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## WHY WE LOVE *The Girls in the Stilt House*

Dear Reader,

The spotlight title chosen for this quarter's book club, *The Girls in the Stilt House*, is such a masterful piece of historical fiction that it's hard to believe it's Kelly Mustian's debut. Expertly crafted and assuredly told, it's a captivating, moving tale that will sweep you away to the heat, humidity, and stickiness of the 1920s Mississippi swamplands and into the lives of two teenage girls from completely different backgrounds who are bound together forever by the shared experience of violence.

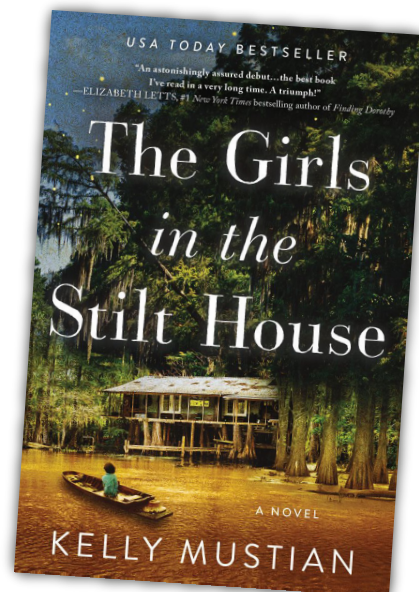
As the story begins, Ada, a young white woman, is pregnant and alone and, with seemingly nowhere else to turn, reluctantly returns to the home of her sadistic father. Soon, she finds herself reliant on Matilda, the black daughter of a sharecropper. Lying low herself, Matilda helps Ada through her pregnancy and spends her time writing about the ongoing prejudice and poverty found in the South. Both teens want to better their lives: Ada dreams about stability for her baby, and Matilda wants a new start in the black diaspora from the Deep South. In a world that tells them both that they count for next to nothing, they both scrape to find the strength to believe they are worth far more—and believing that means everything.

Timely and relevant, *The Girls in the Stilt House* is a perceptive, compelling, and excellent reminder that compassion, kindness, and strength come in many forms, forms that ultimately transcend socioeconomics, skin color, and the deepest, darkest of realities. It is our hope that this message will help us understand our past and be a balm and inspiration for our present and future.

As you read along with us, please share what you think @hoopladigital and include #hooplabookclub to engage in discussion with your fellow readers.

Happy reading!

Andi Paris, hoopla digital





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### About the Author

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Kelly Mustian grew up in Natchez, Mississippi, the southern terminus of the historic Natchez Trace. Her work has appeared in numerous literary journals and commercial magazines, and her short fiction has won a Blumenthal Writers and Readers Series Award. She is a past recipient of a Regional Artist Grant from the North Carolina Arts and Science Council. Kelly currently lives with her family near the foothills of North Carolina. *The Girls in the Stilt House* is her debut novel.

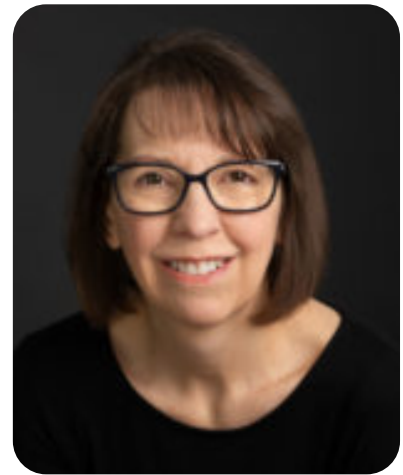


Photo by Rachelle Thompson

### Selected Praise for *The Girls in the Stilt House*

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"Remarkable debut....[a] nearly flawless tale of loss, perseverance and redemption."

— ***Publishers Weekly*, starred review**

"Classic Southern reading."

— ***Library Journal***

"A brilliantly researched, atmospheric page-turner. But best of all, it's populated with characters you really care about. I devoured it in a single weekend, yet the novel's haunting spell remained with me long after."

— **Kate Moore, *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Radium Girls* and *The Woman They Could Not Silence***

"This unforgettable novel is the best book I've read in a very long time, and I'm sure I won't be the only one who thinks so. A triumph!"

— **Elizabeth Letts, #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Finding Dorothy***

"In prose that is stunning and assured, Kelly Mustian forges a powerful story of two young women, thrust together after unspeakable loss and devastation, and their courageous struggle to emerge from their darkest hours."

— **Jessica Keener, author of *Strangers in Budapest***

"A triumph, a heartbreaking and ultimately uplifting debut that's as rich and lush as the Natchez Trace where the story takes place. Mustian's lyrical prose combined with her deep insight into the resiliency of the human spirit make this novel shine. You know a book is good when you wish you'd written it!"

— **Karen Dionne, international bestselling author of *The Marsh King's Daughter***

"The two young women at the heart of this rich debut come of age under the hardest of circumstances, and Kelly Mustian has given us their world entire. We ache for their sorrows, we cheer for their victories, and we recognize both ourselves and our nation in their troubles and their hopes."

— **Jon Clinch, author of *Marley and Finn***

"This is a gripping novel about friendship, danger, isolation, and the vivid, dripping, moving landscape of a Mississippi swamp. If you loved *Where the Crawdads Sing*, you'll love *The Girls in the Stilt House*."

— **Nina de Gramont, author of *The Last September***