

ABOUT

the Author

L Lynda Stephenson was born and reared in West Texas. She taught English and general humanities at East Central University in Ada, Oklahoma, until she retired.



The first three chapters of *Dancing with Elvis* were originally a short story, which she read to other writers in a seminar. Her listeners insisted that the story was not finished, saying they wanted to know what happened to Frankilee Baxter. So Lynda decided to stick with Frankilee and see her through her troubles. The result is this novel.

Lynda lives with her husband in Edmond, Oklahoma, along with her extraordinary cats, Zorro and Elvis.



PRAISE FOR

Dancing with Elvis

“Voice and characterization are superb, with many scenes that beg to be read aloud.... A fine first novel and an author to watch.”

— *Kirkus Reviews*

“This is an unforgettable picture of this time, place, and girl.”

— *Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books*

(Big Picture, starred review)

“At once charming, sharp-edged and tragic, the book captures the essence of eccentrics, manipulators, victims and criminals co-existing in pre-civil rights-era Texas.”

— *Publishers Weekly*

DANCING WITH ELVIS

Written by Lynda Stephenson

Hardcover ISBN: 0-8028-5293-9 ♦ \$17.00
5.5" x 8.25" ♦ 331 pages ♦ Ages 12 and up

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If you have any suggestions for using *Dancing with Elvis* with young readers, we would be happy to hear from you.

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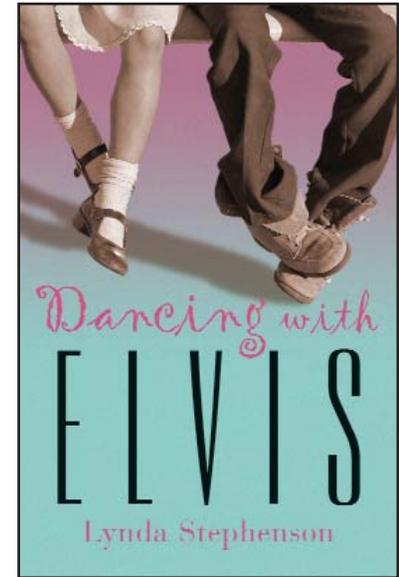


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DANCING WITH ELVIS

Written by Lynda Stephenson



Every night after I say my prayers, it gives me great pleasure to think about murdering Angel Musseldorf. Hell, I know she’s a battered kid, and she’s had an unheavenly host of problems, but I’ve had about all I can take. . . .

THEMATIC CONNECTIONS

- ♦ Diversity
- ♦ Racism
- ♦ Friendship
- ♦ Independence
- ♦ Family relationships
- ♦ American history

Eerdmans Books for Young Readers
Discussion Guide

VOCABULARY

Look up the meaning of the following terms:
Jim Crow, sundown laws, states' rights, separate but equal, white supremacy.



THINGS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE READING THE BOOK

1. Have you faced the death of a parent, grandparent, pet, or friend? Do you think it's common to blame God when a tragedy occurs?
2. When you want to be alone, where do you go for privacy?
3. How do you deal with jealousy? Have you felt guilty for your jealousy?
4. Who is your favorite entertainer? Do you ever fantasize about meeting that person and getting to know him or her?



QUESTIONS TO REFLECT ON AFTER READING THE BOOK

1. What is the meaning of the title?
2. How would you describe Frankilee Baxter? How well does she understand herself? How accurate is her self-image?
3. How might the story be different if Frankilee had a sibling?
4. Do you think Frankilee has a “potty mouth?”

Does her language add or detract from her character? Do you find her speech offensive?

5. Why does Frankilee treat Jerry Fred Porter the way she does? When and why does she revert to her fantasy boyfriend, Elvis Presley?
6. Could the story have occurred at another place or at another time in history? If so, when? Where?
7. At the beginning of the book, Frankilee says she wants to be just like her mother. Does her attitude change by the end of the story?
8. Is Frankilee justified in hating Angel? Do you identify with Frankilee's actions toward her? Does Angel have any redeeming qualities?
9. How does Frankilee view Wanita and her family? How do the other white people view the blacks in the community?
10. How do the Baxters' religious beliefs influence their behavior? Their treatment of Angel? Of the black community?
11. Do you think William's death was truly an accident? Why or why not?
12. Why do the Carvers blame the Baxters for William's death? Why won't Wanita try to forgive Jack Baxter?
13. Do the blacks have any power at all in this community?
14. Compare and contrast the two ministers, the Reverend Farnsworth and Brother Reynolds. Who do you think is more authentic?

15. What can you tell about the social structure in Clover and the position of the Baxters in it? Where does Miss Mabel Hightower fit into this structure?

16. Do Frankilee, her parents, Wanita, and Angel change? If so, how?

17. Do you think Angel's act of giving back Grandmommy's earrings to Frankilee is a sign of remorse? How might the story be different if Angel had not done this?



ACTIVITIES

1. Research the Supreme Court ruling *Brown vs. Board of Education*.
2. Learn about the origin of the Ku Klux Klan, its use of secrecy and its symbolism. Why do you think this organization has continued to exist?
3. Have you ever observed a person who has expressed an unpopular view in public? Write about your observations, and tell what happened to that person after he or she stood up against the crowd.
4. Make a list of popular film stars or singers who are adored by young people. How common is this type of “worship?”
5. Make a collage of pictures — the food, fashions, haircuts, automobiles, etc. — popular in the mid-fifties.