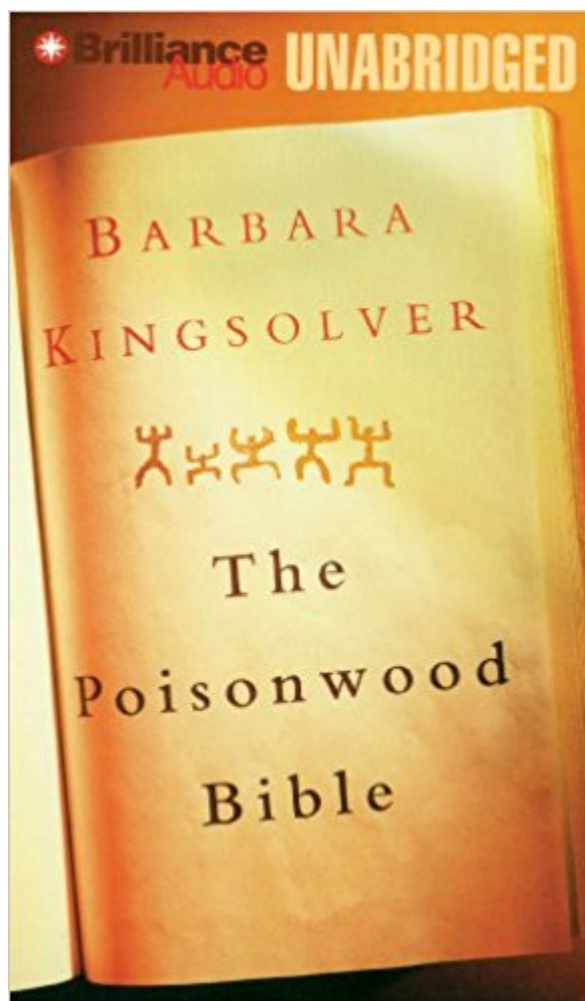




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The Poisonwood Bible



Synopsis

The Poisonwood Bible is a story told by the wife and four daughters of Nathan Price, a fierce evangelical Baptist who takes his family and mission to the Belgian Congo in 1959. They carry with them all they believe they will need from home, but soon find that all of itâ€”from garden seeds to Scriptureâ€”is calamitously transformed on African soil. This tale of one family's tragic undoing and remarkable reconstruction, over the course of three decades in postcolonial Africa, is set against history's most dramatic political parables. The Poisonwood Bible dances between the darkly comic human failings and inspiring poetic justices of our times. In a compelling exploration of religion, conscience, imperialist arrogance, and the many paths to redemption, Barbara Kingsolver has brought forth her most ambitious work ever.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (2,669 customer reviews)

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Authors, A-Z > (K) > Kingsolver, Barbara #45 inÂ Books > Books on CD > Literature & Fiction >

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Customer Reviews

At the time of this writing, there are 488 customer reviews posted. It seems you either love this book or hate it. I loved this book. It is the story of a family that goes to the Belgian Congo to perform Christian missionary work in the 1950's. It is told in the first person by the wife of the minister, and his daughters. Its point of view would of course be feminine, but not necessarily feminist. While some reviewers seem personally offended at the author's treatment of the father, Nathan, I find him sympathetic. And, without him, there is no story. Nathan's soul is tortured. Through a quirk of fate, he misses a battle of WWII where his entire unit is lost. He never deals with it and he is changed forever. When he met his wife at a Christian revival meeting, he was kind and committed to Christ.

When he returns home from the service, we find that he has become a rigid, self righteous bible thumping preacher. He despises wife for his own perceived sin... he physically desires her. He barely tolerates his daughters, as he takes the entire family to the Belgian Congo to pursue what he believes is his calling from God. The hierarchy of his own church does not think that he is suited for missionary work, and will not send him, but he manages to go anyway. The family is ill prepared for the Congo and this predictably has tragic consequences. Once in the Congo Nathan antagonizes the few western missionaries he has contact with. And, in the end he fails in his effort to save the souls of the natives. There is racism in the 1950's attitudes toward the villagers... their souls need to be saved, but their lives are relatively unimportant. They can pray together, but not eat at the same table.

Barbara Kingsolver is finally receiving the attention she deserves for her impressive novel *The Poisonwood Bible*. I read this book last year because I'd just returned from spending five weeks in East Africa and missed the people and the country. This novel tells the engrossing story of quirky, feverish Baptist preacher Nathan Price who hauls his family off on a mission to the Belgian Congo in 1959. The story's narration is shared by his wife Orleanna and their four daughters, ages 5 - 15, who seem much too tender and naive to survive the trials of harsh conditions, poor housing, language barriers, cultural clashes, and natural antagonists. What results is an absorbing story set against the backdrop of political and religious upheaval. Kingsolver's writing in this book proves what can happen when a writer continues to pursue her craft. The work is impressively mature compared to earlier cute novels like *The Bean Trees* and shows her flare and passion and growth as a writer. The narrative voices are distinct and engaging except for 15 year old Rachel's whose heartsickness for American pop culture is somewhat irritating because of the stretches the writer makes to show Rachel's shallow nature. For example, at first Rachel's malaprops are entertaining, but read against the seriousness of several occurrences, the writing sounds forced. Nevertheless, Kingsolver's narrators are living voices most readers will very much enjoy. I loved this book in spite of its flaws--the characterization of Rachel, the plausibility of some of the Congolese people's actions, and Kingsolver's political analysis/overview. The last fifth of the book is laborious as the writer strives to incorporate Congolese political history, and such writing is not where Kingsolver's strengths are.

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