

Approved for use in Honors English II

Summary of the Work:

This is a story told by the wife and four daughters of Nathan Price, a fierce, evangelical Baptist who takes his family and missions the Belgian Congo in 1959. They carry with them everything they believe they will need for a home, but soon find that all of it, from garden seeds to Scripture, is calamitously transformed on African soil. What follows is a suspenseful epic of one family's tragic undoing and remarkable reconstruction over the course of three decades in postcolonial Africa. The novel is set against one of the most dramatic political chronicles of the 20th century: the Congo's fight for independence from Belgium, the murder of its first elected Prime Minister, the CIA coup to install his replacement, and the insidious progress of a world economic order that robs the fledgling African nation of its autonomy.

-from the book jacket

Rationale:

Sophomore Honors English is an enriched and challenging version of the required English II course. This course for the college-bound emphasizes the analysis of non-fiction and novels. Students should have an appreciation for and love of reading. Additionally, the course focuses on the study of other genres of literature, emphasis on class discussion, grammar, and vocabulary development. Expository and research writing is emphasized.

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

- Booklist starred 08/01/1998
- Kirkus Review starred 09/01/1998
- Wilson's Fiction 03/16/2006
- Books for the Teen Age (NYPL) 04/01/1999
- Library Journal starred 09/01/1998
- Publishers Weekly starred 08/10/1998

* Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.

* Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

Noted Distinction:

- Book Sense Top 10 2003 (Number One)
- Independent Publisher Book Awards, Audio Fiction 1999
- American Booksellers Book of the Year (ABBY)
- Patterson Fiction Prize, The Poetry Center, 1999
- *Los Angeles Times* Best Books for 1998
- *New York Times* "Ten Best Books of 1998"
- North 49 Books, Canada, Most Valuable Picks for the Fall 1998 Season
- *Village Voice* Best Books for 1998
- New York Public Library "25 Books to Remember"
- The Orange Prize, Great Britain, short list
- PEN/Faulkner Award, runner-up
- Pulitzer Prize, runner-up

Readability:

- Lexile Score: 960
- Readability Level: AD. 7.9

Learning Resources Guidelines:

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Standard Alignment: *(link)*

Approval:

Submitted to Committee:

Approved for Adoption: 2002

Notes on the Text:

(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

AP recommended reading.

Connection to the Curriculum:

This novel is taught as a final for the Honors English II class, providing examples of various literary elements and epic genre.

Additional Connections:

(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)

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