

DISPATCHES FROM PLUTO BY RICHARD GRANT

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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Near the beginning of the book, Grant writes, "What kind of idiot goes on a picnic and ends up buying a house?" Discuss what it would take for you to visit a new place and decide to live there on a whim.

What were your thoughts on how afraid they seemed of Mississippi at first? They had worries about "redneck methheads," wildlife, and crime.

Could Richard and Mariah have survived without the kindness of strangers? Why or why not?

Throughout the book, Grant asks several people, both white and black, questions about race relations in Mississippi. What did you think of the responses? Did reading about race make you uncomfortable? Why or why not?

Do you think the book is an accurate and honest portrayal of the Mississippi Delta? Do you think Grant embellished anything? Why or why not?

Were you disappointed the author never came to a complete understanding or epiphany about race relations in Mississippi? Why or why not?

If you weren't (or aren't) from Mississippi, would this book deter you from visiting? Why or why not?

Grant says, "Outsiders often see it as a paradox, that such a poor, conservative, religious state should also have such a rich literary tradition, but it makes sense to Mississippians. Not only are they great tellers and admirers of colorful stories, with a rich supply of material. There's also an intangible, mysterious quality to life here that Mississippi writers have felt compelled to tackle, a kind of magical realism that comes out of the state's long insularity, the urge to mythologize its history of defeat and oppression, the deep influence of the Old Testament and faith-based thinking, and perhaps the drama of the natural landscape." Do you agree with this? Have you ever thought about why Mississippi produces so many great writers?