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## Poisonwood bible sparknotes

The Poisonwood Bible is a novel by Barbara Kingsolver, first published in 1998. Purchase on BN.com Orleanna Price Summary The Poisonwood Bible opens in the pained, guilt-ridden voice of Orleanna Price, who simply presents herself as Southern Baptist by marriage, mother of children living and dead. She is one of five storytellers who broadcast this story, mixing her version with the versions narrated by her four daughters, Rachel, Leah, Adah, and Ruth May. As the girls' stories come to us in the present tense, told as they unfold, Orleanna speaks of a later time, looking back on the old family history. Her poetic musings, therefore, hint ominously at the events we are about to read. Orleanna begins her story by painting a scene for us. We are asked to imagine a woman and her four daughters walking blindly through the jungles of Congo, where the husband and father led them in his missionary zeal to save African souls. They eat a paltry picnic, the girls swim in the river, and the mother alone comes face to face with an okapi, an animal once thought to be just legendary. We learn that the mother is Orleanna, and that she directs her story to one of these four girls, the one who didn't come alive from congo. Her act of telling this story, she says, is really a plea for forgiveness. She'll explain it all, she explains, so it can be seen from every angle and reviewed. As she explains: Some of us know how we got through our fortunes and some of us don't, but we all wear it the same. There is now only one question worth asking: How do we want to live with it? The rest of the story is meant to answer this question from the point of view of each of the five Price women. Analysis In her opening story, Orleanna immediately announces that this is a story about guilt and how to live with it. The guilt she speaks of directly is a very personal form of guilt, guilt over her passive complicity in her daughter's death. However, in these pages there is the undertone of a different kind of debt as well. The collective cultural guilt that all Westerners must share for the crimes committed against the people of Africa. Sometimes this undertone even rises to the fore, as when Orleanna says, Maybe I will even confess the truth that I rode in with the horsemen and saw the apocalypse, yet I will insist that I was only a captive witness. What is the conqueror's wife, if not a conquest herself? The Poisonwood Bible is a political allegory. While the story it tells focuses on the guilt of five women, it's really about the debt that all American citizens share. The the question: what has our country done in Africa and how should we respond to it? Orleanna sets the framework for the whole book when she says: There is only one question worth asking now: How do we want to live with it? Life? To the Fire Hunt Summary So far, we have only heard Orleanna talk about her guilt over her personal loss in Congo, but now she is turning to the task of understanding what happened there at the political level. She learned of the political events years after they occurred, when in 1975 a group of senators took it upon herself to investigate the covert operations in Congo, and here she reports them to us. In August 1960, Allen Dulles, head of the CIA, sent a telegram to the Congolese station chief, Lawrence Devlin, who ordered him to replace the new Congolese government as soon as possible. Devlin arranged a military coup, and installed a greedy Congolese man named Joseph Mobutu on his head. On September 14, the army, led by Mobutu, took control of the Republic of Congo and placed Patrice Lumumba under house arrest. Lumumba escaped on November 27. However, while on the run he was recognized by a man on the street and pulled into the crowd to give an improptu speech. Among this crowd was a mercenary pilot with a radio, who immediately contacted the authorities. The army recaptured Lumumba and put him in prison where he was beaten to death. Leah Leah now brings us back to the very personal events unfolding in Kilanga as these historical events unfold. Tata Ndu appears in church one day and, after listening patiently to Reverend Price's sermon for a while, stands up and demands an election. The election, he says, is to determine once and for all whether the people of Kilanga want Jesus to be worshipped in their village. Nathan calls this approach to religion blasphemy, but has no choice but to submit to the vote. Jesus loses eleven to fifty-six. Ruth May is the only Price woman to cast a vote. Rachel The famine has reached desperate proportions, and to secure food for the village is called a traditional fire hunt. A large fire will be set in front of the jungle, forcing the animals out. If the animals try to escape their burning house, the men of the village will follow them with bows and arrows and shoot them down. A huge dispute breaks out over leah's ability to take part in the hunt. Anatole argues on her behalf, arguing that such a good marksman could be very useful to them. Chief Ndu and Tata Kuvundu vehemently objected, shouting that the old habits cannot be ignored so blatantly by letting a woman participate in the hunt. The matter is put to the vote and it is decided that Leah will participate in the hunt. Tata Kuvundu is furious and warns that because the villagers have overthrown the natural path of the world, Animals will rise up against them in the night. Everyone is terrified by this statement. At home Nathan reprimands Leah for her part in this dispute and forbids her from participating in the hunt. Leah openly declares that she will disobey him, and stomps away in the night. Night. tries to go after her, waving his belt menacingly, but she is too fast for him. As he chests at trees, the remaining women lock themselves in the girls' room by pushing the beds against the door. Orleanna spends the night there, and Leah comes in through the window at dawn. The next evening anatoly finds an evil sign outside his hut, and the next morning he wakes up to find a mamba snake curled up beside his bed. Fortunately, he sees it before putting his feet down, and so he is saved from certain death. The whole village is convinced that the warning from Tata Kuvundu will come true. Adah At the fire hunt, Adah, Orleanna, and Ruth may stay with the women, collect all the insects and other creeping creatures to be burned, and skin the flesh from the injured animals. Adah solemnly looks at the mass death and reflects on the fact that this heinous slaughter is the only means by which her neighbors can stay alive. From 1968 Summary Orleanna Price Orleanna explains how after Ruth May died she felt the need to keep constantly moving to keep the grief at bay. In her need to move she began to walk, and then just kept walking, with her girls behind her. Leah Price While the Price women flee Kilanga in the torrential rain, Mama Mwanza's daughters come running after them with oranges and water. These are the only provisions they bring with them on their journey to Leopoldville. Along the way, they meet some women from Kilanga. These women are on their way to bring food to their husbands, who are currently attending a political meeting in Bulungu, and the Prize women decide to travel with them. Before they can reach Bulungu, Leah comes down with an overwhelming fever and can't continue. A few men who happen to be by them on the road are the kind enough to carry the delirious Rachel the rest of the way to Bulungu. Leah spends weeks with malaria and recovers in a cabin belonging to one of Anatole's former students. Anatole has also left Kilanga and is now organizing something political in all neighbouring villages. Rachel escapes from congo on Axelroot's plane, and Adah and Orleanna try to get to Leopoldville by ferry. Leah, however, is too weak and sick to be moved, and so she stays in Bulungu. Anatole takes care of her and nurses her back to health, during which time Leah and Anatole take the final plunge in love. If Leah's good enough to travel again, she won't want to leave Congo. She decides to stay and become Anatole's wife. Rachel Price Axelroot Rachel and Axelroot fly to Johannesburg, South Africa, where they are in white high society. For the sake of decency, they pretend to be married and Rachel waits impatiently for Axelroot to do the realize it. Axelroot often disappears on a business trip, and Rachel presses herself by trying to fit into the top Adah Price Adah and Orleanna walk to Leopoldville for two days. At night they hide with leaves, so soldiers will not see them. Late on the second night they are observed by an army truck and thrown inside. Although the soldiers intend to harm them, Orleanna's eyes scare them and so instead the soldiers drive the women to Leopoldville and hand them over to the Belgian embassy. In Leopoldville, they are treated in hospital for the various diseases that result from it and are then flown to Georgia by hospital plane. At fifty, Rachel surveys her life and feels completely satisfied. She regrets, somewhat, living apart from the American culture with which she still so strongly identifies, but she prides herself on cutting out her own domain amid the jungle. She attributes her success in maintaining mental stability in Africa to a simple procedure: ignoring everything she doesn't want to see. Songs of the Three Children: Leah Price All of Leah's sons, except Nathaniel, are now adults and on their own, and she and Anatole return to the intimacy of their youth, ideologically waxing when they lie in bed at night wondering what life would have been like without colonialism. They've been living in Angola for ten years on an agricultural station. Leah teaches nutrition, sanitation and soybeans. She still suffers from the burden of white guilt, which made herself the unmissionary ... ask to be converted. However, she claims she has found the simple human relief of knowing that you have done wrong and living through it. Adah Price Unable to believe in the possibility of a world in which saving a life is uncomplicated and unequivocally a good thing, Adah abandons the profession of medicine and devotes himself entirely to scientific research. She admits that she doesn't see it as her job to overcome the viruses she studies; on the contrary, she admires these beings, believing that they have as much right to the earth as humans. The eyes in the trees We now hear Ruth May's voice, matured and made wise by death. She takes us back to the scene orleanna described in the opening chapter. The okapi that Orleanna encountered, says Ruth May, was terrified and lived for another year. Every life, she concludes, is different because we went this way and made history. Everyone is complicit in everything. She then paints another scene: Orleanna leads her adult girls through a market. They're supposed to be there to find Ruth May's grave, but they're actually saying goodbye to their mother. They can't even reach Ruth May's grave because Congo is engulfed by war, and there is no way to get out of Angola to reach the border. After thirty-five years Mobutu has run away in the night, his body ridden with cancer The mother and daughters are briefly stopped by a woman whose style of dress and benevolence seems to them. She sells small animals carved from wood. She speaks Kikongo, the language spoken in Kilanga, although this city is far from that region. Orleanna buys some elephants for her grandchildren, and wife gives her an okapi as a gift. It turns out that the women are from Bulungu, but when they ask for news of Kilanga, she claims that such a place never existed. The road stops at Bulungu. The book ends when Ruth May forgives her mother, and asks that Orleanna forgive herself. Themselves.

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