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APPENDIX

1. Synopsis of *The Help*

The Help by Kathryn Stockett, centered around three main characters. Two black maids, Aibileen Clark and Minny Jackson, working in white Southern households in Jackson, Mississippi, in the early 1960s, and a white young woman named Miss Eugenia "Skeeter" Phelan, a 22-year-old University of Mississippi graduate who returns to her family's cotton farm, Longleaf, to discover that her favorite maid and nanny, Constantine, has left without goodbye.

Skeeter seeks to be a respectable Southern lady by playing bridge with the young married ladies, editing the Junior League newsletter, and enduring her mother's relentless guidance about how to meet a man and start a family. But Skeeter's true ambition is to become a journalist, but the only job she can get is with the Jackson Journal, where she writes a housekeeping advice column called "Miss Myrna." Skeeter learns so little about housekeeping, but she seeks answers from her friend's maid, Aibileen, and discovers even more. Aibileen worked hard for the Leefolts. Her job entails of taking care for her employer's child called Mae Mobley, keep the house clean, and making the meals. However, none of this distracts her from the recent death of her own son, who died in an accident at work when his white employers looked away, a few months before Aibileen started to work for the Leefolts' household.

The novel begins with a luncheon at Leefolt's home, where the 23-year-old white women Hilly Holbrook and Skeeter address Hilly's initiative to pass legislation for any white household to have a separate bathroom for black

housemaids. Skeeter, disgusted with Hilly's suggestion, seeks out Aibileen and wonders if she has ever thought she could change anything. Aibileen, unable to express her real emotions to a white woman, insists that all is perfect.

Minny Jackson, another black maid and Aibileen's best friend, leaves her job working for Hilly's mother a few days later. Hilly has even circulated rumours of Minny being a liar, therefore no one wants to hire her. Minny informs Aibileen that she exacted her vengeance on Hilly, but she declines to give her the details. Eventually, Minny seeks employment with Celia Foote, who treats everyone fairly regardless of race or social status.

Skeeter, on the other hand, gets a job writing a housekeeping advice column for the Jackson Journal. She heard that Aibileen's son had started on the book about his experiences working for white people but he died before finishing it. Skeeter, who aspires to be a journalist, gets the idea to interview Aibileen about her experiences for a book about black domestic workers in the South after seeing firsthand how her friends treat their maids. Aibileen is initially reluctant to share her experiences because she is fearful of losing her career or being threatened by racists. But eventually, she decides to meet with Skeeter in order to bring an end to bigotry in Jackson. Minny even tells Skeeter her story, but no one else wants to because they are afraid. Skeeter even steals a book on Jim Crow rules, which Hilly accidentally discovers in her satchel. Hilly separates herself from Skeeter and advises the other women in the group to avoid her because she believes Skeeter is a secret integrationist.

Other maids finally agreed to tell their stories for Skeeter's book, when Yule May, Hilly's maid is thrown into jail. Yule May is convicted of petty stealing when she stole Hilly's ring so she can afford to pay her twin sons to attend college. Yule May, initially, tried to borrow money from Hilly before stealing the ring, but Hilly declined. Even though Yule May have been a faithful servant for years, Hilly used her power to get Yule imprisoned overnight. Other servants, angered by the injustice, agree to add their stories to Skeeter's novel. Skeeter begins to fear that her maid's pseudonyms won't be enough to prevent Hilly from discovering that she wrote a book about Jackson, when the book is nearly over. Minny tells Aibileen and Skeeter how she retaliated against Hilly for jeopardizing her job search. She made a cake out of her own poop and served it to Hilly. When Hilly reads this story in the book, she will be convinced that it is about Jackson, but she will still use her power to prevent others from drawing the same conclusion, so that they will not know what happened.

When the book is finished, people in Jackson begin to think it is about them, but Minny's scheme succeeds, and Hilly attempts to persuade them otherwise. Skeeter eventually accepts a position as an editorial assistant in New York and, following a tearful farewell to Aibileen, packs up and leaves. Hilly, on the other hand, proceeds to plan his vengeance against the maids. Hilly fires Aibileen after determining that she may have played a part in the project. Nonetheless, Aibileen, who has taken over Skeeter's job writing the housekeeping column for the Jackson Journal, leaves Miss Leefolt's house feeling unburdened and free now that the

stories have been told. Aibileen is able to learn more about her life and thoughts at the end of the novel.