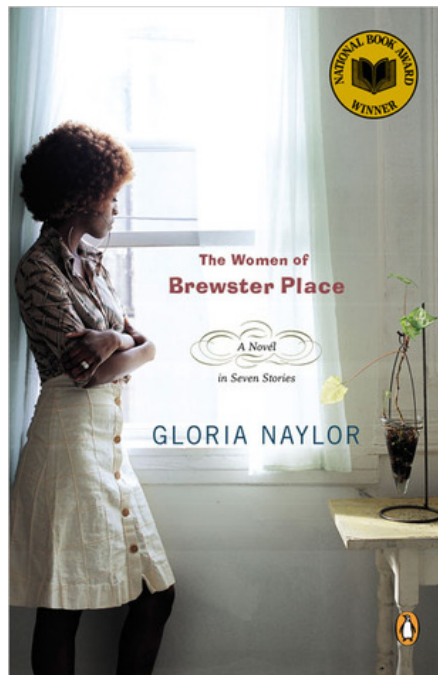




The Women of Brewster Place

Gloria Naylor

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The Women of Brewster Place Gloria Naylor

In her heralded first novel, Gloria Naylor weaves together the stories of seven women living in Brewster Place, a bleak inner-city sanctuary, creating a powerful, moving portrait of the strengths, struggles, and hopes of black women in America. Vulnerable and resilient, openhanded and open-hearted, these women forge their lives in a place that in turn threatens and protects—a common prison and a shared home. Naylor renders both loving and painful human experiences with simple eloquence and uncommon intuition. Her remarkable sense of community and history makes *The Women of Brewster Place* a contemporary classic—and a touching and unforgettable read.

The Women of Brewster Place Details

Date : Published June 30th 1983 by Penguin Books (first published 1982)

ISBN : 9780140066906

Author : Gloria Naylor

Format : Paperback 192 pages

Genre : Fiction, Short Stories, Cultural, African American, Classics, Historical, Historical Fiction, Contemporary, Literature

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From Reader Review The Women of Brewster Place for online ebook

Stephanie (That's What She Read) says

This was a short story novel about seven women who live in the fictional Brewster Place. Each of the women brings a new type of heartbreak to the page and somehow manages the strength to go one and come together as a community.

Some of the stories were a little predictable, but not in a bad way. This was Gloria Naylor's first novel and I was definitely impressed and plan to check out more of her work.

Ana says

This was a nice little read, I see the T.V. movie did not stray too far from the book with the exception of the ending. The book presented a good range of different kinds of women and how they interacted directly with one another. What I loved most about Gloria Naylor's writing of this book was her ability to inject humor in just the right places and timed just perfectly. I recommend this book for a nice weekend read.

MissFabularian says

I don't know how many times I have read this, and to be honest I do not care. Mother Naylor passed away on October 3 and I read this book again, crying all the way through it. To read more of this review [click here](#)

Bryan Alexander says

I read *The Women of Brewster Place* for a very particular reason. My son, 17, was reading it for his high school English class, and was deeply affected by the book. He found it enormously depressing, like many of the books he's had to read. I'd known of *Brewster Place* for years, but hadn't read it, and, as a recovering English professor, decided to remedy that while helping my son think through the novel.

He was right. It is a massively sad novel.

The Women of Brewster Place is about what the title describes, the lives of a group of women living in a shared block. They are black women, and (with one exception) very poor. Almost programmatically the novel articulates the suffering they experience under those three conditions of gender, race, and class. Their experiences stretch across the 20th century, and illustrate enough periodic themes to make this a historical novel: the Great Migration of southern blacks to the north; 1960s black radicalism; the appearance of a black middle class; post-WWII urban decay; Great Society social programs.

Yet these historical and social themes are not what strikes the reader right away. *The Women of Brewster Place* is rather a set of interlinked biographical short stories. Each story shows each woman in the present day, on Brewster Place, while diving into their backstory to show how they came to live there. So we see the

oldest character, Mattie, moving into an apartment, then a long flashback to her teenage years of isolation, family, pregnancy, and flight. The shortest story is about the confrontation between a young radical and her middle-class mother, sketching their very different trajectories and experience of family.

These stories connect with each other through shared characters. We see Mattie as the subject of the first story, for example, then she appears as a supportive maternal character in several others. Kiswana, the political radical, appears in Cora Lee's story to point her and her children towards Shakespeare. And in the final main chapter every (surviving) character comes together for a block party, climaxing in a surrealist scene of demolishing a wall that keeps Brewster Place (and, symbolically, its people) from the mainstream of life.

Framing the stories is a very short pair of chapters about the city block. I find few people address these, so wanted to dwell on them for a moment. These are lyrical and bitter pages, showing the creation of Brewster Place through corruption and cruelty. The first paragraph is a nearly dystopian analysis of harsh, sad politics, including bribery, personal defeat, and buried secrets, all told in sexual innuendo. The final pages show Brewster's post-main-narrative decline into what it refers to as a living death, "dying but not dead" (191). "So Brewster Place still waits to die" is the book's last line. This is not a place of nostalgia, beyond the sense of shared pain. Brewster Place is a horrible space, a zone mostly of failure, cruelty, and disaster. Moreover, the final paragraph shows us the block doesn't let go of people once they leave:

[T]he colored daughters of Brewster, spread over the canvas of time, still wake up with their dreams misted on the edge of a yawn. They get up and pin those dreams to wet laundry hung out to dry, they're mixed with a pinch of salt and thrown into pots of soup, and they're diapered around babies. They ebb and flow, ebb and flow, but never disappear. (192)

Setting aside the few moments of joy, this means the horrors and shames of Brewster haunt its survivors, and are spread further by them. The end. What a nightmare! This is a novel of trauma un-healed, akin to a horror or war narrative. It is not optimistic or inspirational. It is at best about surviving.

It is very well written. Naylor has a fine ear for dialog, attuned to regional differences. And she offers some fine descriptive passages, like the scene of Mattie's seduction, or Cora Lee's family transitioning from massive dysfunction to delighted Shakespeare audience, or the rousing church service.

Let me say a word about economic class. *The Women of Brewster Place* is about poor folks, no matter what bad book jackets say. The characters are usually born poor and do not rise. The American dream is floated by a couple of desperate men, briefly, but they don't realize it, nor does anyone else. For 1983 this book speaks well, sadly, to the 21st-century's environment of decreasing class mobility.

Naylor describes poverty with solid details throughout. There's no romanticization. Rooms are cramped, food is basic (if there at all), clothes few, scents often unpleasant. School is at best a hope for marginal improvement, if present at all. Work is not ennobling nor hopeful, but just a thin rope to cling to for survival. Work doesn't bring people together for social action; indeed, political activity is just a brief chimera. Kiswana's plan for a rent strike comes to nothing. Brewster Place is a grinding, dead-end space.

We only see brief glimpses of non-poor folks. Kiswana's parents are middle class, her mother appearing for a few pages to try talking the daughter out of living poor. One family pimps out their daughter to a rich white man - for years! - to eke out subsistence wages. Brewster Place's superintendent is complained about, but never appears, nor does he change his ways. The wealthy wheelers and dealers who made the block are referenced in a couple of pages. In short *The Women of Brewster Place* is about a two-tier society, with a stark gulf between classes. Again, this might be prescient for the 21st century.

About race: the preceding makes this sound like a novel about racism, and that's true to a structural extent.

But racial prejudice doesn't take up many words in *The Women of Brewster Place*. The black characters largely live in a space without white people, and rarely address racism. They are more likely to blame bad things (poverty in particular) on each other and themselves, than on racially-inflected inequality.

About gender: this gynocentric novel's focus is on a group of women and their relationships, especially with other women. Traditionally-considered women's work is what these characters do: food preparation, child-rearing, clothes washing, housework. One character is a teacher, presumably K-12. Those areas are where the women take pleasure: a good meal, lovely clothing, beloved children.

Families are the opposite of the 1950s nuclear family. *The Women of Brewster Place* is not about two-career power couples. Many of the women are on their own, or rearing children without partners. Caring for children is usually draining on balance, exhausting more than rewarding; one mother parents her son badly enough to cause his criminality, it seems. The most comfortable family unit is a lesbian couple, who promptly meet a bad fate.

Speaking of bad fates, men are pretty thoroughly rotten in this novel. They fall into several categories: randy guys who have sex then disappear; men who abandon their women; bad fathers; rapists; criminals. Most are extremely violent, especially towards women. One male character is possibly the least bad - he's a drunk, obsessed with his own weakness and failure, and ultimately meets a bad, tragically wrong end. *The Women of Brewster Place* is a powerful argument for female separatism, with the women only finding some measure of potential goodness in each other's company.

I finished the book with a powerful sense of dread. The novel struck me like a wartime journal or a horror tale. I can definitely see why my son found it so powerfully sad. I'm not sure if he can appreciate its novelistic skills, but hope this review helps.

Kim says

got this in the mail. a friend had got it for me from paperbackswap.com
I thought it would have been a thicker book
I read it in one sitting
I have seen the movie to this book

Nora says

Read this one for school a couple years back. Goodness, this was one of the most depressing things I have ever read EVER. It follows the stories of several black women and their journeys toward self discovery. What I did like was our main character, Mattie Michaels. She was strong and loving. She took care of herself and her son all by herself at such a young age. Though she did make a pretty dumb decision in the beginning of the book, overall she was the voice of wisdom and reason for the rest of the characters, and a sweet mother figure too. She's the reason I gave this book the extra star. As for the rest of the women, they had their strengths and weaknesses, but I didn't find myself caring for them that much.

The thing that annoyed me the most about this book was the fact that every single male in it was portrayed in a bad light. Every solitary one was abusive or a deadbeat or a player. Every one betrayed or hurt or left any woman they were involved with. I understand that there are plenty of men that are like this, but it is so very unlikely that every man that these women have ever interacted with were hurtful.

Another thing that bothered me was how depressing this book was. Every chapter there was some tragedy that made me want to cry. It's ok if there are some sad scenes in a book, but too many just ruins it for me.

And last but certainly not least, I give you a warning. There is a horribly depressing, disgusting, disturbing scene at the very end that is not for the weak of heart. It actually made me queasy when I read it. I felt it was unnecessary and crude. You have been warned. Overall, I wouldn't recommend this book to anyone, except maybe masochists.

kisha says

Rating this book was hard for me because I had so many opinions (some even which contradict itself). I was leaning more towards 2 stars for several reasons. For me, this book was a little too simplistically written. I like more of a challenge. I didn't like that it was written in seven stories. I couldn't tell at first rather they were supposed to be short stories or if they would tie together at the end. That was a bit confusing at first.

Also, it was very feminist. I'm not big, as Morrison says, on "ist and isms". Reason being is many "ists and isms" become extremist because it begins to favor one while persecuting the other. For example in this story there were seven victimized women and all the fault fell in the hands of a man. There was not ONE good man in this story aside from maybe Ben (and some may even say that's debatable). I know in my review of *The Color Purple* I defended that by saying it was not a bashing of men but a celebration of womanhood. But that was totally different because even then men had redeemable qualities. I didn't see that in this story. And honestly her attempt at the end of bringing it all together and (healing) the characters was extremely weak. It still ended sad to me. I didn't see much growth. And if (view spoiler) Also she's not the most descriptive writer which was bothersome for me. Especially when (view spoiler) that really pissed me off!

But I had to give up an extra star because for some reason I cared about the characters and the story was interesting so I kept reading. I loved Cora Lee's character because it's relatable in the sense that I know so many people like her. Ms Eva was my absolute favorite. Sort of put you in the mind of Tyler Perry's Madea. Gotta love her. But I also think the characters were stereotypical. Especially Kiswanna's and Cora Lee's. Really all of them. I don't like stereotypes unless you have a strong enough plot line and lesson to be learned. I don't feel she delivered in that area.

I guess I will end it with saying the book was decent but the movie was better. NOT OK!

Nidhi Singh says

They came together, propositioned, bargained, and slowly worked out the consummation of their respective desires.

Naylor's construction of Brewster Place's beginnings seems like a plaintive evocation of a story that already lives in the crevices of a bygone past. Or the tale of someone who has lived their years and finally taken respite to talk of their unholy beginning that was marked for a cramped existence in this world. They gradually established their space and mellowed into an old age. Gratitude is expressed for the years they lived, the endless hours they worked, the shelter and protection they bestowed on others. They will be thought of, remembered, perhaps with great affection but their very existence wouldn't be a pleasant reflection on those bound with them. Brewster Place is a street where life blooms and endures, but also

suffers from asphyxiation and demands escape from its griminess, odor, discoloration, confinement, and the intermittent violence and pain. For some, it was meant to be a part of a journey, but ends up being the destination. For some, it's a connecting tunnel to something, where there is hope at the end; for freshness and happiness, for something better and beautiful.

The sigh turned into knot of pity for the ones that she knew would die. She pitied them because she refused to pity herself and to think that she, too, would have to die here on this crowded street because there just wasn't enough left for her to do it all again.

For Mattie Michael, Brewster Place was an impermanent shelter which turned into a permanent one. Mattie never actively looks for an escape towards something else. Because there wasn't enough left for her to do it all again, she seems to be fiercely guarding whatever was left of others; Etta, Ciel, her son Basil. Perhaps because her own splintered life is not mendable, she is very quick to discern any fissures that might erupt in the lives of those around her. Mattie's attitudes and responses are almost prophetic. She can intuitively sense a calamity. Etta Mae Johnson is looking for an escape that would come in the form of marriage. But for a woman who has lived her life not caring for other's opinion, this sudden desire for matrimony seems complex and paradoxical. Cora Lee envisions an escape too, but for her children. They couldn't be left moldering, like her, amidst stale food and unwashed dishes. Babies grow up, babies need Shakespeare and poetry, they need fresh air and education, and a life that will grow out of the claustrophobic space of Brewster Place. For Kiswana Browne, Brewster Place is a refuge for her idealism. A dingy playground for the assessment of her revolutionary design. Her escape into the modest Brewster Place apartment, from Linden Hall and her middle class upbringing, seems to be rather synthetic. Linden Hall keeps permeating into Brewster Place in the form of 'designer jeans' and '70 dollar cheques', and a mother who doesn't agree with the Kiswana's representation of black identity. *Black isn't beautiful and it isn't ugly-black is! It isn't kinky hair and it's not straight hair-it just is.*

But they make me try to feel like a freak out there and you make me feel like one in here.'

In Brewster's Place, individual desires are pitted against the group. Lorraine's and Theresa's existence in Brewster Place seems to have been reached after a past inundated by escapes, from society and its disapproval of homosexuality. *'Lorraine, who just wants to be a human being-a lousy human being who is somebody's daughter or somebody's friend or even somebody's enemy..'* The rasping conflict between the two women regarding their attitudes towards the group speaks of a deep underlying contradiction. Lorraine wants to be accepted, she wants to fit in, she wants an identity which is somehow also configured by society and its perceptions - something it doesn't consider unwholesome. Theresa resents this neediness, ferociously proclaims her difference, and wants to draw the line and secure an individual space unfiltered by the judgment of the group. There is rebuttal of society but at the same time an anger that arises from the lack of acceptance. Theresa's strong avowal of her difference and Etta's drive towards matrimony, perhaps, speaks of a subliminal need for acceptance.

What is most fascinating about Naylor's book is how beautifully the individual stories are merged with a collective consciousness. They are extraordinary and unusual; the women of Brewster Place. They have all survived damage and loss, and reparation has come in the form of a sisterhood, where they watch and understand, and share their perspectives on their own and each other's life. None of them have been happy in the traditional gender roles; they have all in some way been victims of patriarchy and abuse. The peace and empathy that has arrived and stayed with the intermingling of the tales of the past and the struggle of the present provides beautiful sense of stillness and comfort. And it is Brewster Place that remembers this narrative of individual alienation and communal intimacy, imparts it the dignity it deserves, the refuge it needs, as the lives and stories of its coloured daughters unfold.

They were hard-edged, soft-centered, brutally demanding, and easily pleased, these women of Brewster Place. They came, they went, grew up, and grew old beyond their years. Like an ebony phoenix, each in her

own time and with her own season had a story.

Lauren says

The Women of Brewster Place is a powerful collection of intertwining stories surrounding the women who live in an urban housing development. Through seven lives we see decades of history - what brought them to the Place, coming north (the city isn't expressly named, but a few geographical clues in the text make the reader think it is New York) looking for opportunity, love, acceptance and social action.

Exploring the nature of relationships between friends:

Sometimes being a friend means mastering the art of timing. There's a time for silence. A time to let go and allow people to hurl themselves into their own destiny. And a time to prepare to pick up the pieces when it is all over.

Seeing the similarities between a conservative mother and her activist daughter:

And she looked at the blushing woman on the couch and suddenly realized that her mother had trod through the same universe that she herself was now traveling. Kiswana was breaking no new trails... she stared at the woman she had been, and the woman to come.

An extended portion that I've seen a few other reviews mention where Mattie's comforts Ciel (view spoiler) were particular heartbreaking - but at the same time amazing writing.

Naylor crafts her words so well - fluidly moving across the page. She is a master at setting the scene, and raising the emotional bar. The last few stories of the book are particularly hard to read (view spoiler) and took a bit of shift in tone (reality?) but it worked for me.

Really glad I read this one. I will definitely read more of Naylor's work.

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Book Riot Read Harder 2017 Challenge "A collection of stories by a woman" category

Nakia says

Wonderful writing. My third time reading it and it is just as memorable.

Check out my gushing review on my site a few years ago: [Black Woman Writer Warrior Reading List](#)

Debbie says

Addition to review added at bottom.

The Women of Brewster Place is absolutely phenomenal!

Of course it's *phenomenal* because *Gloria Naylor* wrote it and her writing is nothing short of amazing. This is an absolutely perfect read for me. I didn't rush through it because I wanted to enjoy it. When I grow up, I want to write like Gloria. Her stories are enthralling. Her writing style is so figurative and spot on your mind immediately has these vivid images of who these characters are how they flow within the story. Her description and the metaphors she uses to paint the full picture are just more than spot on. I can't sing her praises enough. I love reading it. It's such an inspiration to me.

I want to mention that eons ago I saw *The Women of Brewster Place* as a made for TV movie. I've seen it many more times over the years since its original showing. I have always loved it. This is another book I always "meant" to read but just never got around to or I couldn't find it in my local discount store. I'm so glad that I found it and had the opportunity to read it. This now one of my favorite books of all times. I'm also happy to state that the movie is pretty darn close to the book. This made me happy and I felt free to continue to visualize the movie actors as I read. I won't give any of this away. Who hasn't seen the movie? Read the synopsis and read this book. You won't be sorry.

This book has the 7 star perfection score from me.

(5 GR) I can't wait to read *The Men of Brewster Place* and the rest of Gloria's books. I do recommend this author as necessary reading.

Addition:

My husband who supports me by reading all my reviews commented on my lack of my lengthy review of this book. I wondered if others who are used to what I normally do may be wondering the same thing? I truly did/do love this book but Gloria's writing blows my mind! What do I possibly need to ramble on about when I've posted quotes from the book and my comments as I read it. I mean, just in the scene where Mattie rocks Ciel out of her grief, Gloria writes that she rocked her back to Dachau....she rocked her back through the grief of Senegalese mothers...she rocked her back into the womb!!!! How can I even attempt to review this? Anything I say is dust compared to this writing. One simply and necessarily needs to read this book to experience the story and Gloria Naylor's mastery. In a way, I'm left speechless. You don't review a masterpiece you just marvel at its perfection. ;0)

Mel Bossa says

A candid and beautiful novel told in seven stories. A celebration of women's strengths and struggles as they love, reminisce, hope, envy, hate, deny, anger, and rejoice in the confines of the thin walls of Brewster Place.

There is a key scene in this novel when a woman loses her child and is cleansed and comforted by an older woman the morning of the baby's funeral. It was one of those poignant and lucid pieces of writing one remembers forever.

There's a raw, almost amateurish feel to this novel and that's what makes it so unpretentiously important. Like reading someones unedited thoughts. It moved me, but not as I was reading it. But now, after the fact.

Here's to all the Matties, Ciel, Kiswanas, Ettas, and of course, Lorraines of the world.

We are all that skinny black woman in a torn green dress screaming please at one time or another in our lives.

Or our soul is.

Shawn Mooney says

I fell in love with the recently-departed Gloria Naylor through these interconnected stories. Lesser writers leave clichés leaden and unexplored on the page; here, the stereotypes of African-American women's lives are transfigured into fresh truths—joyous and tragic—about race, gender, class, and sexuality: story-truths that go deep, speak volumes.

Hazie says

The Women of Brewster Place was an interesting novel to read. It represented the life of women today and then and the struggles many of them faced and still are facing. Gloria takes each woman and places them in the same home, Brewster Place. This place was not a pretty one; it was broken down, tiny, clustered, dirty, and dangerous. Brewster Place is last resort for many people and/or the only affordable place at the time. Each woman have a story. They all have a story to tell in where it explains why they are where they are, their plans to move on, and hidden insecurities and fears in life. Each story is connected to one another. The role model of all the women comes straight from the beginning; she is the tree trunk and everyone else branches from her whether it is using her for comfort or using her to hide their own insecurities. Gloria makes this novel portray how women are viewed in societies. These women had many similarities, but the most important while living in Brewster Place was hope. Every individual women had hope to leave Brewster Place and make a better living for themselves. For example, Loraine struggled to keep her hope of being accepted for being a lesbian. Though she felt like giving up and losing hope, she did not. It was an obstacle for Loraine living in a small area where most of the people do not accept her sexual orientation; she still kept living and hoping. I enjoyed The Women of Brewster Place and indeed do recommend it.

Ifeyinwa says

exhales dramatically

Y'all this novel/collection of intertwined short stories blew me away. It wasn't so much the stories themselves (although I enjoyed them- the last story nearly took me out even though I saw it coming), but the way they were written. MY GOODNESS! I hope to revisit it again and again.

Brina says

Years ago I read *Mama Day* by Gloria Naylor. Told from multiple points of view, it discussed a young woman from the north returning to her older female family members on a southern island in search of the spiritual inspiration she needs to sustain her for the rest of the year. I decided that for my annual participation in an A to Z author challenge, one that I choose to read only female authors, that I would revisit Naylor's work. First published in 1982 and winning national awards, *The Women of Brewster Place* details the lives of seven women living on a decrepit block in a northern city but who choose to make the best of their surroundings. Written in short story format with one chapter dedicated to each woman, Naylor intertwines these women's lives as she builds a neighborhood out of bleakness.

Mattie Michael first came north after finding herself single and pregnant as a young woman. Offered yet declining help from her dear friend Etta Mae Johnson, Michael and her son Basil board at the home of Eva Turner for over thirty years. Johnson seeks an even better life in Harlem yet remains close with Michael and resurfaces, whereas Michael builds a home for herself following Turner's passing. With each passing year, Michael gathers more of life's wisdom, which make her a worthy companion in her church and in her neighborhood. Yet, this wisdom is lost on her only child Basil who could never cope with growing up without a father. He lives a life of petty crime which eventually costs Michael her home. She moves into an apartment on Brewster Place and quickly becomes the matriarch of the block, guiding countless women through life. While some may see Mattie Michael as the neighborhood busybody, it is evident that all key neighborhood decisions go through her, and she is the first stop for anyone in search of a positive mental attitude.

Naylor paints the picture of real people as she defines the African American women experience during the late 1970s. Readers become acquainted with Kiswana formerly Melanie Browne who drops out of college to become a community activist, much to the chagrin of her mother. Yet, Kiswana is a ray of sunshine to many of her neighbors who may have less education than she does and she urges the people of Brewster Place to form a neighborhood association and better their station in life. One such person who Browne makes a positive impact on is Cora Lee and her eight children. A single mother living in a two bedroom apartment, Cora can barely make ends meet and has her hands full looking after her children. Browne encourages Cora to attend a modern retelling of *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and after seeing this play, it appears that Cora's life may be heading in a positive direction. Kiswana also decides to return to school to obtain her degree.

While Mattie is the matriarch who holds Brewster Place together, a real busybody named Sophie threatens to turn neighbor against neighbor. Two women, Lorraine and Teresa, have moved into one of Brewster's apartment units, and, lo and behold, they are homosexual. Mattie thinks that there are positives to be taken from everything, and her friend Etta Mae Johnson accedes with this opinion. Most neighbors do not formulate an opinion, positive or negative, that is all except Sophie who spies on them daily. It is Sophie, not Lorraine and Teresa who are both teachers and mind their own business, who is threatening the pathos of Brewster Place. Kiswana decides to hold a block party as a morale booster and fundraiser to bring everyone together. Former residents come home to participate, yet in Naylor's climax, she shows how during the 1970s people were not as open minded as they are now, as Lorraine and Teresa are never made to feel comfortable no matter where they choose to live. Even in a decent, loving street as Brewster Place, there will be legit problems, and it is up to the residents to make the neighborhood into a positive living environment for people of all walks of life.

The Women of Brewster Place had been on my to read shelf for awhile, and, while it took an A to Z author challenge to finally read it, it became a positive reading experience for me. Gloria Naylor paints a picture of the African American woman's experience during the late 1970s through snapshots of seven diverse women on one city block. These women form the patchwork of urban society, and their everyday issues are still issues that are addressed on a constant basis in 21st century living. Naylor was ahead of her time with the publication of this book, which is why The Women of Brewster Place has won accolades and is considered a modern classic by many.

4 stars

Shannon says

This short story collection had all the makings of a book that I should not like. So I'm still trying to figure out how it ended up on my list of best short story collections.

The first story contained no less than ten clichés. And every story after that had something that I could see coming from pages away. I was literally thinking, please don't let this play out the way I think it's going to play out. And it always did.

I have never been, nor will I ever be, on the men-ain't-shit bandwagon. *Never-ever*. This way of thinking can be pervasive for women in the African American community, so I cannot stand books that perpetuate it. I just cannot. But this book did exactly that.

Then the author waited until the last chapter to throw in some surrealism type stuff, which had me totally confused. I'm not sure what happened with the wall. Maybe it was real...yes, I'm still confused.

So, when you have all of those hang-ups and can love every page and hang on every word of a book, then I'm convinced that the author is some sort of genius. Convinced.

The first thing that grabbed me was the author's ability to move the book through time. My very first status update while reading was, "The devolving of a community in three generations and six pages." I thought it was a brilliant way to set up the book. I had no idea that it was a technique, and she was the master. Time and time again, she moves through several decades in a paragraph. And it never fails to be brilliant.

Have you ever seen *pain* in writing? You're probably wondering what am I even asking. Naylor wrote a scene so powerful, it made pain visible; it took form. No one wants to be in pain, but this scene made me never want to know *that* pain. If that wasn't impressive enough, I realized after the book club discussion that in the same scene, it was *love* that took form for other readers. It was *that* love that captivated them.

You know that thing that happens when you read something and it's impossible to keep reading - it was too close to home, too shocking, too revelatory, too *something* to just move past without reflecting on it in that moment. Well, this book made me realize I need to hang more art. Because there were several times, when coming back to myself after staring at the wall, that it would be nice to have something hanging there.

Now it's time for me to create my Gloria Naylor-shelf and start building my personal Gloria Naylor Collection because long review short - she did that.

Rincey says

Oh man, those last few stories though.

Tawanda says

I should stop saying I don't like short stories. Edwidge, Junot and now Gloria are making a liar out of me.

Kathleen says

"A pigeon swept across her window, and she marveled at its liquid movements in the air waves. She placed her dreams on the back of the bird and fantasized that it would glide forever in transparent silver circles until it ascended to the center of the universe and was swallowed up."

Really good books create a world that you live in for a while and then never forget. This is a really good book. Each story in this collection focuses on a particular woman, but expertly woven together, they make a world.

With awesome talent, Gloria Naylor uses words to walk you through these women's lives. The first story flies through time in a way I have never read before, touching down just in the right places. At the same time, she takes you deep inside—a place we rarely see—deep down where it hurts the most.

All of the stories tell something so true that it's shocking. You may think you know what's going to happen, and maybe you do, but after you read it you know how what happens makes a person feel. That's the part you don't know, unless you do know, and then you'll know how true it is.

And if you're a woman, a woman of whatever color, chances are there will be something in here that you can relate to, and when you hit it, it won't be easy. But you will come away from this with renewed respect and admiration for the struggle and the majesty of women's lives. Including your own.
