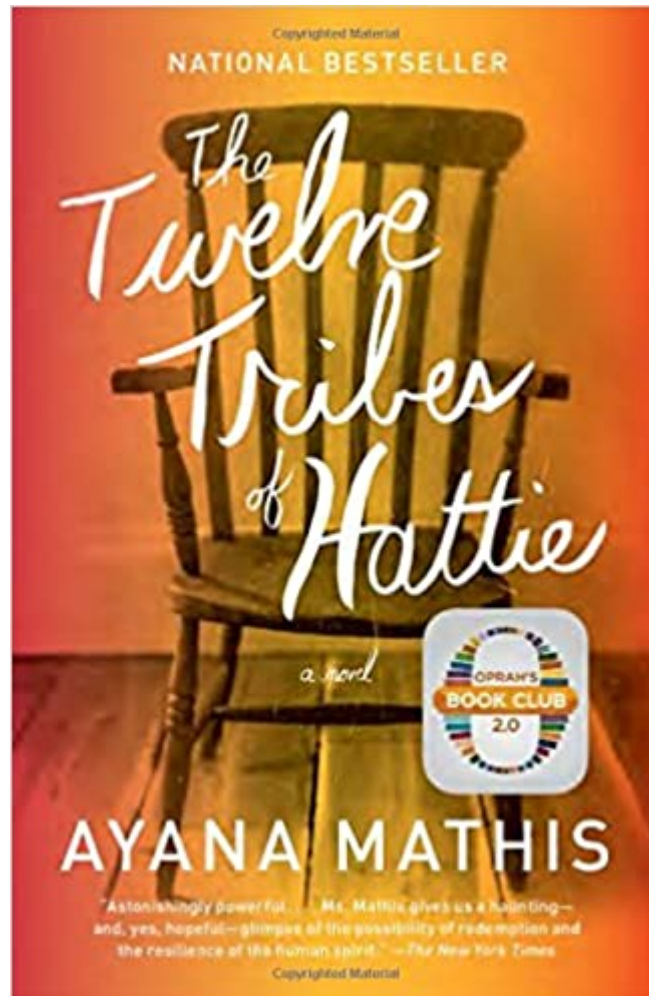




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The Twelve Tribes Of Hattie



Synopsis

A New York Times Notable BookAn NPR Best Book of the YearA BuzzFeed Best Book of the YearIn 1923, fifteen-year-old Hattie Shepherd, swept up by the tides of the Great Migration, flees Georgia and heads north. Full of hope, she settles in Philadelphia to build a better life. Instead she marries a man who will bring her nothing but disappointment, and watches helplessly as her firstborn twins are lost to an illness that a few pennies could have prevented. Hattie gives birth to nine more children, whom she raises with grit, mettle, and not an ounce of the tenderness they crave. She vows to prepare them to meet a world that will not be kind. Their lives, captured here in twelve luminous threads, tell the story of a mother's monumental courage and a nation's tumultuous journey.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Exclusive: Asks Ayana Mathis Oprah with Ayana Mathis, author of Book Club 2.0's December 2012 selection, *The Twelve Tribes of Hattie*. Q. Describe Oprah's Book Club 2.0® in one sentence (or, better yet, in 10 words). A. An impassioned and powerful declaration: Books matter. Q. What's on your bedside table or Kindle? A. I'm often reading three or four things at a time, so I invent odd categories to keep them straight. The bedside table is home to read before-bed-but-not-on-the-subway books (heavy hardcovers like Hilary Mantel's *Bring Up the Bodies*), mysteries/thrillers (like Robert Wilson's *A Small Death in Lisbon*) and things I ought to read but are slooow going (I am now on my fifth month with Augustine's *The City of God*). Q. Top three to five favorite books of all time? A. Very hard to answer! Beloved by Toni Morrison; *The Known World*

by Edward P. Jones; Housekeeping by Marilynne Robinson; The Sound and the Fury by William Faulkner; Cane by Jean Toomer. Q. Important book you never read? A. Ulysses. And also Portrait of a Lady, which shames me. Q. Book that changed your life (or book that made you want to become a writer)? A. I wrote throughout my childhood and thought I wanted to be a poet, but that was more a fantasy than a goal. I was 15 when someone gave me Sonia Sanchez's, I've Been a Woman—that book was a revolution in my life. I realized that I actually could be a poet, that there were black women who were writing--right then, in that moment. Q. Memorable author moment? A. This one? I'm so new to being an author (distinctly different from the solitary enterprise of being a writer) that every moment is unforgettable and stunning. Q. What talent or superpower would you like to have (not including flight or invisibility)? A. Anything Wonder Woman can do! Roping bad guys with a lasso of truth, deflecting bullets with my bracelets! Of course, I'd trade all of that for mindreading. Q. What are you currently stressed about or psyched about? A. I'm psyched about writing some essays on the nature of faith and belief. Writing essays is a very different process from writing fiction. I'm having a hard time with them, which is incredibly exhilarating and incredibly stressful. Q. What's your most treasured possession? A. My grandfather's diaries. He kept them secretly for over fifty years and gave them to me a few years before he died. Q. Pen envy--book you wish you'd written? A. Rita Dove's Thomas and Beulah or Yusef Komunyakaa's Magic City. Q. Who's your current author crush? A. Eudora Welty. There's never a wasted word in her short stories; so much power and meaning packed into a few short pages. Q. What's your favorite method of procrastination? Temptation? Vice? A. That's an embarrassingly long list: clothes shopping online, returning clothes I've bought online, cooking elaborate time-consuming dinners, farmer's markets, Netflix Instant (grrr, it's ruining my life). Q. What do you collect? A. Ways to procrastinate. Q. Best piece of fan mail you ever got? A. Oh dear. I've never gotten any. I'm feeling a little inadequate now. Q. What's next for you? A. Trying to find a way into my second novel, the idea is there but the rest isn't. Right now it's a bit like stumbling around in a dark room. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

“Astonishingly powerful. . . . Ms. Mathis gives us a haunting—and, yes, hopeful—glimpse of the possibility of redemption and the resilience of the human spirit.”—The New York Times
 “A remarkable page-turner of a novel . . . spans decades and covers dreams lost, found and denied.”—Chicago Tribune
 “Enthralling. . . . One remarkably resilient woman is placed against the hopes and struggles of millions of African Americans who held this nation to its promise.”—The

Washington Post – “Captivate[s] from the first pages. . . . As certainly as August Wilson did in the plays of his twentieth-century cycle, Mathis is chronicling our nation.”

Boston Globe – “Raw and intimate. . . . Gracefully told. . . . Deeply felt. . . . Compelling.”

The New York Times Book Review – “The opening pages of Ayana’s debut took my breath away. I can’t remember when I read anything that moved me in quite this way, besides the work of Toni Morrison.”

Oprah Winfrey – “A triumph. . . . Magnificently structured, and a sentence-by-sentence treasure”

Salon – “A dazzling debut, rich in language and psychological insight. . . . Mathis’s characters are those rarest of fictional creations: real living, breathing people.”

Huffington Post – “An intimate, often lyrical daisy-chain of stories. . . . We feel the exhilaration of starting over, the basic human need to belong, and the inexorable pull back to a place that, for better and worse, you call home.”

Vogue – “Like Toni Morrison, the author has a gift for showing just how heavily history weighs on families.”

Entertainment Weekly – “Stunningly good. . . . Blazes fearlessly into the darkness of divided spirits and hungry hearts.”

The Seattle Times – “Accomplished storytelling. . . . This brutal, illuminating version of the twentieth century African-American experience belongs alongside those of Toni Morrison, Alice Walker and Zora Neale Hurston.”

Newsday – “Hypnotic. . . . In this evocative, ambitious novel, the tragedy is biblical, the reckoning stretches over generations, and a gravitas is granted to otherwise-invisible women and men.”

The Plain Dealer – “Beautifully imagined and elegantly written. . . . Ayana Mathis is a hugely talented writer who has authored a wise and ambitious first novel.”

Pittsburgh Post-Gazette – “Visceral, heart-wrenching. . . . An exceptional first novel.”

St. Louis Post-Dispatch – “Written with elegance and remarkable poise. . . . [A novel] as much about our need for joy as it is about our struggles against bitterness.”

The Guardian (London) – “Astonishing. . . . Sounds a depth charge into a character’s life, a charge so powerful we forget we’re reading, we forget the long history of African-Americans in the twentieth century has already been told. We are simply with someone, on a journey, that began long ago and has one determined, sometimes deranged source. Her name is Hattie Shepherd and it’s a name you’ll hear a lot of in years to come.”

The Toronto Star – “Glistens with a quiet, hopeful beauty. . . . This book is a powerful ode to romantic and familial love.”

National Post – “Tough, truthful, wonderfully controlled writing. . . . This fresh, powerful first novel turns the lives of Hattie’s children into an epic of America

in the twentieth century. • The Times (London) "An impressive debut: tender, tough and unflinching. • Daily Mail "Vibrant and compassionate. . . . The characters are full of life, mingled thing that it is, and dignified by the writer's judicious tenderness towards them. This first novel is a work of rare maturity. • Marilynne Robinson "Beautiful and necessary from the very first sentence. The human lives it renders are on every page lowdown and glorious, fallen and redeemed, and all at the same time. They would be too heartbreaking to follow, in fact, were they not observed in such a generous and artful spirit of hope, in a spirit of mercy, in the spirit of love. • Paul Harding "Remarkable. . . . Mathis weaves this story with confidence, proving herself a gifted and powerful writer. • Publishers Weekly (starred) "An excellent debut. . . . Appealingly earthbound and plainspoken, and the book's structure is ingenious. • Kirkus Reviews (starred) "Stunning. . . . Mathis writes with blazing insight into the complexities of sexuality, marriage, family relationships, backbone, fraudulence, and racism in a molten novel of lives racked with suffering yet suffused with beauty. • Booklist (starred)

It was a struggle for Hattie to put herself together after losing her twins. Losing her babies was a partial disintegration of herself. She could not move beyond her grief, even when she had more children. I believe she loved the children born after the twins, but chronic depression affected her in a way that was detrimental to their upbringing. Her husband August's instability added to her depression. Although August was unreliable as a husband and father, he had no difficulty expressing a little tenderness to his children. Yet August was a soft man who lacked character. He was too easy, too carefree, a spendthrift who enjoyed the bars, women and good times. In essence, August was egocentric. I loved Hattie's character. I saw her as a strong woman, yet her grief kept her tethered to a man that caused a great deal of her emotional disability. She could not lift herself out of the mire from him. Her brief affair with Lawrence showed her lack of direction. However, Lawrence made her feel good, made her laugh and gave her hope. But Lawrence's compulsion would have spiraled out of control. Lawrence would have sent Hattie into a tailspin of profound depression. Lawrence could not offer her permanence and stability. Hattie and August's dysfunction and instability affected the children as adults. Their adult children had their own destructive behaviors and demons to deal with. I enjoyed the book because I could imagine (Hattie's sister) Pearl's desperation for a child. I could imagine Hattie's loss and the effects of depression

on her psyche. The writing was poignant, touched my heart, and made my eyes moisten at times. That in itself is a feat for a writer. I would have liked the book to end with Bell, who I found destructive. I will not say more than that. The only error I found was Lawrence's discussion of Robert Kennedy in Bell's chapter (1975). Robert Kennedy died June 6, 1968. Errors happen in editing and in historical facts. No one knows this more than I do. I suggest you read the book. It is a great read.

I tried to like this book, however, I just couldn't. I like books where you invest yourself in the story, this one really had no story. I like books where you find yourself loving or hating the characters, this one didn't give me enough time to develop that love/hate relationship. Each chapter is about a different child of Hattie, however, once that child has been talked about, you don't hear about them again except in very quick passing. Maybe some people like that in a book, but I don't. This was more like a compilation of novellas instead of a novel.

Enjoyed the writing. Found the story engrossing, despite the sad narrative. Would have appreciated moments of joy and success, and especially humor. Some of the children's self-talk sounded similar, making it difficult to differentiate among them. I was touched by the story of the Hattie's sister who came up from Georgia to get something precious from her. Excellent ending.

The book kept my attention from the start to the end. I will recommend for all parents and parents to be to read this. Hattie was a very different woman. Her love was expressed in a different way, that some mothers show their love. I really enjoyed reading the book, it is well written. Each chapter I can picture myself there. Good work Ayana Mathis !

I must begin by saying that Twelve Tribes Of Hattie was recommended to me by an author that I admire in August of 2012. She indicated that this was a new author and the release date for the book would be February of 2013. You can imagine my surprise when it was selected by Oprah and the launch date was "pushed" up. I was so excited to read, and even more so after it was selected by my book club as our read for February. I REALLY enjoyed Ms. Mathis' prose with regards to her ability to set the scene for the reader. I did not like the flow of the chapters however, because they were disjointed and sometimes lacked resolution. I really wanted to enjoy this book, and embrace it as one of my all time favorites; but once I completed it, I felt let down...like a deflated balloon. This story had so much potential had it been written with a better balance - it came from a dark place. I

am not saying there should have been Unicorns, Rainbows, and Butterflies throughout; but some interjection of happiness or success for at least one of the nine children would have given this reader some hope and redemption for Hattie's descendants. For an exceptional read; I would like to recommend "The Healing" by Jonathan Odell.

This book starts and stops in so many ways it is an utter disappointment. It feels as though you are reading many unfinished short stories. The characters start out strong yet you are left with no idea where they are or what becomes of them. Hattie & August (to a lesser degree) are the most common elements within the book. I was excited to read this book because the description made it sound like a different storytelling view, and it was, but I was left feeling that nothing was resolved. You literally have NO idea what happens to these people at the end of the book. You barely understand how they got there. I was quite disappointed by the whole thing.

The first chapter is so riveting that you have to stop to catch your breath. This novel is engaging from start to finish. I highly recommend this read.

The author builds a three dimensional picture of Hattie, the center of the story, through stories weaved together by herself and by her children. The different voices in the book holds different views and thus a multifaceted persona surfaces. I enjoyed reading this book.

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