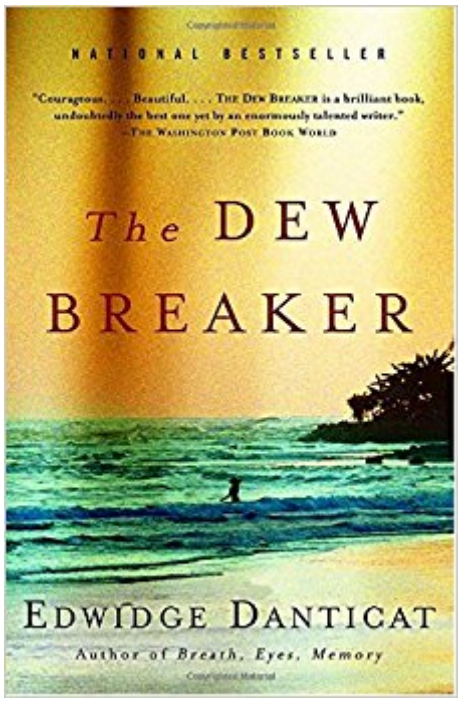
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The Dew Breaker



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Synopsis

In this award-winning, bestselling work of fiction that moves between Haiti in the 1960s and New York in the present day, we meet an unusual man who is harboring a vital, dangerous secret. He is a quiet man, a good father and husband, a fixture in his Brooklyn neighborhood, a landlord and barber with a terrifying scar across his face. As the book unfolds, we enter the lives of those around him, and his secret is slowly revealed. Edwidge DanticatÃ¢â ¬â„¢s brilliant exploration of the Ã¢â ¬Å“dew breakerÃ¢â ¬Â•-- or torturer-- is an unforgettable story of love, remorse, and hope; of personal and political rebellions; and of the compromises we make to move beyond the most intimate brushes with history. It firmly establishes her as one of AmericaÃ¢â ¬â„¢s most essential writers.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In her third novel, The Dew Breaker, the prolific Edwidge Danticat spins a series of related stories around a shadowy central figure, a Haitian immigrant to the U.S. who reveals to his artist daughter that he is not, as she believes, a prison escapee, but a former prison guard, skilled in torture and the other violent control methods of a brutal regime. "Your father was the hunter," he confesses, "he was not the prey." Into this brilliant opening, Danticat tucks the seeds of all that follows: the tales of the prison guard’s victims, of their families, of those who recognize him decades later on the streets of New York, of those who never see him again, but are so haunted that they believe he’s still pursuing them. (A dew breaker, we learn, is a government functionary who comes in the early

morning to arrest someone or to burn a house down, breaking the dew on the grass that he crosses.) Although it is frustrating, sometimes, to let go of one narrative thread to follow another, The Dew Breaker is a beautifully constructed novel that spirals back to the reformed prison guard at the end, while holding unanswered the question of redemption. --Regina Marler --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Haitian-born Danticat's third novel (after The Farming of Bones and Breath, Eyes, Memory) focuses on the lives affected by a "dew breaker," or torturer of Haitian dissidents under Duvalier's regime. Each chapter reveals the titular man from another viewpoint, including that of his grown daughter, who, on a trip she takes with him to Florida, learns the secret of his violent past and those of the Haitian boarders renting basement rooms in his Brooklyn home. This structure allows Danticat to move easily back and forth in time and place, from 1967 Haiti to present-day Florida, tracking diverse threads within the larger narrative. Some readers may think that what she gains in breadth she loses in depth; this is a slim book, and Danticat does not always stay in one character's mind long enough to fully convey the complexities she seeks. The chapters—most of which were published previously as stories, with the first three appearing in the New Yorker—can feel more like evocative snapshots than richly textured portraits. The slow accumulation of details pinpointing the past's effects on the present makes for powerful reading, however, and Danticat is a crafter of subtle, gorgeous sentences and scenes. As the novel circles around the dew breaker, moving toward final episodes in which, as a young man and already dreaming of escape to the U.S., he performs his terrible work, the impact on the reader hauntingly, ineluctably grows. Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I thought this was going to be a great story. She introduces many, and I mean many, characters. I was thinking they are all going to come together at the end with a great ending. But no. They just knew a bad man. That is all! Then it ends.

The cycle of nine stories that make up "The Dew Breaker" revolves around the central character that haunts all of them: a loving father and husband living in New York who was once a member of the Tontons Macoute, paramilitary torturers during Francois Duvalier's despotic regime in Haiti. Only three of the stories deal directly with this man and his family, but the other six deal with his victims, their families, or their friends. Although I often feel that stories-as-a-novel (or fix-ups) are not

convincing--the distraction of the seams can sometimes overpower the whole--this is an exception: if anything, the jigsaw-puzzle approach more powerfully shows how disparate lives have been shattered by one "evil" man.It’s a heavy topic, and much of the book is melancholy and even gloomy--but Danticat is expert at throwing in both comic relief and the perfectly placed awkward moment. All nine stories are superb, but even so there are four the truly stand out. The opening story, "The Book of the Dead," describes a semi-vacation trip to Florida taken by the now-elderly man and his daughter, Ka, who has sold a sculpture based her father’s image to a famous Haitian American actress. When the father (with the artwork) disappears, secrets are revealed, Ka’s adoration of her father is tested, and the obligatory meeting with the actress is both uncomfortable and unforgettable. In "Seven," an immigrant living with two bachelors in a basement apartment gets ready to receive the wife he hasn’t seen in seven years. (One of his initial concerns: his apartment-mates need to stop sitting around in their underwear.)My favorite section, "The Bridal Seamstress," features Aline, a young, idealistic journalism intern who interviews a woman who is about to retire from a career making bridal dresses for other Haitian immigrants ("they come here carrying photographs of tall, skinny girls in dresses that cost thousands of dollars. . . . It’s part of my job to tell them, without making them cry, that they’re too short, too wide, or too pregnant . . ."). The story turns darker when the older woman describes the new neighbor who, she claims, is the man who tortured her in Haiti. And, the longest and final story, "The Dew Breaker," takes us back to 1967, when the man who will be the cause of so many future nightmares conducts his last murderous assignment in Haiti, and then takes us forward to 2004, with the story of the woman who saved, forgave, and (if such a thing is possible) redeemed him.

Still working on class project, I wish I had more to say.

Had to read this for school. Did NOT like the teacher.However, the book really isn’t that bad. Told through multiple stories, see if you can find the connections. It’s a very interesting take on an issue the media doesn’t seem to want to focus on. It’s a good. I can’t give much a better review then that.If you are into these kind of books, then you will like it. If you are going to be forced to read it for school... well there ain’t much you can do and, trust me, there are worst books you could get stuck reading.That’s as good as I can do. it’s not a book I’d normally read but it is good all the same.

Had to buy the book for an English class. Starts off quite confusing but is very colorful and does a great job of incorporating characters despite chapters not being in chronological order. It definitely

helps if you know some background about Haiti, or have a class that will be discussing the background of the book.

The Dew Breaker is my first taste of the gift of storytelling by Edwidge Danticat.....but it won't be my last!As the novel opens, revealing shocking secrets of the past, it's clear that the reader will not be disappointed.The Dew Breaker's title comes from a Creole phrase referring to `Tontons Macoutes' (Haitian volunteer torturers) during the regime of the Duvaliers in Haiti. They would often come in the early dawn to take their victims away...thus the broke the serenity of the grass in the morning dew. These `Macoutes' tortured and killed thousands of civilians, many for trivial incidences.Beautifully written, the chapters overlap and wind back around each other as the novel slowly reveals the ghosts of the past within the culture's stories of miracles and spiritual beliefs.Now, living in New York, trying to erase a past that shadows him continually, we meet a good father and husband with a horrible scar on his face and an agonizing secret embedded deeply in his soul...and now...finally it must be unmasked!

This is a book that you will have to read at least two times. I have some friends who are on the fourth read. It is packed with stuff that you miss the first time around. At the end of the book, you realize that there was more to characters, events and places than I initially perceived. While it was a confusing read at first, it was not off putting. This is one of those books that you buy the printed version because it will stay on you mind and prompt you, three or four months later, to go back and clarify a point that just will not leave you alone.

This incredible collection of linked short stories is beautifully written and moved me as much as any book ever has. From the first story about a grown daughter and her scarred father, I was seduced by Danticat's beautiful prose. And with each new "chapter" I was brought further into the web of the many lives affected by the acts of the father. The tension in each individual story was enough to keep me reading, but I was also drawn in as I wondered how each new story fit with the previous stories. The final chapter which brings it all together in Haiti in the 60's is incredible. The fact that I continued to read even through the scenes that were painful enough to make me cringe is testament to what an incredible writer Danticat is. Beautiful writing that looks at a very difficult story with truth... even when it's uncomfortable. HIGHLY recommended!

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