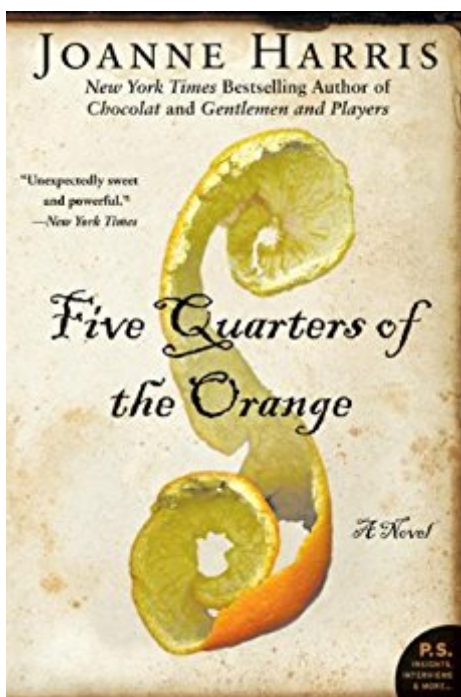


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Five Quarters Of The Orange: A Novel (P.S.)



Synopsis

When Framboise Simon returns to a small village on the banks of the Loire, the locals do not recognize her as the daughter of the infamous woman they hold responsible for a tragedy during the German occupation years ago. But the past and present are inextricably entwined, particularly in a scrapbook of recipes and memories that Framboise has inherited from her mother. And soon Framboise will realize that the journal also contains the key to the tragedy that indelibly marked that summer of her ninth year. . . .

Book Information

File Size: 691 KB

Print Length: 322 pages

Page Numbers Source ISBN: 0060958022

Publisher: HarperCollins e-books (October 13, 2009)

Publication Date: October 13, 2009

Sold by:Â HarperCollins Publishers

Language: English

ASIN: B000W5MI9O

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Not Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #2,742 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #4 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > Women's Fiction > Mothers & Children #28 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > British & Irish > Historical #79 inÂ Books > Literature & Fiction > Contemporary

Customer Reviews

War is hell, as we all know, but the last word on that still hasn't been said. Now Joanne Harris gives us a book that exposes the ugliness of war from the viewpoint of three neglected children, living in a German-occupied French village during World War II. In "Five Quarters of the Orange," narrator Framboise Dartigen unfolds a chilling tale in which she and her two siblings find themselves collaborating with Nazis, trading secrets about their neighbors for chocolate and comic books. The great strength of "Five Quarters of the Orange" is Harris' unflinching honesty about childhood--its capacity for treachery and cruelty. Graphic images of Framboise's war against the life of the nearby

river underline this theme. After a village girl is bitten and killed by a venomous snake, Framboise nets a dozen snakes, crushes their skulls and leaves them to rot on the river banks. At the heart of the novel, as in the novelist's early work "Chocolat," is a complicated relationship between mother and daughter. Framboise's mother Mirabelle mistakenly applies the same techniques to child rearing that she applies to growing fruit trees. Prune them severely and they will flower. She discovers too late that children don't respond well to constant scolding and deprivation. Mirabelle is also plagued by olfactory hallucinations. Prior to her terrible migraines, she thinks she smells oranges. In scenes which make the book worth reading by themselves, Framboise gets revenge on her mother by planting a cut up orange near the stove so that the scent fills the house. These scenes of nine-year-old vindictiveness are where Harris reveals her true genius. "Five Quarters of the Orange" isn't just another war novel, however. It's also a mystery.

Five Quarters of the Orange by Joanne Harris contained a mystery that kept me reading until I finished the book in just 3 nights. Harris wrote the book like the main character Framboise was just sitting around telling a childhood story to a friend over coffee. Reading the story, I felt comfortable as "Framboise's friend" and enjoyed her tale of adolescence. In the beginning of the story, Framboise casually tells us "I know, I know. You want me to get to the point... It has taken me fifty-five years to begin. At least let me do it in my own way." Harris' use of details and descriptions helped to paint a vivid picture in my mind of Framboise's childhood. I liked the way Harris described Framboise's older sister Reine-Claude in comparison to Framboise, "At twelve, my sister has already ripened. Soft and sweet as dark honey, with amber eyes and autumn hair... next to her I looked like a frog, my mother told me, an ugly skinny little frog with my wide sullen mouth and my big hands and big feet." The book describes the conflict of mother and daughter relationships. Harris shows that no matter how badly we don't want to end up like our parents, we can't help but to inherit some of their qualities. Framboise's mother tells her nine year old daughter "Hard as nails... I used to be like that... I always wanted to fight everybody too." When the older Framboise is stressing about her declining business while her daughter and granddaughter were departing from their summer visit, "I could see in her eyes that she felt I was unreasonable, but I could not find enough warmth in my heart to tell her what I felt... a sudden terror overwhelmed me. I was behaving like my mother... Stern and impassive, but secretly filled with fears and insecurities. I wanted to reach out to my daughter... but somehow I couldn't.

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