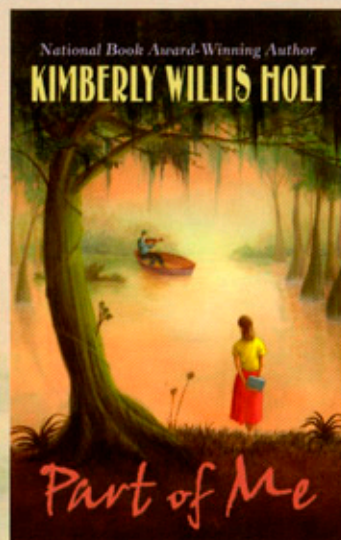


*National Book Award-Winning Author*

**KIMBERLY WILLIS HOLT**

*Part of Me*

**A Discussion Guide**



# Part of Me

Tracing a family's roots is like taking a journey through the years, which in the case of one Louisiana family can be charted by the books they read and loved.

The journey begins in 1939 with Rose, who moves with her mother and siblings from rural Texas to live with their estranged grandfather in the Louisiana bayou. Rose connects with this flavorful community through her love of books and by driving a bookmobile. Two decades later, Merle

Henry, Rose's son, is more passionate about trapping mink than about reading, although there is a place in his heart for *Old Yeller*. In 1973, Merle Henry's daughter, Annabeth, feels torn between reading fairy tales and having a crush on a real-life knight in shining armor. And in the present day, Annabeth's son, Kyle, finds himself in a bind: he hates reading, but the only summer job he can get is at the library.

As you read this intergenerational tale of family and how books connect them, think about the following questions.

- Momma refuses to accept help from the government or members of her community, even as her family begins to run out of food and realizes that Papa won't return. Why do you think she will not accept help?
- When Rose is reluctant to lie about her age to get the bookmobile job, Momma says, "Dat's surviving" (page 24). What distinction is she making? Do you think it is ever okay to tell a lie?
- Rose's family is one of the most important things in her life. Why is her family so important to Rose?
- A simile is a figure of speech that compares two different things and is introduced by like or as. What are some examples of similes in *Part of Me*? Why does Kimberly Willis Holt use similes in her writing?
- Luther describes Aunt Pie as "like a stray cat, always looking for a better fish" (page 83). Why do you think Aunt Pie is unable stay with one boyfriend for very long?

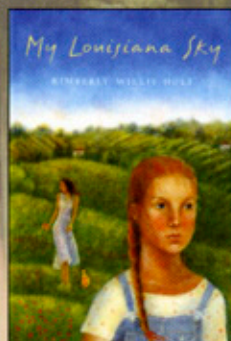


- Why do you think Merle Henry and Lily Bea decide to go by Merle and Lily only (page 106)?
- Why is it so important to Rose that Merle Henry (page 90) and Annabeth (page 116) think about becoming writers?
- Is Annabeth's honesty in dealing with Melody worth the harassment she suffers from Melody and the popular girls? How would you behave in Annabeth's situation, knowing the outcome?
- *Part of Me* is a collection of short stories about the same family. What effect does that structure have on how you read the book? How does it compare to other novels you've read?
- *Part of Me* spans sixty years and shares the stories of four generations of one family. How does the family dynamic differ in each generation?
- How are Rose, Aunt Pie, Merle Henry, and Annabeth characterized as children? How do they change or stay the same when they grow up?
- Books play an important role in the some of the characters in *Part of Me*. Who are these characters? How does their love of books alter how you view these characters? Do books play an important role in your life?

**Kimberly Willis Holt** is the author of several award-winning novels, including *My Louisiana Sky*; *When Zachary Beaver Came to Town*, which received the National Book Award for Young People's Literature; and *Keeper of the Night*. Her books have been named ALA Notable Books and ALA Top Ten Best Books for Young Adults. Seven generations of Ms. Holt's family were from Louisiana. Although she grew up in a military family, Louisiana became her emotional home.



# Also Available from Henry Holt Books for Young Readers



★ "Holt's languid storytelling style is as unhurried as a Louisiana summer, a soft steady breeze turning the pages."

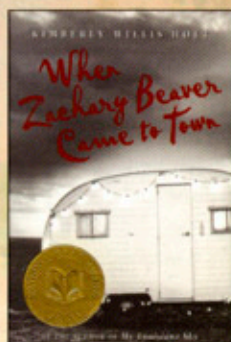
—*The Horn Book*, starred review for *My Louisiana Sky*

## My Louisiana Sky

Middle Grade Fiction

1998 • Hardcover

0-8050-5251-8 • \$16.95



★ "Heartwarming and carefully crafted."

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review for

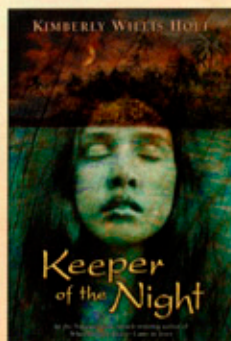
*When Zachary Beaver Came to Town*

## When Zachary Beaver Came to Town

Young Adult Fiction

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"Heart-rending. . . Kimberly Willis Holt has created an endearing, complicated narrator in Isabel; she manages to sound both lyrical and like the eighth grader she is."

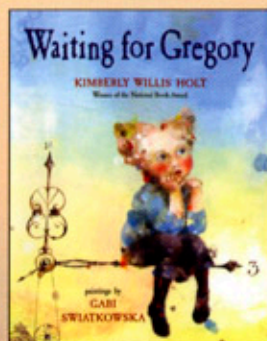
—*New York Times Book Review* for *Keeper of the Night*

## Keeper of the Night

Young Adult Fiction

2003 • Hardcover

0-8050-6361-7 • \$16.95



★ "Holt's affectionate story of awaiting a new baby touches on the many myths associated with this joyous event. This is one for all ages."

—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review for *Waiting for Gregory*

## Waiting for Gregory

illustrations by Gabi Swiatkowska

Picture Book

2006 • Hardcover

0-8050-7388-4 • \$16.95