



## Family

By J. California Cooper

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## Family By J. California Cooper Bibliography

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In this beautifully textured first novel by the author of the acclaimed short story collection *Homemade Love*, the history of one slave family becomes symbolic for all slaves and slaveholders. Clora, the granddaughter of a slave and a slaveholder, refuses to accept her life as chattel and, as did her mother, escapes slavery by committing suicide. She had tried to poison her children first, but they survive and Clora's spirit narrates their story, beginning with her daughter Always. Although her siblings pass for white to escape, dark Always endures the misery of slavery including frequent rape by the slave owner. Stealing his gold to save for anticipated freedom, she risks her life to learn how to read. When she and his wife give birth to sons at the same time, Always switches the babies, of like complexion. Her son grows up in freedom, while she raises the other as a slave--a masterful metaphor for the psychological bondage that slavery imposed on slave masters. Both young men survive the Civil War, and Always lives to see them prosper after emancipation. However, as Clora narrates, racism replaces slavery and humankind continues to suffer from its divisions. With power and grace, Cooper weaves the dialect, style and myths of the South into a portrait of the hell that was slavery. Literary Guild and Doubleday Book Club alternate; author tour.

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From School Library Journal

YA-- This affecting historical novel, set in the pre-Civil War South, is narrated by a slave named Clora. She describes the life she and her mother share, her mother's suicide, her own unsuccessful attempt to kill her children, and the successful taking of her own life to escape mistreatment by her masters. After her death, Clora follows her children's lives in spirit form (interestingly depicted on the cover). The treatment of the slaves is heart-wrenching. Although vivid details make readers identify with the characters and feel their pain, Cooper's writing skill will draw them into the story, despite knowing in advance that it will hurt. While the generous use of white space on each page gives the book a juvenile appearance, the format, emotional tone, and use of dialect make it more appropriate for more mature YAs. An excellent book about slave life in the pre- and post- Civil War era.

-*Jacqueline J. Craig, W. T. Woodson High School, Fairfax, VA*

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From Library Journal

Cooper adopts an unorthodox perspective in this tale of one family's suffering under slavery. Typical of pre-Civil War times, the female slaves in this novel were sexually abused by the master of the land, often bearing him children who were later taken away and sold. The women went through life not knowing what had become of their offspring or experiencing a loving male/female relationship. Such is the lot of this book's protagonist. Early in Cooper's story, the young mother attempts to poison herself and her children. She dies but her children survive. The novel then describes in painful detail the poor soul's oversight of her children from beyond the grave. Although most of them land on their feet eventually, until that point their interrelated stories are wrenching. Cooper writes in dialect but occasionally slips into standard English, which can be disconcerting. Nevertheless, recommended for public libraries.

- *Kimberly G. Allen, National Assn. of Home Builders Lib., Washington, D.C.*

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### Users Review

**From reader reviews:**

**Dennis Thorpe:**

Book is to be different for every single grade. Book for children till adult are different content. We all know that that book is very important usually. The book Family has been making you to know about other information and of course you can take more information. It is extremely advantages for you. The publication Family is not only giving you far more new information but also to become your friend when you sense bored. You can spend your own personal spend time to read your e-book. Try to make relationship while using book Family. You never sense lose out for everything should you read some books.

**Nannie Hernandez:**

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**Jacqueline Thompson:**

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