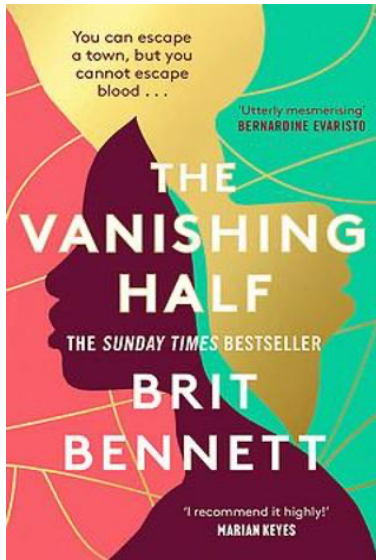


## ***The Vanishing Half***

**By Brit Bennett**

***The Vanishing Half* by Brit Bennett is the story of identical twin sisters growing up in a Southern black community in the USA over roughly a twenty year period (1968-1986).**



*They run away at aged 16 and then their lives separate.*

Stella lives as a white woman, married to a successful white businessman, Blake, who is from a wealthy privileged family. She lives in a big house in a white closed community, where they object to any black families moving in and has a white, even blonde, daughter. She hides her upbringing, her family and her life before from everyone, including her husband.

The other sister, Desiree, has a black daughter and returns to their home town, shame-faced, with bruises on her face and neck, to live with their mother who she cares for until her death and works in the local diner. She is reunited with her childhood sweetheart, Early.

Much of the story is told through the eyes of Jude, Desiree's daughter and the intertwining of her life and that of Stella's daughter, Kennedy.

### **Themes/discussion points:**

- One of the main themes of this book is that no matter how far away you go and whatever efforts you go to hide or cover up your background and upbringing, your past is always with you.
- The other main theme for discussion is how racism impacts different communities. The twins' hometown, Mallard, seems an extraordinary place but in the other towns and locations in the story the twins experience racism in different forms.
- How is Stella able to hide the fact that she is black for so long, even from her husband and daughter?
- Do you think ultimately Stella regrets her decision?

- Kennedy, Stella's daughter, knows early on that her mother is lying about her past and in a way finds acting and being on the stage a way of dealing with it. Do you think Kennedy should have confronted her mother?
- The twins have very different relationships with their partners – Stella and Blake and Desiree and Early. What do you see are the main differences?
- Jude, Desiree's daughter and her partner, Reese, both have had traumatic pasts and their relationship throws up questions about romantic love. Do you think they have a future together?
- Do you think it is a realistic story?
- Did you relate to both Stella and Desiree or one more than the other and, if so, which one?
- Do you like the ending?

**Other books by Brit Bennett:**

'The Vanishing Half' is only her second book.  
Her first is 'The Mothers' was published in 2016.

**Other recent books about twins:**

'Hamnet' by Maggie O'Farrell