

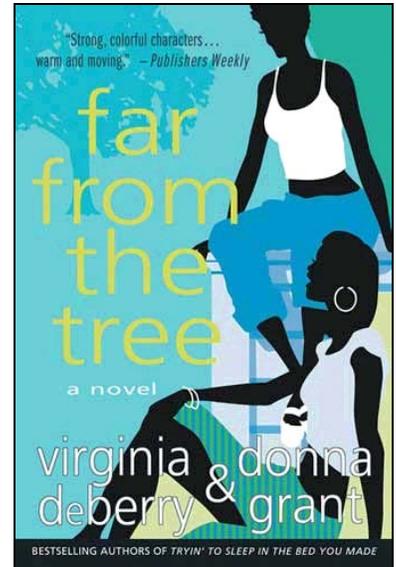
# READING GROUP GUIDE

## *Far From the Tree* by Virginia DeBerry & Donna Grant

St. Martin's Press

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### Introduction to *Far From the Tree*

Celeste English and Ronnie Frazier are sisters, but they couldn't be more different. Celeste is a doctor's wife, living a perfect and elegant life. But secretly, she is terrified: her marriage is falling apart and her need to control the people around her threatens to alienate her entire family. And Celeste allows no one to see how vulnerable she really is. Ronnie is an actress, living in New York. Her life, however, is a lie: she has no money, has no home, and her life is held together by "chewing gum, paper clips, and spit," though she wants everyone to think that her life is one of high glamour and budding fame. When their father dies, the sisters inherit a house in Prosper, North Carolina. Their mother, Della, is adamant that they forget about going there and dredging up the past. Because Della has secrets she'd rather not see come to light—secrets and heartbreak she's kept from everyone for years. Neither Ronnie, Celeste, nor Della realize just what their trip to Prosper will uncover and they must discover for themselves who they really are, who they really love, and what the future holds for them.

*Far From The Tree* is a novel that asks the questions: can the past ever truly remain hidden? Can mothers and daughters put aside their usual roles long enough to get to really know each other? Long enough to see they each have felt the love, loss, heartache and joy that they share as women. And can two strangers realize that they are, and always will be, sisters?

### Reading Group Guide Questions

1. What was the author's purpose in writing *Far From the Tree* and does the title help you to understand that purpose?

2. How are the characters' (Della/Celeste/Ronnie/Nikki) similarities and differences used to facilitate the author's message?
3. Do any of the characters or situations in the book provoke you? Why? Do they make you think about or evaluate some of your own behavior and/or relationships? Explain.
4. Does anything about the story remind you of another kind of story, i.e. the tried-and-true story themes like revenge, jealousy, etc., or classic stories like *Oedipus* and/or *Cain and Abel*? If so, which ones?
5. Are there any metaphors that run throughout the story? What do they tell you?
6. Does the narrator have a particular point of view? If so, how does it influence how the story is told and how you feel about it?
7. Does *Far From the Tree* reflect your own experience or does it give you insight into someone else's?
8. Has *Far From the Tree* changed your mind or point of view...about anything?

## About the Author

**Virigina DeBerry** and **Donna Grant** are the bestselling, award-winning authors of *Tryin' To Sleep In The Bed You Made*, the novel which won the Merit Award for fiction from the Black Caucus of the American Library Association, the Book of the Year Award from Blackboard, and the New Author of the Year Award from the Go On Girl Book Club. Virginia and Donna first met while working as models, and what should have been a rivalry ended up being a decades-long friendship. Virginia lives in New Jersey, and Donna lives in Brooklyn with her husband.