



## Belle Teal

*By Ann M. Martin*



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Now in paperback from the Newbery Honor-winning author of *A Corner of the Universe*--a moving tale that tackles issues of prejudice and community with a child-friendly eye.

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## **Belle Teal** By Ann M. Martin Bibliography

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- 224 pages

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this honest and moving novel, Martin (the Baby-Sitters Club series; P.S. Longer Letter Later) takes readers back to the era of the civil rights movement in the rural South to share the experiences of a poor white girl when her school becomes integrated. The author evokes the aura of hatred and fear permeating the small community of Coker Creek as skillfully as Belle Teal's empathy for her African-American classmate, Darryl. Martin sensitively captures the narrator's reactions to the events around her, such as when Belle Teal sees racist picketers outside of her school: "I feel my face grow warm, like I'm embarrassed, even though I haven't done anything." Besides feeling anger towards her insensitive classmates and their bigoted parents, the fifth-grade narrator resents a new rich girl named Vanessa (whom she dubs "HRH" for Her Royal Highness), who makes fun of the way she dresses. Yet the heroine learns some important lessons about not judging people by their appearances; she later learns a tragic secret that sheds some light on Vanessa. As well as capturing the climate of the early '60s, the author adroitly tackles timeless issues. Preteens will relate to Belle Teal, whose observations and realizations provide an eye-opening introduction to social and personal injustice. Ages 10-14.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 4-6-Fifth grade will be a year of change for Belle Teal in this novel by Ann M. Martin (Scholastic, 2001). Her mama seems to be settling down to a job she might stick with, her beloved Gran shows increasing signs of senility, friendships are changing, and her rural Southern school is being integrated. Belle finds it hard to understand why some adults and some of her friends are behaving so badly to her new African-American classmate, the shy but appealing Darryl. As the year progresses, Belle struggles to deal with a snobby new girl in her class while slowly grasping that her angry friend, Little Boss, is being abused by his drunken father. It's a lot to deal with, but the strong support of Belle's family and her own inner sense of kindness and understanding gets her through it all. Hers is a distinctive voice, and seems tailor made for recording. Julia Gibson narrates with a youthful air, although she lacks a southern accent. The pacing is good, and she ably conveys the frequently humorous observations made by Belle Teal and her best friends, Darryl and Clarice. The theme of prejudice and the way it causes people to behave is not overtly presented, but instead is smoothly incorporated into the story. Belle's meditations on family, friendship, prejudice, and not judging by appearance are so believable and matter of fact that they may well impel listeners to think about these issues in their own lives. The lively main character and compelling plot make this a popular choice for young listeners.

*B. Allison Gray, South Country Library, Bellport, NY*

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 4-6. Belle Teal's fifth-grade year is off to an eventful start. She finally has Miss Casey, whom she is sure she will love. However, there is controversy over black students attending her school for the first time. This coming-of-age-story, set in the early sixties, features a spunky, thoughtful girl whose family doesn't have much. Mama works several jobs to pay the bills. Gran cooks and tends the garden, but her memory is fading quickly. At school, Belle Teal contends with a new girl who makes fun of her and some boys whose mean behavior extends to the new black student in her class. Belle Teal befriends him, even as other students keep their distance. By the story's finish, Belle Teal has made some surprising discoveries about her classmates

and has learned that she has a well of strength that will help her face her family's own uncertain future. The only false note is Belle Teal's voice, too wise for her years. But the story's portrayal of integration in a small school is low key yet quite effective. *Denise Wilms*

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## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Barbara Bell:**

Do you have favorite book? In case you have, what is your favorite's book? Book is very important thing for us to find out everything in the world. Each publication has different aim as well as goal; it means that book has different type. Some people sense enjoy to spend their time and energy to read a book. They are reading whatever they have because their hobby is reading a book. What about the person who don't like looking at a book? Sometime, particular person feel need book when they found difficult problem or perhaps exercise. Well, probably you should have this Belle Teal.

#### **Jose Coleman:**

Reading can called brain hangout, why? Because if you find yourself reading a book mainly book entitled Belle Teal the mind will drift away trough every dimension, wandering in every aspect that maybe unknown for but surely might be your mind friends. Imaging each and every word written in a e-book then become one form conclusion and explanation that maybe you never get before. The Belle Teal giving you another experience more than blown away your thoughts but also giving you useful info for your better life in this particular era. So now let us teach you the relaxing pattern the following is your body and mind will probably be pleased when you are finished studying it, like winning a. Do you want to try this extraordinary paying spare time activity?

#### **Jessica Bowman:**

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#### **Stephen Morgan:**

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