



Critical Insights: Barbara Kingsolver

By Austenfeld. Thomas

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This collection of essays offers readers an introduction to Kingsolver's life, works, and critics. Four original essays provide valuable context for readers new to Kingsolver. These essays draw on Kingsolver's biography to discuss the evolution of her political convictions and locate her as an inheritor of the political fiction of the 1930s; review the major pieces of Kingsolver criticism and the popular reception of her books; demonstrate how her first novel, *The Bean Trees*, affirms positive portrayals of racial and ethnic others; and offer an ecofeminist reading of *Prodigal Summer* that reveals how, throughout the novel, the female protagonists reconsider their relationships with human communities and the land of the Appalachian South.

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 10 Up—Students who need a range of critical material in one source will find it here. Entries open with a biographical piece, followed by a "Critical Contexts" section that provides three essays on the influence of the author's works or discussions on such topics as the cultural context that shaped his or her writings. The bulk of the material, though, consists of previously published essays and articles that focus on specific works or themes. For instance, *Ernest Hemingway* features an article entitled "The Personal Stories: Paris and Provence, 1926–1927" by Hilary Justice that appeared in one of her books. The volumes also feature an original entry by a writer from the literary journal *Paris Review*. The essays are accompanied by endnotes, and general bibliographies offer plenty of material for further research. The indexes are somewhat paltry and cross-references are only useful in the case of titles that were translated into English. Overall, though, the quality of the articles—new and old—is impressive.—*Carol Fazioli, Gwynedd-Mercy College, Gwynedd Valley, PA*

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