



If Beale Street Could Talk

by James Baldwin

Discussion Questions

1. Baldwin wrote this story about a period in the 1970's. Have things changed nearly 50 years later? What has changed? What has stayed the same?
2. Themes: male/female love, family love, family and friend relationships, community relationships, powerlessness, racism, social injustice, religion; these are some of the themes in the story, which do you think is the strongest? Central?
3. What are your thoughts about Daniel's interaction with the legal system? He pleads guilty to a crime he did not commit because he is scared and coerced by the police and the court appointed lawyer. We hear stories like this all the time. What can we do to change this sort of systemic problem? Would things have been different for Daniel had he had family and friends to rely on during his crisis?

4. What does this book teach you about family and the power of family?
Fonny is Tish's family and her family takes on the responsibility of that.
What does that mean to them?
5. Do you agree with this statement: "The women characters in *If Beale Street Could Talk* are portrayed either as saints or villains."? Why or why not? Give evidence to support your opinion based on quotes from the book.
6. The ending of the book is continuous. Nothing is finalized for Tish and Fonny. Is the ending paragraph a dream sequence or reality? Does Fonny get out on bail? Does the ending leave you with a sense of hope? Or, are you frustrated by it?
(hplct.org and Southfield Public Library)

Find additional copies of printable discussion questions here:

www.sussexlibraries.org/just-mercy-expansion-kit-2

