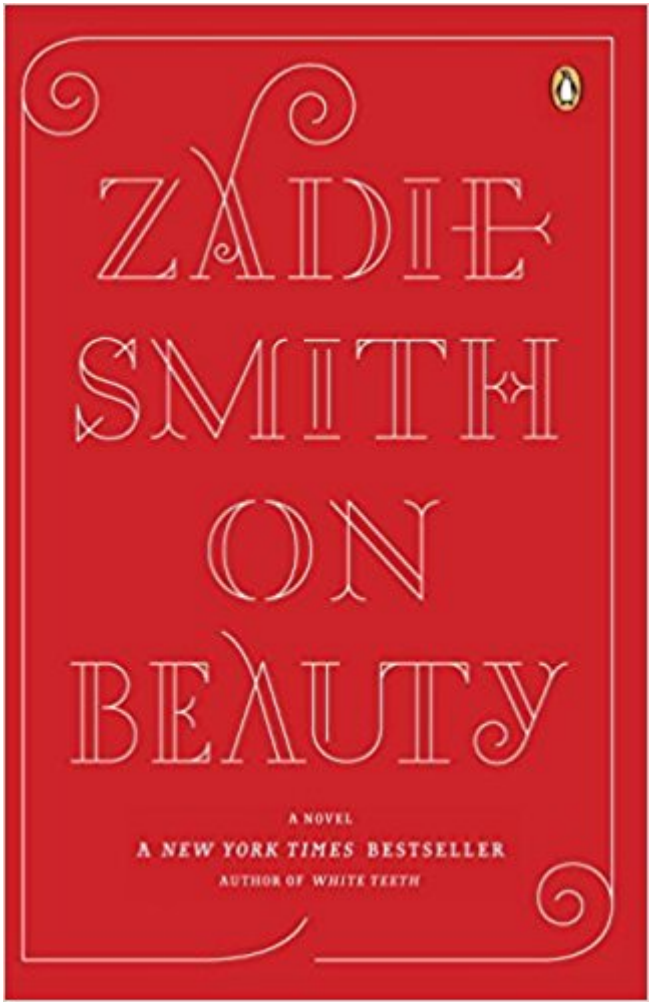
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On Beauty: A Novel



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Synopsis

Winner of the 2006 Orange Prize for fiction, anotherÃ Â bestselling masterworkÃ Â from the celebrated author of White TeethÃ Â Having hit bestseller lists from the New York Times to the San Francisco Chronicle, this wise, hilarious novel reminds us why Zadie Smith has rocketed to literary stardom. On Beauty is the story of an interracial family living in the university town of Wellington, Massachusetts, whose misadventures in the culture wars-on both sides of the Atlantic-serve to skewer everything from family life to political correctness to the combustive collision between the personal and the political. Full of dead-on wit and relentlessly funny, this tour de force confirms Zadie Smith's reputation as a major literary talent. Zadie SmithÃ¢â ¬â„¢s newest novel,Ã Â Swing Time, was published by Penguin Press in November 2016.

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Customer Reviews

In an author's note at the end of On Beauty, Zadie Smith writes: "My largest structural debt should be obvious to any E.M. Forster fan; suffice it to say he gave me a classy old frame, which I covered with new material as best I could." If it is true that imitation is the sincerest form of flattery, Forster, perched on a cloud somewhere, should be all puffed up with pride. His disciple has taken Howards End, that marvelous tale of class difference, and upped the ante by adding race, politics, and gender. The end result is a story for the 21st century, told with a perfect ear for everything: gangsta street talk; academic posturing, both British and American; down-home black Floridian straight talk; and sassy, profane kids, both black and white. Howard Belsey is a middle-class white liberal

Englishman teaching abroad at Wellington, a thinly disguised version of one of the Ivies. He is a Rembrandt scholar who can't finish his book and a recent adulterer whose marriage is now on the slippery slope to disaster. His wife, Kiki, a black Floridian, is a warm, generous, competent wife, mother, and medical worker. Their children are Jerome, disgusted by his father's behavior, Zora, Wellington sophomore firebrand feminist and Levi, eager to be taken for a "homey," complete with baggy pants, hoodies and the ever-present iPod. This family has no secrets--at least not for long. They talk about everything, appropriate to the occasion or not. And, there is plenty to talk about. The other half of the story is that of the Kipps family: Monty, stiff, wealthy ultra-conservative vocal Christian and Rembrandt scholar, whose book has been published. His wife Carlene is always slightly out of focus, and that's the way she wants it. She wafts over all proceedings, never really connecting with anyone. That seems to be endemic in the Kipps household. Son Michael is a bit of a Monty clone and daughter Victoria is not at all what Daddy thinks she is. Indeed, Forster's advice, "Only connect," is lost on this group. The two academics have long been rivals, detesting each other's politics and disagreeing about Rembrandt. They are thrown into further conflict when Jerome leaves Wellington to get away from the discovery of his father's affair, lands on the Kipps' doorstep, falls for Victoria and mistakes what he has going with her for love. Howard makes it worse by trying to fix it. Then, Kipps is granted a visiting professorship at Wellington and the whole family arrives in Massachusetts. From this raw material, Smith has fashioned a superb book, her best to date. She has interwoven class, race, and gender and taken everyone prisoner. Her even-handed renditions of liberal and/or conservative mouthings are insightful, often hilarious, and damning to all. She has a great time exposing everyone's clay feet. This author is a young woman cynical beyond her years, and we are all richer for it. --Valerie Ryan --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Starred Review. Truly human, fully ourselves, beautiful," muses a character in Smith's third novel, an intrepid attempt to explore the sad stuff of adult life, 21st centuryÃ¢â ¬â œstyle: adultery, identity crises and emotional suffocation, interracial and intraracial global conflicts and religious zealotry. Like Smith's smash debut, White Teeth (2000), this work gathers narrative steam from the clash between two radically different families, with a plot that explicitly parallels Howards End. A failed romance between the evangelical son of the messy, liberal Belseys;Howard is Anglo-WASP and Kiki African-American;and the gorgeous daughter of the staid, conservative, Anglo-Caribbean Kipps leads to a soulful, transatlantic understanding between the families' matriarchs, Kiki and Carlene, even as their respective husbands, the art professors Howard and Monty, amass matÃƒÂ©riel for

the culture wars at a fictional Massachusetts university. Meanwhile, Howard and Kiki must deal with Howard’s extramarital affair, as their other son, Levi, moves from religion to politics. Everyone theorizes about art, and everyone searches for connections, sexual and otherwise. A very simple but very funny joke;that Howard, a Rembrandt scholar, hates Rembrandt;allows Smith to discourse majestically on some of the master’s finest paintings. The articulate portrait of daughter Zora depicts the struggle to incorporate intellectual values into action. The elaborate Forster homage, as well as a too-neat alignment between characters, concerns and foils, threaten Smith’s insightful probing of what makes life complicated (and beautiful), but those insights eventually add up. "There is such a shelter in each other," Carlene tells Kiki; it’s a take on Forster’s "Only Connect;," but one that finds new substance here. 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 read a dozen books of literary fiction last summer, and this is the one that sticks with me. The characters are original and memorable but also believable. Smith spins a tale I had never heard before, just surprising enough to still be realistic. At no point was I bored. Reading On Beauty was one of those treats where you actually wake up thinking about the story and hoping you can spend time in that world before you have to get back to yours. No serial killers here, nor detectives, just a family trying to stick together while time and human nature is pulling them apart--the way it tends to do.

I quickly fell in love with the characters in this book. They were multifaceted, likable people, but not perfect (like real humans). The situations seemed real. I would defintely read another book about Kiki and her kids.I think the author may be confused about what states in the U.S. are part of the Deep South (versus Southern), but that was very easy to overlook.

I was disappointed in this book, having heard so much recently about Zadie Smith. Trouble is, I really couldn’t like any of the characters -- except the mother, but she wasn’t a major character. Much of it seemed unrealistic and unexplored -- for instance, one of the characters is clearly a sex addict, but this is glossed over because she is young and beautiful.

Zadie Smith has once again created some interesting characters in her latest book "On Beauty". This time she seems to take some delight in sticking some painful pins in their dolls. Death, infidelity, occupational hazards, and theft are all part of a novel which still, despite these difficulties,

provides a lot of entertainment. Two mixed race couples (one British and the other American) and their families find both friendship and hostility in their relationships with each other. The two male heads of family, both academics, are pompous bulls who paw the earth, and roar their political disagreements at each other. One is a liberal and the other a conservative, so what else can you expect?One of the half white, half black sons is so desirous of identifying with his black heritage that his efforts to identify with the black community are often quite comical. A daughter's promiscuity wreaks havoc within the other family. The American father who dearly loves his wife (?) survives one affair that becomes publicly known, and then falls into another one.Fine writing coupled with an interesting tale makes this an enjoyable book. Yet I was a bit disappointed; this book does not match up to her first novel "White Teeth". Some of the family members lacked definition. Perhaps there's just too large a cast to be able to do justice to without writing a much longer book. And, sadly, this novel lacked the wit of "White Teeth". Ms Smith did have one funny farcical scene when our professor was the guest of a student at a college banquet. It seems that there is something about small choral groups singing in harmony that he finds hilariously funny. Sure enough a choral group marches on stage during this black tie dinner, and starts singing. The prof's reaction to their performance totally embarrasses his student, and himself. To me this was the funniest part of the novel. Smith is an expert at this kind of inanity, and I just wishe there had been more of it. All in all, though, it's a good read.

I really enjoyed this book about a vet complex family. I did not want it to end, because I wanted to see what would happen to the children.

This is the story of two families, the Belseys and the Kipps. One based in London, the other in the States. One conservative and Christian and the other liberal and 'god-aversive'. The patriachs of each family are academics and take opposing views on artworks of Rembrant resulting in an 'academic fight' that encroaches on other areas of college life and is further intensified when their families become entwined through relationships between their children and wives.The story is not only about the obvious clashes in viewpoint but a close examination of academia - the high morals, competitiveness, a critique of sorts of the meritocracy and the strange closeted environment of colleges.Initially I found the story slow and was wondering what was the point, but the story really hits a home run in the last quarter.

Beauty is defined so eloquently in this book- inside and out. It is also seen in the everyday lives of

the characters.

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