



# Daughters of the Dust

*Julie Dash*

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## **Daughters of the Dust** Julie Dash

Inspired by her Sundance Festival award-winning film "Daughters of the Dust," Julie Dash has put her cinematic vision on the page, penning a rich, magical new novel which extends her story of a family of complex, independent African-American women. Set in the 1920s in the Sea Islands off the Carolina coast where the Gullah people have preserved much of their African heritage and language, Daughters Of The Dust chronicles the lives of the Peazants, a large, proud family who trace their origins to the Ibo, who were enslaved and brought to the islands more than one hundred years before. Native New Yorker Amelia Peazant returns to her mother's home to trace her family's history. From her multigenerational clan she gathers colorful stories, learning about "the first man and woman," the slaves who walked across the water back home to Africa, the ways men and women need each other, and the intermingling of African and Native-American cultures. Through her experiences, Amelia comes to treasure her family traditions and her relationship with her fiercely independent cousin Elizabeth. Daughters of the Dust is ultimately a story of homecoming and the reclaiming of family and cultural heritage.

## **Daughters of the Dust Details**

Date : Published February 1st 1999 by Plume (first published October 1st 1997)

ISBN :

Author : Julie Dash

Format : Paperback 320 pages

Genre : Fiction, Historical, Historical Fiction, Cultural, African American, Literature

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## From Reader Review Daughters of the Dust for online ebook

### **Matt Sautman says**

While the Gullah dialect may make for difficult reading at first, Daughters of the Dust is a fascinating, and at times emotionally trying, story that centers around two women and their family. Without providing spoilers, the main crux of the novel revolves around one of these women, Amelia, and her return to Dawtuh Island. Amelia is an anthropology student seeking to study her family's roots on the island in order to understand what makes them so unique, while at the same time trying to grasp why her grandmother Haagar and her mother Myown have such distinct differing opinions about the island. The other principal lead female character is Elizabeth, Amelia's cousin, who lives on the island and works as a school-teacher. Together, their narratives blend as this novel blends a collection of folktales, family-drama, recipes, and a critique of academia into this diasporic novel about African American heritage.

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### **Jenny says**

This book is an awesome book to learn about the Gullah/Geechie people of SC and GA. Written mainly in their dialect (which is what distinguishes it from other African Americans) it was challenging for some at first but all felt they were got into the flow of it soon after. Lots of great characters with lots of "lies".... Loved learning something new while being entertained!

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### **Jb says**

i actually saw this as a movie. it was one of the most unbelievable experiences i've ever had. the story is beautifully written, and the movie was unlike anything i'd ever seen. images of the gullah family living on the island are stunning. i'd recommend both book and film to anyone.

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### **Nancy says**

I loved this read - a book I have wanted to read for years after seeing the movie twice back in 1991. It is a very engaging story of the Geechee people living on one of the sea islands off South Carolina. The book was written after the movie and takes the form of stories told by a range of family members and islanders. The movie left me with mind images of women on beaches in crisp white cotton dresses in the early years of the 20th century.

A powerful way to present the results of slavery from the perspective of those who followed and honour the gifts of the ancestors.

This book is a keeper for me - and one I know I will re-read often.

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### **Jerry Wendt says**

This is a wonderful story. At first I was confused by the character population. I was recommended by friends to see the movie which was actually made before the book. It is beautifully done and gives one a handle of the books story, which is an account of the Gullah settlements on the Carolina Barrier islands. The book has dialect which some may find hard following. To me it was like subtitles in a film. They are a distraction that quickly becomes unnoticed. This is a grand story of a family, torn apart by ambition, and by history. I was so interested in this I got and read a book of actual historical account of that isolated colony and , as in out other native populations, was put upon and eviscerated by modern times and greedy souls ( Think Hilton Head Island development) This book is the delicious appetizer into a part of American history that is all but forgotten. A wonderful book. Just watch the movie first ( that is a lushly photographed , lovingly told story in itself) If you get fascinated and want the full immersion the book of historical accord is Gullah Culture in America Feb 1, 2012  
by Wilbur Cross . It is definitive and well worth redaing.

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### **Malcolm says**

A perfect novel? No. An extremely good novel? Yes. Julie Dash takes us into two relatively unknown worlds: the Sea Islands and Gullah culture of Georgia from the turn of the 20th century through to the 1920s, and urban, intellectual Black New York of the 1920s as a young woman struggles with her mother's heritage for a Masters thesis in anthropology. Dash manages to give us a compelling sense of the complexity of African-American lives, the tensions between opportunity and security, the importance of roots and knowing where you're from, and the diversity and difference that is often obscured by the practice of ethnic labelling – and all in a fine novel with a fluid and engaging narrative. The book works at many different levels: it is a tale of crossed cultures, the challenges of fieldwork, and a really good story. A long term favourite developed from but distinctly different to a long term favourite film.

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### **feathers says**

i wanted to read this book after remembering how much i liked but didn't really understand the movie when i was 14. initially i thought the narrative was sorta reductive, but it got so much better. according to the book jacket, the book is dash's chance to explore her film characters more deeply, and that exploration is really fecund. this book is pretty beautiful.

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### **Sue Pit says**

This is a book that I picked up whilst at a book signing in the Haymarket area of Lincoln, NE. Not until I was going to Key West, FL did I chose to read it based upon it being "an island book" ..albeit the islands off of South Carolina. It actually was initially difficult for me to get or stay interested in the book. Perhaps it was the distraction of my trip or the very broken English of some of the characters in the book. Perhaps it was because at first it seemed a medley of stories that did not have much connection to each other. However, as the various story lines developed further and became intertwined, I found it quite interesting. It is of people (Gullahs) whose "ancient ones" (their ancestors) were brought over from Africa as slaves. The story takes place in 1924 or so and by then some have stayed and live the simple life on the island while others have ventured elsewhere. Human nature is well displayed here in the various struggles all people go through as a result of choices made; how dreams are made and dreams are dashed not just by environment but by one's (re)actions thereto or in light thereof.

### **Kathleen McRae says**

I really enjoyed this story. The physical descriptions of Dawtah Island were very good and this book was definitely written from a female perspective. It gave a very good account of slavery and the south and its very elite society and while slavery existed to enrich and create wealth it could only exist in a society where men rule.

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### **Antona says**

I absolutely adored this book!

I saw the film several years ago and was overjoyed when I stumbled upon this copy of the book at a sale. To say this story of stories is beautiful does not do it justice. It is as blue as the ocean meeting the Carolina sky, as blindly real as the white sand, as tinkling as the blue bottles in the trees, as sweet as bread pudding, and as mysterious as the Sea Islands. It is a must, must, must read, especially for those interested in one of the major African peoples who kept their culture intact. As a Creole woman, it always fascinated me how the Gullah peoples were similar in keep customs as my culture. I loved the woman-ness of this story and can not wait for my teenage daughter to read this affirming tale of generation, of family, of self, of place, of people, of culture.

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### **Jardana says**

You will not want to put this book down. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and the movie as well. I liked that the book gave a lot more insight into some of the characters who appear in the movie. As a first generation-American, the themes of family and cultural preservation resonated strongly with me.

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### **Scgirlz3 says**

Not my style

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### **Kenna says**

Those soul searching years of trying to figure out what it means to be black - this book has some many stories and characters that i always wished were my family. And the main character's struggle between wanting to research and document her history and wanting to keep it safe and secure from white academia who would tear it apart in order to understand...i've read it three times.

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## Lisa says

excellent story from the early 1900's about growing up Gullah on the sea islands-like Seabrook!

Nice contrast of North vs South and rural vs urban.

Growing up poor and black in the rural South is something else-takes you back a century from growing up in NY.

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## bookczuk says

This is the book chosen by Charleston County Library for the 2011 One Book program. Read about it here.

I'd not heard of it prior to the selection.

The history of South Carolina fascinates me. I've lived here over half my life (33 years and counting, though not in one stretch) and I continue to love learning about the cultures of Carolina. The Gullah world, in particular is a lesson in survivor-ship and courage. I stand in awe of what these people, torn from their world, created through generations when transplanted so violently to the Carolina coast.

This story provided a portal back into the 1920's, capturing the life of sea island folks and a young woman who has returned to the island of her heritage from Harlem for anthropological study of the culture she came from. The characters are all richly drawn, and I've been told that there is interplay between the film (released 1991) and the book, though the book certainly stands alone quite successfully. I have not yet seen Dash's film, but intend to. (My friend, author Robert Jordan, said after seeing the film years ago that had he moved away from Carolina, seeing this film would have made him homesick and wish to return.) The richness of the characters and story, interwoven with the telling of the lies (stories) which give back-history created a fabulous tapestry. One other element, which completely captured me, was the sprinkling of potions and recipes for charms through the book. (The first one, on page 23, I told my friend Mary about, since she makes soaps and aromatherapy scents. I'm going to try it, too: *"Mix 75 drops of peppermint oil with 35 drops of eucalyptus oil, 10 drops of clove, and 1/2 cup of spring water. Shake the mixture around the four corners of the room to bring the nature inside. As the mixture ages, the scent will become stronger."*)

I usually don't give a synopsis of a story in my reviews, and will carry on that tradition. However, I will say, this is a marvelous "lie" told by Julie Dash.

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