

THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MY MOTHER: A NOVEL (FSG CLASSICS) BY JAMAICA KINCAID



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Amazon.com Review

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From Publishers Weekly

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THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF MY MOTHER: A NOVEL (FSG CLASSICS) BY JAMAICA KINCAID PDF

From the recipient of the 2010 Clifton Fadiman Medal, an unforgettable novel of one woman's courageous coming-of-age

Powerful, disturbing, stirring, Jamaica Kincaid's novel is the deeply charged story of a woman's life on the island of Dominica. Xuela Claudette Richardson, the daughter of a Carib mother and a half-Scottish, half-African father, loses her mother to death the moment she is born and must find her way on her own.

Kincaid takes us from Xuela's childhood in a home where she can hear the song of the sea to the tin-roofed room where she lives as a schoolgirl in the house of Jack LaBatte, who becomes her first lover. Xuela develops a passion for the stevedore Roland, who steals bolts of Irish linen for her from the ships he unloads, but she eventually marries an English doctor, Philip Bailey. Xuela's is an intensely physical world, redolent of overripe fruit, gentian violet, sulfur, and rain on the road, and it seethes with her sorrow, her deep sympathy for those who share her history, her fear of her father, her desperate loneliness. But underlying all is "the black room of the world" that is Xuela's barrenness and motherlessness.

The *Autobiography of My Mother* is a story of love, fear, loss, and the forging of character, an account of one woman's inexorable evolution, evoked in startling and magical poetry.

- Sales Rank: #55990 in Books
- Published on: 2013-05-07
- Released on: 2013-05-07
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.19" h x .65" w x 5.76" l, .45 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 240 pages

Amazon.com Review

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Most helpful customer reviews

63 of 65 people found the following review helpful.

I loved this book

By traylor@cats.ucsc.edu

I have to speak up, because I feel that this book is being unfairly trashed. I stumbled across one of the chapters of this book in a collection, and I was so taken aback that I had to rush out and get the complete novel. I think that that Jamaica Kincaid's writing is so beautiful and poetic that she could be writing about anything and I would read it. But she also tells a very interesting and important story. Xuela is a mixed-race, motherless girl who does not receive love from anyone, and must survive by loving and celebrating her self. Perhaps for those people who have always felt secure in their place in life, and surrounded by love on all sides, Kincaid's book is too harsh and hard to relate to. But for those of us who have had times we when we felt so alone that we literally had to become our own mother and/or our own best friend, Kincaid's novel is a testimony to our experience. A great book.

25 of 26 people found the following review helpful.

Controversial, disturbing, not for everyone.

By A Customer

Having read this title while vacationing in Jamaica, (even though placed in Dominica and the author grew up in Atigua)I was entirely able to understand Xuela. Many children are born out of wedlock, though the fathers still are involved with their children. Xuela is an extreme, but not implausible, case of emotional detachment. Everything in the book, from her father's corruption, to encountering the stevedore during a downpour came

to life in my reading experience. Be forewarned, Xuela is not a likeable character, and her physical self-love may be offensive to some readers. But Jamaica Kincaid's blunt and honest portrayal of a hardened woman is undeniably hard to forget.

18 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

pretty writing - imagery not meant to be pretty

By Chuen Ng

I think more readers should read this in context of Jamaica Kincaid's own personal life, especially regarding her torn relationship with her mother. It would then become extremely touching, as Kincaid really writes this to save her own living. While other reviewers have found this book to be harsh or dirty in some sense, we should gain the sense that this narrator is really at a loss for love, that there is so little to love, but was able to find love in herself.

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