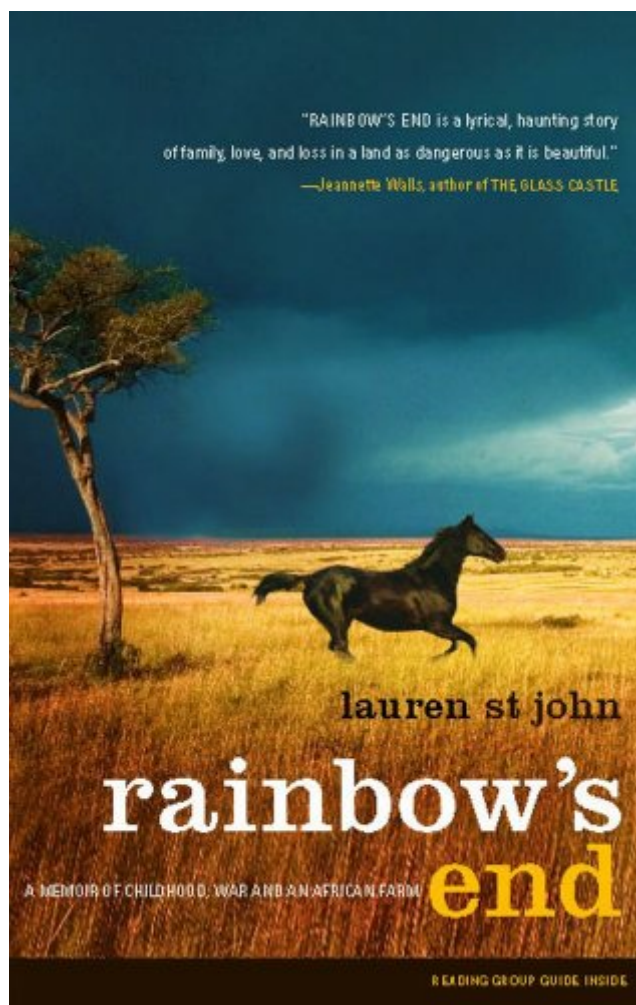


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Rainbow's End: A Memoir Of Childhood, War And An African Farm



Synopsis

This is a story about a paradise lost. . . . About an African dream that began with a murder In 1978, in the final, bloodiest phase of the Rhodesian civil war, eleven-year-old Lauren St John moves with her family to Rainbow's End, a wild, beautiful farm and game reserve set on the banks of a slowflowing river. The house has been the scene of a horrific attack by guerrillas, and when Lauren's family settles there, a chain of events is set in motion that will change her life irrevocably. Rainbow's End captures the overwhelming beauty and extraordinary danger of life in the African bush. Lauren's childhood reads like a girl's own adventure story. At the height of the war, Lauren rides through the wilderness on her horse, Morning Star, encountering lions, crocodiles, snakes, vicious ostriches, and mad cows. Many of the animals are pets, including Miss Piggy and Bacon and an elegant giraffe named Jenny. The constant threat of ruthless guerrillas prowling the land underscores everything, making each day more dangerous, vivid, and prized than the last. After Independence, Lauren comes to the bitter realization that she'd been on the wrong side of the civil war. While she and her family believed that they were fighting for democracy over Communism, others saw the war as black against white. And when Robert Mugabe comes into power, he oversees the torture and persecution of thousands of members of an opposing tribe and goes on to become one of Africa's legendary dictators. The ending of this beautiful memoir is a fist to the stomach as Lauren realizes that she can be British or American, but she cannot be African. She can love it -- be willing to die for it -- but she cannot claim Africa because she is white.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lauren St. John's tale of family life, strife and growing up in Rhodesia during "the War" -- the guerrilla war that led to the creation of Zimbabwe and Mugabe dictatorship, is at once beguiling and frustrating. There are all sorts of unnecessary nonsequiters and mysteries that derail what is generally a very engaging memoir. For instance, she frequently discusses her unpronounceable Dutch name, but I'm not sure if I ever saw it in the book. She says that the entire family changed names by deedpole but she doesn't say why. And they all took different surnames. Why this need to disassociate from one another? Why no details? Why mention all this if it is unmentionable and you can't tell us what you're talking about? Something is going on between mom and dad, Mom is always getting on a plane and flying around the world, but we don't find out why until almost the end of the book. Even then, she doesn't do more than hint until the last few pages. Dad was unfaithful. Is that it? That's the big deal? That's why they all took different surnames? If she was going to tell us anyway, why make us roll our eyes in frustration first? For all her tiptoeing around family secrets and disputes, St. John is ultra-descriptive about her daily life, from the vanilla-licious Cerelac she had for breakfast, to her particular preferences in biltong. This attention to detail is the best part of the story, giving us a real feel for the era and the way she lived. It is where St. John's story captures our attention and where her gift for making us 'see' what she sees really shines. The book is a fascinating look at Rhodesia prior to and during the time it morphed into Zimbabwe and the thugocracy it is today, although it ends before the country goes completely off the rails.

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