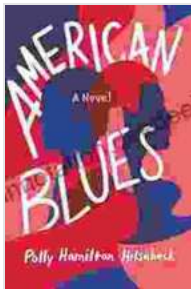


# Polly Hamilton Hilsabeck: The American Blues Novel's Unsung Pioneer

Polly Hamilton Hilsabeck was an African American woman who wrote the first blues novel in 1917. Her novel, *The Octoroon: A Novel of Reconstruction*, was groundbreaking for its time, and it remains an important work of literature today. Hilsabeck's novel explores the complex social and racial issues of the post-Reconstruction era, and it offers a unique perspective on the lives of African Americans during this time.



## American Blues: A Novel by Polly Hamilton Hilsabeck

★★★★☆ 4.7 out of 5

Language	: English
File size	: 871 KB
Text-to-Speech	: Enabled
Enhanced typesetting	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 192 pages
Screen Reader	: Supported



## Early Life and Education

Polly Hamilton was born in 1864 in Nashville, Tennessee. Her parents were former slaves, and she grew up in a poor neighborhood. Despite her humble beginnings, Hilsabeck was a bright and ambitious young woman. She attended Fisk University, where she studied English and literature. After graduating from Fisk, Hilsabeck moved to Chicago, where she worked as a teacher and a journalist.

## **Writing Career**

Hilsabeck began writing fiction in the early 1900s. Her first novel, *The Octoroon: A Novel of Reconstruction*, was published in 1917. The novel tells the story of a young African American woman named Annah who is trying to find her place in the world. Annah is beautiful, intelligent, and ambitious, but she is also an octoroon, meaning that she is one-eighth black. This makes her a social outcast, and she faces discrimination from both whites and blacks.

*The Octoroon* was a critical and commercial success. It was one of the first novels by an African American woman to be published by a major publisher, and it was praised by critics for its realism and its insights into the lives of African Americans. Hilsabeck's novel was also groundbreaking for its use of blues music. Blues music was a popular form of music among African Americans at the time, and Hilsabeck's novel is one of the first to incorporate blues lyrics into its text.

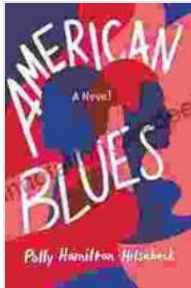
Hilsabeck wrote several other novels and short stories throughout her career. Her work often explored the social and racial issues of her time. She wrote about the lives of African Americans in the post-Reconstruction era, and she also wrote about the experiences of African Americans during the Great Migration.

## **Later Life and Legacy**

Polly Hamilton Hilsabeck died in 1937. She was 73 years old. Although she was a successful writer during her lifetime, her work was largely forgotten after her death. In recent years, there has been a renewed interest in Hilsabeck's work. Scholars have praised her for her groundbreaking

contributions to African American literature, and her work is now taught in universities across the country.

Polly Hamilton Hilsabeck was a pioneering writer who made significant contributions to African American literature. Her novel, *The Octoroon: A Novel of Reconstruction*, was one of the first blues novels, and it remains an important work of literature today. Hilsabeck's work offers a unique perspective on the lives of African Americans during the post-Reconstruction era, and it explores the complex social and racial issues of the time.

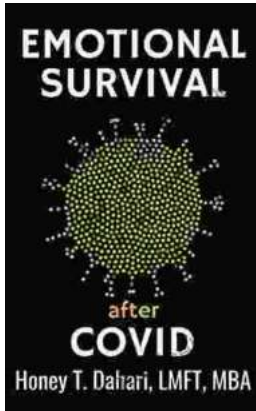


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