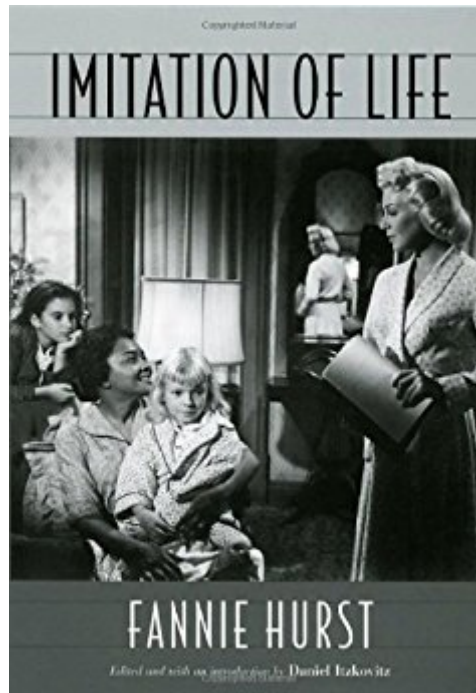




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Imitation Of Life



Synopsis

A bestseller in 1933, and subsequently adapted into two beloved and controversial films, *Imitation of Life* has played a vital role in ongoing conversations about race, femininity, and the American Dream. Bea Pullman, a white single mother, and her African American maid, Delilah Johnston, also a single mother, rear their daughters together and become business partners. Combining Bea's business savvy with Delilah's irresistible southern recipes, they build an Aunt Jemima-like waffle business and an international restaurant empire. Yet their public success brings them little happiness. Bea is torn between her responsibilities as a businesswoman and those of a mother; Delilah is devastated when her light-skinned daughter, Peola, moves away to pass as white. *Imitation of Life* struck a chord in the 1930s, and it continues to resonate powerfully today. The author of numerous bestselling novels, a masterful short story writer, and an outspoken social activist, Fannie Hurst was a major celebrity in the first half of the twentieth century. Daniel Itzkovitz's introduction situates *Imitation of Life* in its literary, biographical, and cultural contexts, addressing such topics as the debates over the novel and films, the role of Hurst's one-time secretary and great friend Zora Neale Hurston in the novel's development, and the response to the novel by Hurst's friend Langston Hughes, whose one-act satire, "Limitations of Life" (which reverses the races of Bea and Delilah), played to a raucous Harlem crowd in the late 1930s. This edition brings a classic of popular American literature back into print.

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Customer Reviews

This is an oldie but a goodie, and although it may seem somewhat anachronistic, in fact, almost embarrassingly and offensively so, it is well worth reading. A best selling novel when it was first released in 1933, the reader should keep in mind that much of what is in the book would today be perceived as racist. The book is reflective of a paternalistic view of African-Americans that was prevalent at the time in which this book was written. It is certainly a view that is jarring in these more enlightened times, as the books reflects the nature of the racism that was then inherent in our society. This is not a book that would be written today, as modern society, though still racist in many ways, would view it as being totally politically incorrect. That being said, the book focuses on two female characters, Bea Pullman, a white teenage widow living in Atlantic City, New Jersey with her elderly father and a baby daughter named Jessie, and Delilah Johnston, a young black widow with a light-skinned baby daughter named Peola. Both women are struggling to survive in pre-World War I society, where the lot of widows in a man's world could be a difficult one. When they join forces, an alliance born of necessity is forged. Delilah becomes Bea's housekeeper and caregiver, taking on the traditional woman's role, while Bea struggles to be the breadwinner in a world not yet hospitable to the idea of a business woman. When Delilah's culinary talents merge with Bea's innate business acumen, they are both on their way to fame and fortune. Before you know it, Bea is making a mint with Delilah's recipes, running a successful chain of B.

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