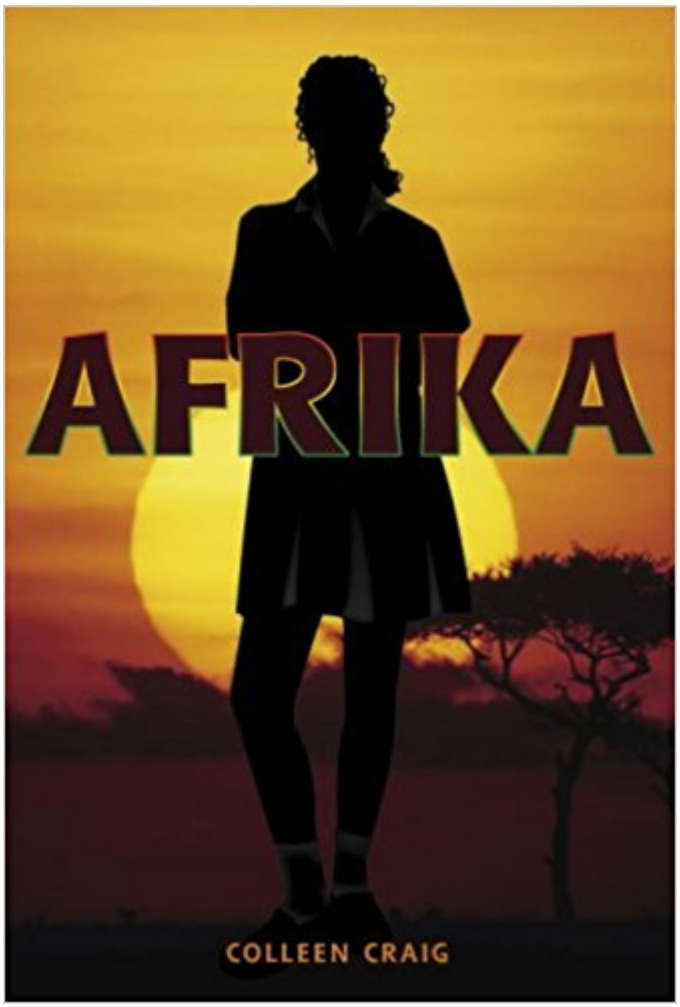
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Afrika



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Synopsis

For thirteen-year-old Kim, travel to South Africa with her journalist mother will mark the end of her childhood and the beginning of a remarkable journey. Expecting nothing more than three months in her motherÃ¢â ¬â„¢s homeland, Kim comes to terms with the countryÃ¢â ¬â„¢s diverse and often shocking history. The Truth and Reconciliation Hearings in post-apartheid South Africa open her eyes to the tragedy and brutality of its segregationist policies. KimÃ¢â ¬â„¢s first meeting with her relatives, her contact with schoolmates and cousins, bring her face-to-face with the realization that she is not as removed from this powerful story as she thought. As her mother struggles with her past, Kim becomes more and more determined to unlock the secret that has always kept her from knowing her father. Helped by the young son of a long-time family servant, whose own father was a casualty of Apartheid history, Kim eventually unlocks her mystery and brings her mother and herself to their own truth and reconciliation. Layered and complex, this is a novel that raises questions and challenges beliefs.

Book Information

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Grade 6Ã¢â ¬â œ8Ã¢â ¬â •Growing up in Canada with her white South African mother, Kim van der Merwe does not know who her father is. Now, at 13, she goes to Cape Town

for the first time, shortly after independence in the mid-1990s, because her mother, a journalist, is going to report on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Visiting and meeting her family for the first time, she decides that her mission will be to discover her father's identity. When Kim becomes involved in a friendship with the family who works for the van der Merwes', especially Themba, whose father was murdered by the police during apartheid, her life becomes more closely entwined with South Africa's political and social realities. As she gets closer to the answer she seeks, her mother becomes more and more unhinged by the horrors she hears about in her work. The climax packs a powerful emotional punch as the author dovetails Kim's personal odyssey with the pain, contradictions, and hopes of the country as it carries its devastating history into the future. The realities of the society are carefully and skillfully portrayed, so that Kim's story is truly the emotional heart of the book, and not a vehicle for ideas. Kim herself is a believable and likable character, and her relationship with Themba is tender and realistic. The author does not sugarcoat the realities of South Africa, or the details of torture that are revealed at the Truth Commission. Not just another multicultural title, by any means, this novel will really grab readers who appreciate realistic fiction about young people searching for their place in the world.Ã¢â ¬â •Sue Giffard, Ethical Culture Fieldston School, New York City Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Starred Review The riveting revelations of South AfricaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) are at the heart of this powerful novel, in which, like Carolyn ComanÃ¢â ¬â„¢s award-winning Many Stones (2000), political history is fused with one girlÃ¢â ¬â„¢s discovery of family secrets. Growing up in Canada, Kim, 13, has never known her father. Her mom, journalist Riana van der Merwe, refuses to talk about him or about her South African home. But when Kim goes with Riana to cover the TRC hearings for three months, she learns about her Afrikaner family roots in the heart of the rural Karroo. Then tension quietly builds, until she finally meets her father and discovers why Riana, pregnant with Kim, ran away and never returned. There is some plot contrivance, and KimÃ¢â ¬â„¢s black friend and mentor, Themba, son of a family servant in the backyard shack, is much too wise and understanding. But the author, who lived in South Africa in the 1980s (before the TRC hearings), gets the way things were for ordinary people, especially in the farm areas, exactly right. The teen outsiderÃ¢â ¬â„¢s viewpoint reveals the shocking apartheid cruelty, which includes what happened to ThembaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s father. Readers will be stirred by the connections with other history they know (Ã¢â ¬Å“I was only carrying out ordersÃ¢â ¬Â•) and by the ultimate message about forgiveness. Grades 7-12. --Hazel Rochman

This is a fine book about one young woman’s struggle with her mother, relocation, emerging maturity, and own racial prejudices after learning that her background is not what she thought. It is unfortunate that a strong swear word was included near the end of the book. I lent my copy to a South African friend who thoroughly enjoyed it too.

Craig did an excellent job of weaving together the details and the mystery of of the main characters’ lineage and the complexities of South Africa’s brutal racist apartheid system. The story told through the eyes of a Canadian born girl,Kim, and an African boy, Themba, who has experienced his own lost, pulls in the reader, so that we too experience the various nuances that impact all who are touched by the evil that apartheid condoned. I thoroughly enjoyed this book and highly recommend it!

I am reading this with my son who has to read it for 7th grade. While he does not like it I do! And I am really having fun talking to him about it.

This was an interesting breath taking novel. Sometimes I cried about this book other times I laughed. All and all I love this book.

I had to read this book for a school project. I could hardly get through it. the only reason i bothered finishing it was because i had to for school. It was extremely boring with almost no plot line. for the school project i had to find the climax. i couldn’t find it because the whole book was equaly boring. hope this helps. :)

An historical novel such as "Afrika" is a great way to provide a lot of facts in a very entertaining and special way. Highly recommended.

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