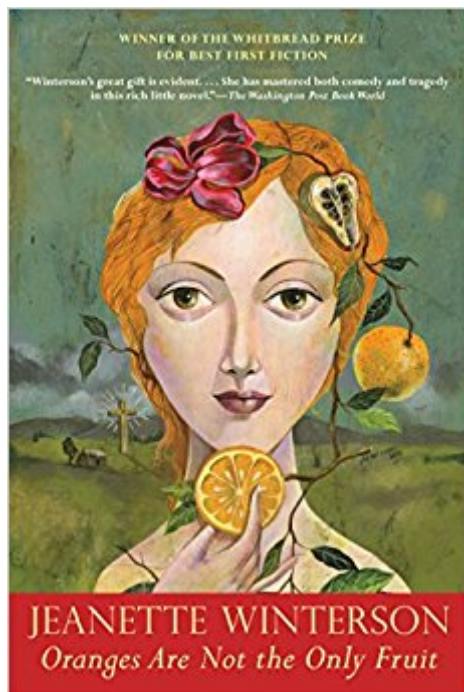


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Oranges Are Not The Only Fruit



Synopsis

Winner of the Whitbread Prize for best first fiction, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* is a coming-out novel from Winterson, the acclaimed author of *The Passion and Sexing the Cherry*. The narrator, Jeanette, cuts her teeth on the knowledge that she is one of God's elect, but as this budding evangelical comes of age, and comes to terms with her preference for her own sex, the peculiar balance of her God-fearing household crumbles.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"A striking, quirky, delicate, and intricate work . . . Winterson has mastered both comedy and tragedy in this rich little novel. . . . Winterson's great gift is evident." *The Washington Post Book World*"A daring, unconventional comic novel . . . by employing quirky anecdotes, which are told with romping humor, and by splicing various parables into the narrative, Winterson allows herself the dangerous luxury of writing a novel that refuses to rely on rousing plot devices. . . . A fascinating debut . . . A penetrating novel." *Chicago Tribune*"If Flannery O'Connor and Rita Mae Brown had collaborated on the coming-out story of a young British girl in the 1960s, maybe they would have approached the quirky and subtle hilarity of Jeanette Winterson's autobiographical first novel. . . . Winterson's voice, with its idiosyncratic wit and sensitivity, is one you've never heard before." *Ms.*"The overwhelming impression of her work is one of remarkable self-confidence, and she evidently thrives on risk. As good as Poe: it dares you to laugh and stares you down." *The New York Review of Books*"An explosively imaginative writer." *The London Free Press*"She is a master of her material, a writer [of] great talent." *Muriel*

Spark"Many consider her to be the best living writer in this language." —Evening Standard"The most interesting writer I have read in twenty years." —Gore Vidal

Jeanette Winterson OBE is the author of ten novels, including *Oranges are not the Only Fruit*, *The Passion and Sexing the Cherry*; a book of short stories, *The World and Other Places*; a collection of essays, *Art Objects* as well as many other works, including children's books, screenplays and journalism. Her writing has won the Whitbread Award for Best First Novel, the John Llewellyn Rhys Memorial Prize, the E. M. Forster Award and the Prix d'argent at Cannes Film Festival. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

A girl is adopted into a very conservative Christian family, the mother being a functionally mentally ill person who lives for the church, and is forced to come out as gay while being emotionally, and physically tortured by the church, her mother, the pastor, and everyone around her. At times funny, at times brutally sad, it's an interesting look at one woman's path to being herself while fighting those around her.

Sometimes I think it's a huge advantage for a writer to grow up in weird or even miserable circumstances. A normal, happy childhood produces normal, well-adjusted minds while misery and strangeness, while suffocating some, gives the putative writer not only an original outlook on life but also a lifetime of material to mine. Jeanette Winterson had a truly strange childhood and emerged as a truly talented writer with an original and authentic voice that is heard on every page of this poetic and compelling memoir. Winterson was adopted by a working class couple living in a poor town in northern England. Her father was a quiet, self-effacing man and is practically a non-presence in this book. Her mother dominates every page. A fundamentalist Christian and neglectful and sometimes cruel mother, she devoted herself wholly to her weird strain of Christianity. Winterson expected to follow in her path and became an enthusiastic evangelizer and preacher in her own right -- but her sexuality got in the way. Neither her mother nor her church could accept her lesbian identity and Jeanette was ultimately forced to leave the safety of the cult and find her own way. There is a dogged but subtle working class humor in this book but it is always tinged with sadness. Winterson never quite rejects her upbringing -- in some ways she seems to long for it in all its nuttiness. But she cannot go against who she is, nor can she regard herself as evil. Mixed into the narrative, full of colorful characters masterfully evoked, are poetic reworkings on fairy tales and legends that cast a light and a shadow on the story. Winterson has a real ear for dialogue which brings her northern folk

to life. Much of my reading consists unfortunately of cookie-cutter books that are put together either well or not so well but ultimately nearly all turn out to be forgettable. This one is unforgettable.

This book has been telling the story of my life in painful yet glorious accuracy, although there is no identical fact I share with it. This is what great writing is about isn't it? Jeanette Winterson is a genius and her writing is so deep and therapeutic, that it almost borders mystery. After all most of the facts and figures are sad and disastrous, yet I feel so much better reading her...

This is my new favorite book! Winterson has a way of deflecting the reader from certain aspects of her inner most transitional experiences into young adulthood, while completely revealing an artful autobiographical piece. This book is about the memorable private journey of a young woman from youth into early adulthood; she is seeking love against the odds, while grasping eagerly to an outlet for salvation. This book embodies the reason why the study of literature is a treasured discipline.

I read *Why Be happy When You Could be Normal* first (found it in a library in my apartment building) and then found out about *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, a novel which is based on Winterson's life. I thought that *Oranges* would fill in the blanks for me. But I found out very little. I found that I was reading a lot of the same autobiographical information that was in the first book I read. Then when I came to Winterson's first same-sex relationship I thought I would find out more than I knew already but not really. There was a little about a subsequent relationship. The vast majority of the book dwells on how the church and her mother affect her negatively. There was abuse. Starving a person for two days is certainly abuse. Her mother is a piece of work. The craziness Winterson's character deals with on a daily basis is mind-boggling. Her mother is beyond eccentric. She is a functioning victim of mental illness. Between the church and the mother, the hypocrisies and ironies abound. Some of it is almost funny. Most is just bizarre. I hate it that the author jumps from the life of the heroine to a fairy tale and back again throughout much of the book. If she is trying to draw parallels, it doesn't work for me. I like books that stay with the story and don't digress. I liked fairy tales as a young girl but not anymore. Basically, Winterston has two books out there with much of the same information in them. No real surprises. I empathize with Winterson. One of the most poignant parts of the book for me was when she went to church with her first girlfriend and was feeling so happy to be with her love in the church that she loved. I think she felt imbued with human and divine love. But the joy wasn't to last.

An odd topic and I wish there was more of her life after leaving the town, but I suppose that would be a whole other novel.

When I first read "Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit" I fell in love with Winterson's witty and humorous depictions of a rigid traditional christian household in an ever evolving modern society. Upon a second read, I fell in love with Winterson's intrinsic characterizations and complex depictions of relationships. Upon my third read, I appreciated the work for its analysis of society and the way thought operates in this world. I am currently writing my thesis comparing Winterson's "Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit" and "Why Be Happy When You Could Be Normal?" while analyzing the connections between healing through writing. I could not have asked to work with more interesting and well written material.

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