



FULTON COUNTY
LIBRARY SYSTEM

 **ONE
BOOK**
ONE READ



atlanta-fulton
public library
foundation

READER'S GUIDE - for - **GOOD DIRT**



THANK YOU

FOR JOINING THE 2025 ONE BOOK ONE READ PROGRAM

This year, we will feature *Good Dirt* by Charmaine Wilkerson. "Good Dirt" is a story about the daughter of an affluent Black family who pieces together the connection between a childhood tragedy and a beloved heirloom.

The primary objective of the One Book, One Read initiative is to foster a love for reading among as many residents of Fulton County as possible. By encouraging the community to read, discuss, and engage with the same book, this program aims to promote conversations, build stronger communities, and enhance literacy, all while having a great time with friends, family, and neighbors.

The Library System, with support from the Atlanta-Fulton Public Library Foundation, will host a special visit with author Charmaine Wilkerson on Saturday, October 25 from 11 AM - 2 PM. The author will discuss the book, answer audience questions and take part in a book signing, immediately following the talk. Look for a book club discussion coming to a library branch near you!



ABOUT CHARMAINE WILKERSON

Charmaine Wilkerson is a Caribbean-American writer who has lived in Jamaica and Italy. Her newest novel is *Good Dirt*, a USA Today bestseller. Her debut novel *Black Cake* is a New York Times bestseller, a #ReadWithJenna book club pick, and the basis for the Hulu/Disney+ screen series of the same name. Charmaine is a former news and communication professional whose award-winning short fiction has appeared in various anthologies and magazines.

ABOUT

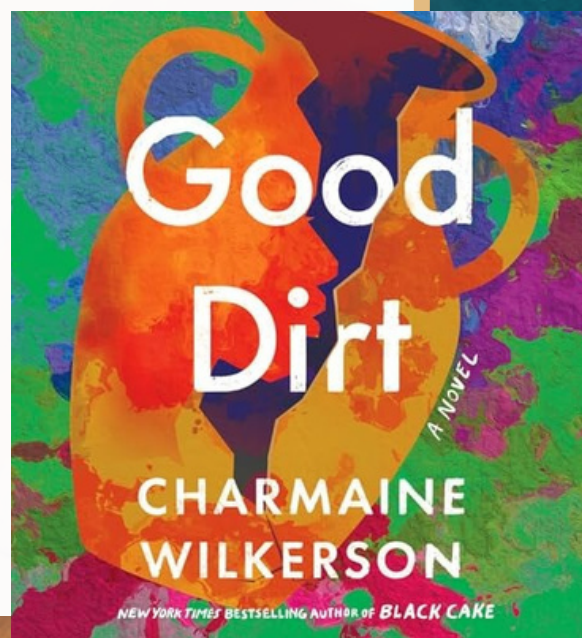
Good Dirt

The daughter of an affluent Black family pieces together the connection between a childhood tragedy and a beloved heirloom in this moving novel from the New York Times bestselling author of *Black Cake*, a Read with Jenna Book Club Pick.

When ten-year-old Ebby Freeman heard the gunshot, time stopped. And when she saw her brother, Baz, lying on the floor surrounded by the shattered pieces of a centuries-old jar, life as Ebby knew it shattered as well.

The crime was never solved—and because the Freemans were one of the only Black families in a particularly well-to-do enclave of New England—the case has had an enduring, voyeuristic pull for the public. The last thing the Freemans want is another media frenzy splashing their family across the papers, but when Ebby's high profile romance falls apart without any explanation, that's exactly what they get. So Ebby flees to France, only for her past to follow her there. And as she tries to process what's happened, she begins to think about the other loss her family suffered on that day eighteen years ago—the stoneware jar that had been in their family for generations, brought North by an enslaved ancestor. But little does she know that the handcrafted piece of pottery held more than just her family's history—it might also hold the key to unlocking her own future.

In this sweeping, evocative novel, Charmaine Wilkerson brings to life a multi-generational epic that examines how the past informs our present.



HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE

GOOD DIRT

BY CHARMAINE WILKERSON

.....

Keeping Track of Time

Whether your discussion lasts an hour or two, conversations can easily run long. Assign a specific amount of time to each question to keep the discussion balanced and allow time for open conversation and mingling at the end.

Keep the Discussion Going

Participants may sometimes share experiences that drift from the main topic. Be respectful, but gently guide the conversation back on track to keep the discussion moving.

Allow Many Voices

The key to a great discussion is active participation and engagement. Don't hesitate to invite input from someone who hasn't spoken yet — they might just be a little shy.

Maintain the Peace if Discussions Intensify

Everyone's voice and opinion matters in a discussion. The most important thing is that ideas are shared and received respectfully. As the moderator, it's your role to foster this respect.

Share your Experience on Social Media

Help us spread the word and invite others to join this amazing initiative that brings Fulton County residents together through the power of reading.



LIBRARY BOOK CLUBS

ADAMS PARK

September 30 // 5:30-6:30 PM

2231 Campbellton Rd SW,
Atlanta, GA 30311

ADAMSVILLE-COLLIER HEIGHTS

September 13 // 2:00 PM

3424 M.L.K. Jr Dr SW,
Atlanta, GA 30331

ALPHARETTA

September 16 // 6:00 - 7:00 PM

10 Park Plaza,
Alpharetta, GA 30009

BUCKHEAD

October 7 // 4:00 PM

10 Park Plaza,
Alpharetta, GA 30009

CENTRAL

September 30 // 6:00 - 7:30 PM

Online

COLLEGE PARK

September 23 // 6:30 - 7:30 PM

3647 Main St,
College Park, GA 30337

DOGWOOD

October 7 // 5:30 - 7:00 PM

1838 Donald Lee Hollowell Pkwy
NW, Atlanta, GA 30318

EAST ATLANTA

August 28 // 2:00 - 3:00 PM

400 Flat Shoals Ave SE,
Atlanta, GA 30316

EAST POINT

September 15 // 5:30 - 7:30 PM

2757 Main St,
East Point, GA 30344

EVELYN G. LOWERY @ CASCADE

September 22 // 6:00 PM

3665 Cascade Rd,
Atlanta, GA 30331

FAIRBURN

September 8 // 6:00 PM
September 22 // 6:00 PM

60 Valley View Dr,
Fairburn, GA 30213

GLADYS S. DENNARD @ SOUTH FULTON

August 27 // 12:00 - 2:00 PM

4055 Flat Shoals Rd,
South Fulton, GA 30291

HAPEVILLE

September 16 // 6:30 - 7:30 PM

525 King Arnold St,
Hapeville, GA 30354

KIRKWOOD

September 8 // 5:00 PM

1 Kirkwood Rd NE,
Atlanta, GA 30317

LOUISE WATLEY @ SOUTHEAST

September 27 // 1:00 - 2:00 PM

1463 Pryor Rd SW,
Atlanta, GA 30315

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

October 18 // 10:00 - 11:45 AM

480 John Wesley Dobbs Ave
NE, Unit 100, Atlanta, GA
30312

LIBRARY BOOK CLUBS

MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.

October 18 // 10:00 - 11:45 AM

480 John Wesley Dobbs Ave
NE, Unit 100, Atlanta, GA
30312

MECHANICSVILLE

August 26 // 6:30 - 7:30 PM

400 Formwalt St SW,
Atlanta, GA 30312

METROPOLITAN

September 22 // 6:00 - 7:00 PM

1332 Metropolitan Pkwy
SW, Atlanta, GA 30310

MILTON

September 17 // 12:00 - 1:00 PM

855 Mayfield Rd,
Milton, GA 30009

NORTHEAST SPRUILL OAKS

August 25 // 5:00 PM

9560 Spruill Rd,
Johns Creek, GA 30022

NORTHSIDE

October 8 // 3:00 - 4:00 PM

3295 Northside Pkwy NW,
Atlanta, GA 30327

NORTHWEST @ SCOTT'S CROSSING

September 11 // 12:00 - 2:00 PM

2489 Perry Blvd NW,
Atlanta, GA 30318

PALMETTO

October 6 // 6:30 PM

9111 Cascade Palmetto
Hwy, Palmetto, GA 30268

WASHINGTON PARK

August 25 // 5:30 - 6:30 PM

1116 M.L.K. Jr Dr SW,
Atlanta, GA 30314

WEST END

August 29 // 4:00 - 5:30 PM

525 Peebles St SW,
Atlanta, GA 30310

WOLF CREEK

August 28 // 12:00 - 2:00 PM

3100 Enon Rd,
Atlanta, GA 30331

GUIDING QUESTIONS

“There was the moment before and there would be everything after.” Prior to the shooting, the flashbacks to Baz and Ebby’s childhood depict them as carefree siblings with a strong bond. How does this before-and-after mentality shape the way Ebby sees her life? How does Baz’s death haunt Ebby throughout her adult life?

What was your favorite part of the story? Favorite location and time period? The character who interested you the most?

Ebby’s decision to take refuge in a small French village after her wedding is called off is a pivotal moment. What do you think she was hoping to find in France, and how does this setting contrast with her life in the United States?

When Henry’s new partner, Avery, meets Ebby, she immediately knows who Ebby is: “Here, in the middle-of-nowhere France, is yet another person who has formed an image of Ebby before they’ve even met her.” How does the novel portray the way trauma, particularly public trauma, becomes a part of a person’s identity? How does Ebby react to being known more for her tragedy than for her personal achievements?

Throughout the novel, Ebby’s physical appearance changes repeatedly as she experiments with hair color. How do you interpret these changes in the context of her emotional journey?

During a flashback to her childhood, Ebby feels uncomfortable with the attention the Freemans receive as a prominent Black family in Massachusetts. How does this discomfort evolve as Ebby grows older and gains more visibility in society? How does her family’s wealth and status complicate her feelings about race and belonging?

“Sometimes, not recognizing someone’s worth can be an advantage.” Do you find this statement to be true for the characters in the novel? Discuss.

The novel shifts between different time periods and perspectives. How do these shifts in time help to deepen your understanding of the characters and their motivations? How does learning about Ebby’s ancestry shed light on the Freeman family’s lives today?

GUIDING QUESTIONS

The Freeman family's jar is described as a "reminder of how you children came to be Freemans." How does the jar's presence in different moments of the story influence the characters' sense of identity and family legacy? What do you think the heirloom symbolizes for Ebby, specifically?

The theme of heritage and legacy is important in the novel, from the family's historical ties to Refuge County to the jar that has been passed down for generations. How does the novel explore the concept of inheritance—both material and emotional?

Old Mo, the cherished family jar, ultimately becomes a beloved museum exhibit. How do you think this shift from a personal family heirloom to a public artifact affects the emotional connection the Freemans have to it? How does Old Mo's fate at the end of the novel mirror Ebby's own story?

What do you think will happen to Ebby after the novel's conclusion? Do you believe she will finally find peace and closure, or do you think her past will continue to influence her future decisions and relationships? What path do you imagine for her moving forward?

True crime is a very popular trend across television, film, books, podcasts, and more. Did Ebby's story make you examine or reconsider how pop culture consumes other people's stories and trauma?

What did you think of the five words on the bottom of the jar? How did you feel when the words were revealed?

If Good Dirt became a movie or TV show, who would you cast as each character?

Playlist for Good Dirt

SEPTEMBER

(Freemans all together on the first day of the school term)

Earth Wind & Fire

CELLO CONCERTO IN E MINOR, OP. 85: L. ADAGIO — MODERATO

Elgar, Sheku Kanneh-Mason,
London Symphony Orchestra, Sir Simon Rattle

COURAGE TO CHANGE

(Ebby leaves home to stay overseas)

Pink

DO THE WALLS COME DOWN

(Ebby and Henry see each other for the first time since their breakup)

Carly Simon

LIFE

(The Freemans in happier times)

Des'ree

NO ONE

(Ebby and Henry before the breakup)

Alicia Keys

BABY CAN I HOLD YOU

(Ebby and Henry on their night of revelations)

Tracy Chapman

SOFT STUD

(Avery longing for Henry)

Black Belt Eagle Scout

LANDSLIDE

(Ebby and her father Ed reflecting before reuniting in Massachusetts)

Stevie Nicks

BEST THING THAT EVER HAPPENED TO ME

(Ed with Soh and Ebby)

Gladys
Knight and The Pips

BLESSED

(Ed being harassed on the road by other motorists)

Bashy feat. Skrapz, Haile

COURAGE TO CHANGE

(Ebby, Soh and Ed on the 20th anniversary of Baz's death)

Sia

REDEMPTION SONG

(Freemans announcing new exhibit)

Bob Marley

BLACKBIRD

Beatles/Paul McCartney

TIME

(Soh thinking about Baz)

Mary J. Blige

WE ARE GOLDEN

(Photos in the Selfie Bank at the museum)

Mika

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

WHO CAN BE INVOLVED?

Everyone! We are looking for community members, thought leaders, and curious readers to engage in reading the book with your friends and community. Gather a group from your family, religious organization, civic group, sorority or fraternity, job, or friends to read and discuss the book together.

DOES ONE BOOK ONE READ COST ANYTHING?

No! Participation in One Book, One Read is completely free. You can check out the featured title from your local library or access it through our digital resources.

WHERE CAN I GET THE BOOK?

There are approximately 500 copies in circulation in the Fulton County Library System. Local retailers, such as ACapella Books, are committed to having copies of the book in stock.

WHAT IS THE TIMELINE FOR THIS EVENT? WHEN DO I NEED TO SIGN UP?

There is no deadline to sign up.

- May - August 2024 - Read! Book clubs will meet every month.
- August 10, 2024 lecture from 11am-2pm, Central Library



4TH ANNUAL ONE BOOK, ONE READ



**ONE
BOOK
ONE READ**

Plant yourself INTO **GOOD DIRT**



Discover Good Dirt by Charmaine Wilkerson, the 2025 One Book, One Read selection, a moving exploration of family, legacy, and the roots that shape us. Pick up a copy today and be part of the conversation.



AUTHOR TALK
SATURDAY, OCTOBER 25
11 AM - 2 PM



CENTRAL LIBRARY
One Margaret Mitchell,
Atlanta, GA 30339



LEARN MORE AT
fulcolibrary.org/obor



Sponsored by





ONE BOOK ONE READ

APPLY TO THE WRITER'S RETREAT

with Charmaine Wilkerson

OCTOBER 24, 2025

1:00 – 2:30 PM

CENTRAL LIBRARY

**NEW THIS
YEAR!**

Apply today at
[fulcolibrary.org](https://fulcolibrary.org/obor-workshop)
[/obor-workshop](https://fulcolibrary.org/obor-workshop)

Apply by October 1!



Sponsored by



atlanta-fulton
public library
foundation