



## The Garden

*Elsie V. Aidinoff*

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**The Garden** Elsie V. Aidinoff

In the beginning ...

There was the Serpent, there for Eve's awakening, and for all the days since. Teacher, mentor, companion, friend, and more. There was God. The Creator. Quick to anger. Dangerous. Majestic.

There was Adam: as God said, a joy to behold.

And there was Eve.

These four hold the future in their hands. And only Eve -- or perhaps the Serpent, too -- wonders what lies outside the Garden of Eden. Passionate, witty, beautifully drawn, and utterly unforgettable, *The Garden*, a debut novel, remakes and offers insights into a story that forms a cornerstone of our understanding.

## The Garden Details

Date : Published April 14th 2004 by HarperTeen

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Author : Elsie V. Aidinoff

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## From Reader Review The Garden for online ebook

### Hallie says

First of all, I'm not giving this book one star because I disagree with the way it treats Christianity. I give Philip Pullman an unhesitating five stars because he is a genuinely good author. Aidinoff would like to be Pullman, but lacks the inspiration and the talent. This book is frankly boring, relies heavily on description of the Garden, paints one-dimensional characters (and in a world with exactly four sentient beings, to keep them all one-dimensional for the entirety of a fairly long book is a rather astounding feat of bad writing), and is just as uncompromising in its worldview as the one it purports to criticize. This book isn't truly about questioning the established order or promoting freedom of thought - if it were, the Serpent wouldn't have such ready answers to all Eve's questions about life, the universe and everything. It's simply about substituting one set of "humanist" values for another set of "religious" ones. And, as I said, it makes for a fairly boring read.

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### Michelle says

This is supposed to be for YA, which I think of from 12-17 years old, but I wouldn't recommend it for anyone under age 14 because of the sexual parts. Otherwise it was really interesting and made me think about Adam & Eve more.

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### Alison says

I have read this book numerous times. It is an absolute favorite of mine. The ideas behind the story are beautiful and believable. This book even inspired a tattoo that I have on my back. My sympathies for the Serpent are undeniable, and my love for Eve is strong. Reading through it this time around, I realized the writing style was much more intricate than I had noticed before. The story starts out written in a fairly child-like manner, much in the same way I would expect someone new to the Earth would actually write. By the end, the thoughts are well formed and beautifully written. It bothered me for a bit until I made that realization. I highly recommend this book to anyone with an open mind.

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### Bananas says

[and...more later on, in a surprisingly touching scene. (hide spoiler)]

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### Julie says

I don't recommend this book if you're deeply religious because it portrays God as selfish, impatient, childish, and needy. That said, this was an extremely creative alternative look to what happened in the Garden of Eden and what led Even to eat the forbidden apple. It questions the meaning of freedom and free will and the

traditional portrayal of women in the Bible. Better still, the descriptions of Eden and the surrounding world are absolutely beautiful and you get to experience the world through Eve (mostly) and Adam's eyes for the first time. It definitely makes you appreciate the beautiful things that surround us every day!

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### **Kristy says**

A twist on the Garden of Eden story. "Adam and Eve are raised separately: Adam by a controlling, jealous and angry God who insists on total obedience, and Eve by the wise and gentle Serpent, who encourages her to ask questions and challenges her to think for herself." God wants to populate the earth and pressures Adam to force himself on Eve. This rape inevitably leads to the disintegration of their friendship. Eve begins a healing process which ultimately helps her make the choice to eat from the tree of knowledge. She decides that the introduction of knowledge and death are necessary for the development of human beings. Finally, a feminist's /version of this popular Judeo-Christian myth!

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### **Anisha says**

At first I thought it was plot-less...but by the end the author definitely made some connections and tied things up. Easy to read, very interesting perspective, and it definitely made me think. I would definitely recommend it.

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### **Jenna says**

This is not your Sunday school version of Adam and Eve and the Creation. When I read this, I felt creeped out to reading such a "blasphemous" retelling of the story of Eden. Aidinoff's depiction of God as a childish, selfish, bratty being was jarring. But the story is fleshed out, risky, and I loved how the book played out -- petulant God and all. In the afterword, Aidinoff says the reason she wrote the story was because she felt there were so many holes in the Genesis Creation story that she wanted a way to explain them. And in spite of her saying she didn't set out to write a story with feminist and religious leanings, for her to have written Eve as a strong and smart woman (oftentimes much smarter than Adam), and to write about God and the Serpent and the first two humans . . . it kind of happened anyway

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### **Lisa says**

pretty interesting, the creation story from eves point of view, not for the faint of heart,(spoiler) an almost rape is contained, beware.

Provides an interesting view of a story from another point of view

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### **Danielle Anderson says**

I enjoyed this book! I enjoyed the clever way that Eve and Adam are written and I liked the serpents character. Was not thrilled about the character of God but I can understand the writers take and appreciate her creative view.

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### **Laura says**

I read this book in 2004, which means I would have been 14 years old at the time. I picked the book out randomly at Barnes & Noble one day and remember just really falling in love with it. Not at all because of it's religious foundation (that meant little to me), but because of how *refreshing* it was.

By now, if you've read the summary or others' reviews about this book, you probably know: This is a take on the story of Eve, as in, Adam & Eve in the Garden of Eden. From her perspective, you learn about the Serpent, her mentor as designated by God; Adam, who is in God's own care; and God himself, a quick-tempered and seemingly narcissistic individual.

The book starts with Eve waking up and being in complete wonder of the world around her. The Serpent cares for her and teaches her before she even meets Adam or God, where the book then takes an interesting twist and eventually comes to the key event we all know happens: Eve eats an apple from the forbidden tree. Her journey up to that point is full of fascination, curiosity, intrigue and more, bringing the reader with her as she learns and loves.

I have to say that it is Eve's innocence and admiration for even the smallest things in life was what made this book really resonate with me years ago. I think its obvious we take things for granted, and after reading this, it surprisingly gave me a different perspective on life. (I wonder how I would feel if I read this again now.) Regardless, this book is beautifully written and takes an intriguing perspective on a timeless story.

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### **Jessica-Robyn says**

The Garden is a retelling of the the biblical story of The Garden of Eden. Now, if we take a second to ignore the fact that this story is the basis of God creating the universe and is considered religious text, this book is just another retelling. Granted, it's not about Cinderella or Pride and Prejudice but it follows the same format of taking a story that already exists and retelling it from a different point of view.

Now, I am not Christian or even very religious, so for me personally I didn't have a problem in reading this. For some people this book will cross the line. Although I didn't find anything said to be particularly insulting to Christianity, it's not exactly the perfect story if you find yourself easily offended. And the part God plays does make me want to say that this isn't for the faint of religious heart.

The plot takes us throughout the original biblical version through the eyes of Eve as she gradually makes her way towards her fate. The more I read, the more attached I felt towards Eve as a character. She's so *new*, like a child who is somehow already a woman. The story is also expanded upon with the interactions Eve has with the Serpent, God, and Adam.

The writing does sway towards the fact that womanhood of the past is nothing like womanhood of the present. Getting the short end of the stick is a fact of history and the writing of The Garden does not gloss

over that it started out that way.

Overall, I found The Garden to be incredibly interesting, if not a little unexpected. I mean, of all the retelling you come across not many people have the balls to go to religious text and say, "Here's how it could have happened." It was at times very harsh to read but it has this effort to it that shows how the author was really trying to take these characters and flesh them out.

Not something I would recommend but it was at least interesting to see someones attempt at writing such a story.

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### **Ruth says**

I read this book several years ago and it still resonates with me, which is saying something with my memory. Not a typical retelling of the Garden of Eden scenario but one that makes you think about two young naive teens left to their own devices to figure things out, but with the "help" of two mentors - Eve's Serpent and Adam's God. In this version the Serpent is the much kinder and gentler of the two but no one can say our Old Testament God is a kind one. He is viewed more as a scientist in the sense of seeing how Adam with respond to his first sexual urges, no matter if Eve is receptive yet or not. This book has raised a lot of concerns, but I believe it is beautifully written and very thought provoking - two criteria essential in a great book - at least for me.

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### **Claire says**

I am not devoted to any religion, so I feel that's why I enjoyed this book more. It gives a different perspective on what it was really like in the Garden of Eden. The author portrayed the Serpent as the wise and caring one, and God as a person who wanted complete devotion and perfection from Adam and Eve. I recommend this book to anyone who is open to many religious possibilities.

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### **Jessica Fassinger says**

[TRIGGER WARNING - DO NOT READ THIS BOOK IF YOU ARE TRIGGERED BY RAPE SCENES]

So I read "The Garden" for the first time when I was in seventh grade, yeah, I was about...twelve maybe eleven? Which (in my humble and honest opinion) is too young to read this book. At least, personally, I think I should have waited to read this book.

Reading the Author's Note at the very end of the novel certainly helped clear things up. Even though it's a retelling and different perspective of the Biblical story of The Garden of Eden and of Adam and Eve - it's not inherently Christian. It made me wonder the whole way through if Elsie (the author) was a Christian or not. In the author's note she said she got the idea to write the book "in church" so I can only assume...

Regardless of the biblical sense of the biblical story. One, it was well-written. [TRIGGER WARNING] Two,

the rape scene where God forces Adam to have sex with Eve and neither of them enjoy it and it's against both of their wills was uncomfortable...but at the same time, it wasn't very violent.

Also, big surprise in this re-telling of this famous story is that The Serpent isn't portrayed as Satan, he's portrayed as Wisdom, Reason, and Justice. He's portrayed as Nachash (I don't know who Nachash is, but I will be doing further research on this).

All in all, it was provocative, it was bold, and it kind of made me put it down afterwards and say, "What the fuck did I just read?"

If you want to be confused - read this book.

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