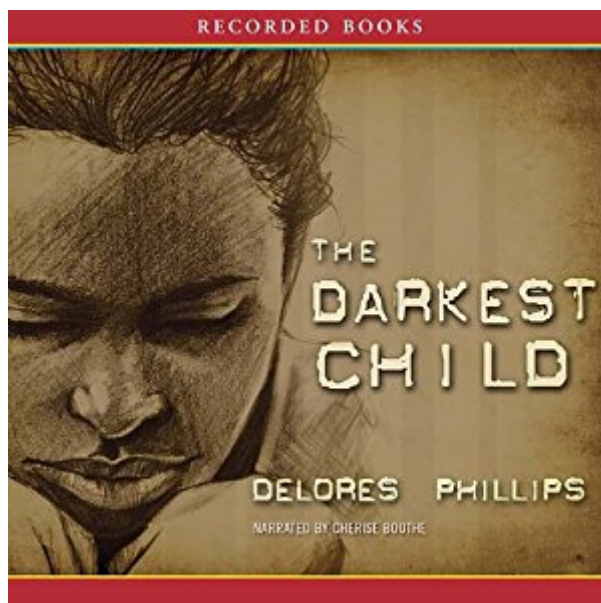


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# The Darkest Child



## Synopsis

A new edition of this award-winning modern classic, with new introduction, excerpt, and discussion guide

—Parkersfield, Georgia, 1958: Thirteen-year-old Tangy Mae Quinn is the sixth of ten fatherless siblings. She is the darkest-skinned among them and therefore the ugliest in her mother, Rozelle's estimation, but she's also the brightest. Rozelle is beautiful, charismatic, and light-skinned—exercises a violent hold over her children. Fearing abandonment, she pulls them from school at the age of twelve and sends them to earn their keep for the household, whether in domestic service, in the fields, or at "the farmhouse" on the edge of town, where Rozelle beds local men for money. But Tangy Mae has been selected to be part of the first integrated class at a nearby white high school. She has a chance to change her life, but can she break from Rozelle's grasp without ruinous—even fatal—consequences? --This text refers to the Paperback edition.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"The Darkest Child" by Delores Phillips is a well written, yet unimaginable sad story of a distraught African American family navigating through the dismal malfunctions of a segregated south during the 1950s in rural Georgia. Indeed, this story reveals somber accounts of staggering dysfunctional interactions between a confused mother (Rozelle) and one of her daughters (Tangy Mae) who happened to be the darkest among her siblings. As if the unbelievable obstacles involving southern life weren't encumbered enough, being the darkest in the family, Tangy Mae also had to endure the insanity of a possessive mother.

Portrayed in mordant and shameful scenery using scathing language, this appalling story described the terrible and sickening penalties Tangy Mae had to pay for personalizing in skin color the insecurities and anxieties of her mother's self hate. At times, the astringent conditions this unfortunate child had to endure were far too much for a young child to bear or even understand. Even though this story involved many other characters and events, it seems that the writer waited until the end to give some sign of hope. This is a good read!

A mesmerizing account of a debased woman whose children struggle daily to survive her. Suspenseful and disturbing, the unforgettable book is clearly written and excellently plotted. Roselle Quinn resides in rural Georgia in the 1950s, is the mother of ten children, sired from ten different men, and runs her home with a brutal fist and a selfish hand. Tangy Mae believes her mother a beauty, with her dark, reddish hair and creamy complexion, but knows the devil that lies beneath. Roselle loves her sons but only uses her daughters, categorizing them by color. Tangy Mae intends to finish school however, Roselle, has different plans for her daughters.

This novel was so good. I read it in 4 days. Sometimes I thought about this "family" as if they were real people long after I put down the book. The mother Rozelle will have you wanting to jump in the story and kick her ass. And then Tangy will have you wanting to shake her so she can defend herself. VERY engrossing story. I happen to live in Georgia now and wonder how I would have survived that time period.

I thought *The Darkest Child* by Delores Phillips was the saddest, most tortured emotionally wrenching story I have ever read. Her writing style was impeccable and realistic. A good novel takes you on a rollercoaster ride of emotions. This novel certainly did just that. I went from feeling sorrow to anger. Excellent character development.

I'm always intrigued by family dynamics - the one you're born into as well as the ones you create. In as early as the second chapter of Phillips' debut novel; I knew that becoming acquainted with the Quinn family would be fascinating and disheartening, familiar and frightening. "Our house stood alone on a hill off Penyon Road, about half a mile outside the city limits" begins chapter two; "It was old, crippled and diseased - an emblem of poverty and neglect. Nature had tried to cure it by embracing the rear frame with herbs, roots and a jumble of foliage which spilled over from the surrounding woodland. Nature had failed, and in frustration she sought to destroy the house by

eroding the very foundation on which it stood."The house, as symbolism for the family, set the tone of the story and my expectations of what the family would be like. Poverty and oppression, in the absence of a guiding light - be it God or someone sent on his behalf - can reduce a person to her most base elements. Enter Rozelle, matriarch of the Quinn's, product of a rape and a mother who couldn't love her; whose best intentions for her family - staying together, keeping a roof over their head, food on the table, clothes on their backs - were honorable, but costly. She instead created a house of pain and neglect from which her children may never recover. The Quinn's story is narrated by Tangy Mae, the darkest and most literate of the ten children. Set in small town Georgia during Jim Crow law, she and her siblings not only have to survive the violence and oppression of the time but that of Rozelle as well. The children are incredibly resilient in the face of their circumstances. Their relationship with one another injects love into the Quinn household; their devotion to their mother injects humanity. The aspect of the novel that I most appreciate is that at its core is a reader-ly sensibility that reinforces the importance of literacy and education. Tangy Mae's love of reading and thirst for school (one of the few places where she felt safe and of value) equipped the author with a narrative voice that is both articulate and rhythmic. "The Darkest Child" may be viewed by some as a dark story but I found it full of life and on a rare occasion or two, humor. If you read to escape this is probably not the novel for you. If you read to connect, this novel will challenge your capacity for forgiveness and connectedness. I'm hard pressed to find the humanity in Rozelle, but I understand why she is how she is. After a second read of the novel, a few years down the road, perhaps I will see her differently. My only disappointment in the novel was that we don't get to know how Tangy's life turns out. My hope is that reading and education will brighten her future. Enjoy!

Phenomenal! This book is well-written with excellent character development. The pace and flow of the plot and subplots are done extremely well that you feel like you're being driven along side-by-side with the characters. I applaud the author for her ability to grab the reader and hold them captive from beginning, middle, and end. This novel never falls flat. It's deep, dark, and layered with unimaginable elements you never see coming. When a book stays with you well after you've read it, you know it's a work of art. Very well done! I highly recommend it.

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