



Book of the Week

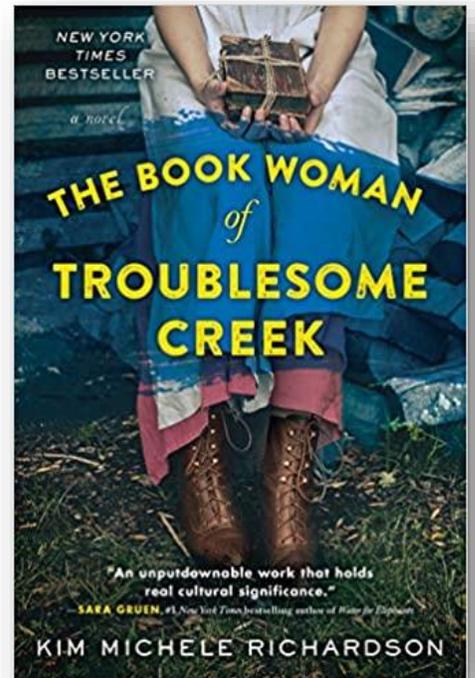
***The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek* by Kim Michele Richardson**

Book Review by Maureen Lang

In 1935, the Roosevelt administration initiated a new Works Progress Administration (WPA) program highly endorsed by the First Lady that would deliver reading materials to the isolated poor in 45 states in an effort to encourage literacy and knowledge. For the next 8 years, the Pack Horse Library Project was one of the WPA's most successful programs and was staffed largely by female librarians who traveled into the backwoods, hollers and mountains with books, magazines, scrapbooks of collected recipes, remedies, fashion and whatever the "patrons" might find interesting. Perhaps the most unusual circuit was of a librarian who traveled by houseboat along the Yazoo River!

The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek by Kim Michele Richardson takes place in the most iconic region in the program, the backwoods of Kentucky. Cussie Carter lives with her coal-miner father who is determined to find a husband for his daughter. Cussie is pretty, young, intelligent and educated by the books she loves to read. There is only one hitch. She and her father are the last of the Blue People of Kentucky suffering from a benign congenital defect, methemoglobinemia, that manifests itself by turning the skin a bright blue. The Carters are deemed non-white and are subjected to both social and racial discrimination.

As a pack horse librarian, Cussie loves her job and the desperately isolated and poor patrons she serves. It is her mission to bring not just literacy and knowledge to the people along her route, but to bring contact from the outside world, excitement to the children waiting for the next picture book and friendship to a young pregnant wife. Although there are fulfilling and even romantic times in store for the intrepid Cussie, there is also danger and heartbreak as she rides her faithful mule through the changes of seasons to carry out her job.



Richardson has crafted an excellent story that will captivate and educate the reader. She captures both the goodness and decency of many of the characters, their hopes and dreams, as well as the jealousies and meanness lurking in the racial mores of the time. *The Book Woman of Troublesome Creek* is definitely a good read.

For more information about supporting the Friends of the Starkville Library, click [here](#).