



# The Passion

By Jeanette Winterson

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Jeanette Winterson's novels have established her as one of the most important young writers in world literature. *The Passion* is perhaps her most highly acclaimed work, a modern classic that confirms her special claim on the novel. Set during the tumultuous years of the Napoleonic Wars, *The Passion* intertwines the destinies of two remarkable people: Henri, a simple French soldier, who follows Napoleon from glory to Russian ruin; and Villanelle, the red-haired, web-footed daughter of a Venetian boatman, whose husband has gambled away her heart. In Venice's compound of carnival, chance, and darkness, the pair meet their singular destiny.

In her unique and mesmerizing voice, Winterson blends reality with fantasy, dream, and imagination to weave a hypnotic tale with stunning effects.

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## The Passion By Jeanette Winterson Bibliography

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## **Editorial Review**

### **Amazon.com Review**

In 1985 Jeanette Winterson won the Whitbread Award for best first fiction for the semi-autobiographical *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, an often wry exploration of lesbian possibility bumping up against evangelical fanaticism. She was 25. Two years later, *The Passion*, her third novel, appeared, the fantastical tale of Henri--Napoleon's cook--and Villanelle, a Venetian gondolier's daughter who has webbed feet (previously an all-male attribute), works as a croupier, picks pockets, cross-dresses, and literally loses her heart to a beautiful woman. Written in a lyrical and jolting combination of fairy tale diction and rhythm and the staccato, the book would be a risky proposition in lesser hands. Winterson has said that she wanted to look at people's need to worship and examine what happens to young men in militaristic societies. The question was, how to do so without being polemical and didactic? Only she could have come up with such an exquisite answer. In the end, Henri, incarcerated on an island of madmen, becomes aware that his passion, "even though she could never return it, showed me the difference between inventing a lover and falling in love. The one is about you, the other about someone else."

### **From Publishers Weekly**

This "arresting, elegant novel" uses Napoleon's Europe as the setting for an enticing surrealistic romance between an observer of history and a creature of fantasy. "The slender story is sometimes lost in the strange brew of myth, fact and modernism, but Winterson's assured prose does much to unify her unsettling tale," determined PW .

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### **From Library Journal**

Villanelle, the web-footed daughter of a Venetian boatman, is an exotic gamine whose odd, overlapping love affairs are doomed at the outset. As she spars with an aloof society matron in a complex, passionate, and ungratifying game of sexual masquerade, she slips into a concurrent and equally futile love/hate relationship with Henri, Napoleon's chef. Although Winterson has set her story in early 19th-century Europe, her writing style is incongruously contemporary and idiomatic. Despite the strangely fascinating plot, featuring a chillingly unexpected climax, the erratic and nearly incomprehensible structure in which the time period and the narrator's identity are often unclear make this novel irritatingly inaccessible. Ronald L. Coombs, SUNY Health Science Ctr. Lib., Brooklyn, N.Y.

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## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Richard Rhone:**

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**Nathan Lawhorn:**

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**Linda Manning:**

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**Raymond Nelson:**

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