



Wench: A Novel (P.S.)

By Dolen Perkins-Valdez

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Wench by Dolen Perkins-Valdez is startling and original fiction that raises provocative questions of power and freedom, love and dependence. An enchanting and unforgettable novel based on little-known fact, Wench combines the narrative allure of Cane River by Lalita Tademy and the moral complexities of Edward P. Jones's The Known World as it tells the story of four black enslaved women in the years preceding the Civil War. A stunning debut novel, Wench marks author Perkins-Valdez—previously a finalist for the 2009 Robert Olen Butler Short Fiction Prize—as a writer destined for greatness.

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Wench: A Novel (P.S.) By Dolen Perkins-Valdez Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In her debut, Perkins-Valdez eloquently plunges into a dark period of American history, chronicling the lives of four slave women—Lizzie, Reenie, Sweet and Mawu—who are their masters' mistresses. The women meet when their owners vacation at the same summer resort in Ohio. There, they see free blacks for the first time and hear rumors of abolition, sparking their own desires to be free. For everyone but Lizzie, that is, who believes she is really in love with her master, and he with her. An extended flashback in the middle of the novel delves into Lizzie's life and vividly explores the complicated psychological dynamic between master and slave. Jumping back to the final summer in Ohio, the women all have a decision to make—will they run? Heart-wrenching, intriguing, original and suspenseful, this novel showcases Perkins-Valdez's ability to bring the unfortunate past to life. (*Jan.*)

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From [Booklist](#)

Four slave women accompany their masters to a resort in the free state of Ohio in the mid-1850s. Lizzie actually loves Drayle, the father of her two children—a brown-skinned boy named for his father and a girl white enough to pass. Reenie is the half sister of her owner, a cruel man who passes her along to the resort manager. Sweet is pregnant and has a relatively amiable relationship with her master, while Mawu is a wild red-haired woman bent on freedom from a cruel and violent owner. Frustrations mount as they consider their options, tempted to take advantage of the help offered by free blacks and a Quaker woman. But they are guilt-ridden about the prospect of leaving their children behind. The women rely on each other for support as they come together for three summers, catching up on their lives of woe and occasional joy. Drawing on research about the resort that eventually became the first black college, Wilberforce University, the novel explores the complexities of relationships in slavery and the abiding comfort of women's friendships. -- Vanessa Bush

Review

"[E]lectrifying. . . . [T]his remarkable novel skillfully dramatizes a dark chapter in American history. Writing with lyrical grace and a gift for plot development, Perkins-Valdez has produced an inspiring portrait of four brave women and the risks they take to change their lives." (BookPage)

"[A] fascinating and tragic story. . . . [A] compulsive read." (NPR.org, Book Club Pick)

"[A] memorable and engaging debut." (*Library Journal*, Best Books of 2010)

"A heartbreaker, full of understated tragedy and lyrical prose. . . . Perkins-Valdez has woven a devastatingly beautiful account of a cruel past." (People)

"Perkins-Valdez manages to shed a poetic light on one of the ugliest chapters in American history." (Essence)

"Readers entranced by *The Help* will be equally riveted by *Wench*. A deeply moving, beautifully written novel told from the heart." (USA Today)

"A fabulously creative and daring historical novel ." (Dawn Turner Trice, *Chicago Tribune*)

“Perkins-Valdez memorably portrays how the entwined destinies of chattel and master, increasingly related by blood, passion and hatred, prefigure the looming national conflict. This is an almost forgotten, but important, chapter in American history--recorded as fiction but nonetheless full of hard facts.” (Town & Country)

“A mesmerizing read.” (Seattle Times)

“Absolutely phenomenal. . . . *Wench* is an excellent novel that will appeal to many readers. Debut author Dolen Perkins-Valdez has crafted a historical narrative that shouldn't be missed.” (Sacramento Book Review)

“A powerful story.” (Sequim Gazette)

“Dolen Perkins-Valdez's debut novel, *Wench*, is outstanding: well crafted, imaginative, spellbinding, and above all satisfying.” (World Literature Today)

“Impressive. . . . There are countless stories to be told and to be read regarding the lingering emotional impact of slavery; and here, Perkins-Valdez has imagined a memorable one, her characters are framed within a well-crafted and expressive narrative.” (The Network Journal)

“In her debut, Perkins-Valdez eloquently plunges into a dark period of American history. . . . Heart-wrenching, intriguing, original and suspenseful, this novel showcases Perkins-Valdez's ability to bring the unfortunate past to life.” (Publishers Weekly)

“A striking debut intimately limns a Southern slave's complicated relationship with her master. . . . Compelling and unsentimental.” (Kirkus Reviews)

“[A] memorable first novel . . . Readers of historical fiction centering on Southern women's stories like Lalita Tademy's *Cane River* or Lee Smith's *On Agate Hill* will be moved by the skillful portrayal of Lizzie's precarious situation and the tragic stories of her fellow slaves.” (Library Journal (starred review))

“Drawing on research about the resort that eventually became the first black college, Wilberforce University, the novel explores the complexities of relationships in slavery and the abiding comfort of women's friendships.” (Booklist)

“A finely wrought story that explores the emotional lives of four slave women caught in the web of the Peculiar Institution.” (Lalita Tademy, author of *Cane River* and *Red River*)

“This elegantly-structured novel sheds much-needed light on the racial intricacies of America's past.” (Margaret Cezair-Thompson, author of *The Pirate's Daughter* (a #1 Indie Next Pick))

“Through unforgettable characters and luscious prose, *Wench* stares down the difficult truths while never losing its beautiful beating heart. With all the weight of a historical excavation and the urgency of a page-turner, Perkins-Valdez establishes herself as a powerful new voice in fiction.” (Tayari Jones, author of *Leaving Atlanta* and *The Untelling*)

“A shattering story told with dignity, compassion, and some wicked humor. A brave, honest, beautifully written book that will shock and move readers to much new awareness.” (Sigrid Nunez, author of *The Last of Her Kind* and *A Feather on the Breath of God*)

“Perkins-Valdez crawls under your skin and probes most gracefully in clear, concise lyric prose, ultimately asking the question that only extraordinary fiction can ask--what would you have done? A superb and outstanding achievement.” (Jeffrey Lent, author of *In the Fall* and *A Peculiar Grace*)

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Gracie Davis:

What do you think about book? It is just for students since they're still students or that for all people in the world, what best subject for that? Just you can be answered for that concern above. Every person has various personality and hobby for every other. Don't to be forced someone or something that they don't need do that. You must know how great and also important the book *Wench: A Novel (P.S.)*. All type of book would you see on many solutions. You can look for the internet sources or other social media.

Patricia Little:

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Lillian Thrasher:

Reading a book to get new life style in this yr; every people loves to learn a book. When you study a book you can get a lots of benefit. When you read textbooks, you can improve your knowledge, simply because book has a lot of information upon it. The information that you will get depend on what kinds of book that you have read. If you need to get information about your analysis, you can read education books, but if you act like you want to entertain yourself you can read a fiction books, this sort of us novel, comics, and also soon. The *Wench: A Novel (P.S.)* will give you new experience in looking at a book.

Sanjuanita Mecham:

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