



Hang a Thousand Trees with Ribbons: The Story of Phillis Wheatley (Great Episodes)

By Ann Rinaldi

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Kidnapped from her home in Senegal and sold as a slave in 1761, Phillis Wheatley--as she comes to be known--stuns her adopted country by becoming America's first published black poet.

Includes a reader's guide.

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Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #277995 in Books
- Brand: Graphia
- Published on: 2005-03-01
- Released on: 2005-03-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.00" h x .88" w x 4.50" l, .51 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 352 pages



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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 7 Up-Rinaldi's latest contribution to historical fiction tells the story of the first important African-American poet. Since Phillis Wheatley lived in Boston just before the Revolutionary War, readers get a dose of U.S. history as well. Rinaldi freely admits in her author's note that she has altered many facts to create "my own Phillis." In her biggest change from reality, she makes Nathaniel Wheatley, the handsome, bright, bored son of Phillis's owners, the girl's tutor. This teacher-pupil relationship, which develops into a full-scale crush on Phillis's part, dominates the book. Readers will be drawn in just as Phillis is, and will enjoy their conversations, quarrels, and activities. Unfortunately, Nathaniel is absent during the last few chapters and they consequently limp along, suffering from wordiness and an overabundance of historical data. Phillis's interview with George Washington, which concludes the novel, is sentimental and didactic-a disappointment rather than a celebration. Rinaldi writes well, gives an engrossing look at pre-Revolutionary War life with numerous interesting details, and brings her characters vividly to life. It's too bad she couldn't sustain the novel's initial excitement and appeal. Those who follow it through should also read Merle Richmond's *Phillis Wheatley* (Chelsea, 1988; o.p.), which sticks strictly to the facts and provides a fascinating contrast to Rinaldi's treatment.

Ann W. Moore, Guilderland Public Library, NY

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From Booklist

Gr. 7^12. Phillis Wheatley, America's first black poet, was a child when purchased by John Wheatley in 1761, and her entrance into his Boston household marked the beginning of her unique position. She was educated, nurtured, and encouraged to write by the prominent Wheatleys, but was never considered an equal because of her color. It is Phillis' dilemma of belonging to neither the white nor the slave society that Rinaldi so well delineates. Obviously deeply researched, the novel abounds with details of colonial life--encounters the Wheatleys had with America's early historical figures as well as the effects of the day's politics on Mrs. Wheatley's campaign to get Phillis' poetry published. The poet's circumstances deteriorated after the deaths of the Wheatleys, and she died at age 30 in abject poverty, her husband in debtor's prison. In contemplating this quick decline, Rinaldi questions the motives of Phillis' mentors and friends--did they consider her a serious poet or a plaything, a parlor conversation piece? And did they properly prepare her for the attention she received for her poetry? It is difficult to know, and the author, fortunately, does not make judgments but leaves it up to readers to decide for themselves. Strong characterization and perceptive realism mark this thoughtful portrayal. *Laura Tillotson*

From Kirkus Reviews

The short and not very happy life of America's first black poet, brought to vibrant life by Rinaldi (*The Blue Door*, p. 1241, etc.). Keziah is kidnapped from her village in Senegal in 1761 and handed over to a notorious slave trader for transport to America. She is brought to Boston, where she is purchased by the Wheatley family, who rename her Phillis after the ship on which she arrived. Nathaniel, the son and potential heir to the substantial Wheatley estate, becomes intrigued by the slave's intellect, and teaches her to read and write, then tutoring her in the Latin and Greek classics. Phillis's gift for writing poetry impresses the Wheatleys and their guests at their frequent soirees, but no American publisher will print her work; she is sent to England, where she is published to great acclaim. She is grudgingly granted freedom upon her return to Boston, but it does not bring the happiness she expected: She is not prepared to be on her own. A disastrous marriage ends with the deaths of her children and her own death at 30, and she is buried in a pauper's grave. A powerful

portrait of an innocent who, uprooted from her world, enters another where she is allowed to rise above the average slave's lot; Rinaldi makes clear to readers that Wheatley's good fortune is a double-edged sword that destroys her. A tragic tale, beautifully written and researched. (Fiction. 12+) -- *Copyright ©1996, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Gloria Duncan:

Typically the book Hang a Thousand Trees with Ribbons: The Story of Phillis Wheatley (Great Episodes) will bring you to definitely the new experience of reading a book. The author style to explain the idea is very unique. If you try to find new book to read, this book very ideal to you. The book Hang a Thousand Trees with Ribbons: The Story of Phillis Wheatley (Great Episodes) is much recommended to you to see. You can also get the e-book from the official web site, so you can easier to read the book.

Jason Serrano:

The reason? Because this Hang a Thousand Trees with Ribbons: The Story of Phillis Wheatley (Great Episodes) is an unordinary book that the inside of the guide waiting for you to snap it but latter it will surprise you with the secret the item inside. Reading this book alongside it was fantastic author who else write the book in such wonderful way makes the content within easier to understand, entertaining means but still convey the meaning entirely. So , it is good for you because of not hesitating having this nowadays or you going to regret it. This unique book will give you a lot of rewards than the other book have got such as help improving your proficiency and your critical thinking method. So , still want to delay having that book? If I have been you I will go to the reserve store hurriedly.

Jeffry Yanez:

This Hang a Thousand Trees with Ribbons: The Story of Phillis Wheatley (Great Episodes) is completely new way for you who has curiosity to look for some information given it relief your hunger of knowledge. Getting deeper you in it getting knowledge more you know or else you who still having small amount of digest in reading this Hang a Thousand Trees with Ribbons: The Story of Phillis Wheatley (Great Episodes) can be the light food to suit your needs because the information inside this kind of book is easy to get by means of anyone. These books acquire itself in the form and that is reachable by anyone, sure I mean in the e-book web form. People who think that in book form make them feel tired even dizzy this guide is the answer. So there is absolutely no in reading a guide especially this one. You can find what you are looking for. It should be here for an individual. So , don't miss it! Just read this e-book variety for your better life and knowledge.

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