



Daughter of Kura: A Novel

Debra Austin

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"At first, Snap was aware of a few background noises -- a baby cried, the fire crackled, one of the older children laughed. Eventually, the other sounds disappeared, and she heard only the ancient rhythm of the drums, the dancers' voices, and the sounds of her own feet as they beat a path to an unclear future." On the parched African earth more than half a million years ago sits the village of Kura, a matriarchal society of Homo erectus. Snap -- a young, passionate woman of Kura -- is destined to lead her people, and this year she must select a mate for the first time. Will she choose someone different each year, or will she find one mate she wants to pick over and over again, like her mother, Whistle, the next leader of Kura? As the Bonding ceremony approaches, Snap's future remains unknown. But Whistle, when her mate doesn't return, chooses a stranger with ideas far more dangerous than the lions that kill with a single slash.

When Snap challenges the stranger's growing power one too many times, she is brutally cast out to survive or perish. Abandoned and alone, she risks her life -- and the future of her people -- to stand up against an unthinkable evil. Unknown to her, the same danger threatens other villages as well. Soon, Snap and a new band of outcasts will face a force more terrifying -- and deadly -- than any of Africa's natural threats.

Both imaginative and believable, "Daughter of Kura" astonishingly brings to life an ancient and untamed world. Austin has created an unforgettable heroine who comes of age in a thrilling tale of courage, loyalty, and passion.

Daughter of Kura: A Novel Details

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From Reader Review Daughter of Kura: A Novel for online ebook

Danny R. says

Maybe 3.5

Me pareció una historia interesante aunque la contraportada del libro spoilea algunas cosas que no pasan hasta después de la mitad, por lo que la mayor parte de la lectura se hace sabiendo lo que viene.

Aunque no tenía muchas cosas en común con el personaje principal, Golpe, fue fácil meterme en la cultura que la rodea y entender el rechazo o aceptación de determinadas creencias.

Lo único que le costó un poco a mi imaginación fue el lenguaje de señas, pero nada muy terrible.

Donna says

DAUGHTER OF KURA - Debra Austin; 2009 NY

BookDivas

“Daughter of Kura” by Debra Austin was a fabulous book to sit down with, in order to pass time in a winter snow storm. Set in a time period of about a half million years ago, “Daughter of Kura” tells the tale of Snap, a vibrant young woman in line for leadership of her tribe, the Kura.

In a culture where leadership is maternally set, Snap is now of age to pick a mate and is expected to do so at the Bonding ceremony in the fall. However, Snap is discovering it hard to pick her mate for the next year, until strange men begin to arrive in the village.

One new arrival, Bapoto, makes Snap quite uncomfortable, and even though he believes his ‘god’ medicine cured her of an infection from a wildcat wound - Snap is clear in voicing her disbelief. For whatever unknown reason, Snap believes Bapoto isn’t good for her people, the Kura, and remains wary of Bapoto and his increasing interest in her mother - Whistle. Her instincts will undoubtedly prove true.

However, another new arrival is different from the men Snap knows - and soon catches the young woman’s interest - Ash. Though Ash’s many differences leave Snap wondering if he is the man for her, somehow she knows she and Ash are bound for a life together.

With great descriptions of the world so long ago, and fabulous scenarios of life in the days of cave peoples, “Daughter of Kura” is easily reminiscent of “The Clan of the Cave Bears” - and just as well written. “Daughter of Kura” relates the story of a time of great change coming to the prehistoric world. As travellers and traders extend their territories farther, new ideas and ways of life are discovered and are bound to be explored.

“Daughter of Kura” by Debra Austin will definitely hold a place on my “To Read Again” shelf - and I will be passing on my recommendations to read it to all my friends!!

I received this book for free to review from Bookdivas.com. I am a member of Bookdivas, Goodreads,

Kim says

3.5

Yolo says

Find this review at www.notoriousspinkstalks.com

While browsing through the Simon & Schuster catalog I came across this book. After I read the synopsis above I knew I had to read it. I was drawn in by the mere fact that it was set in Africa more than half a million years ago and that it was set in a matriarchal society.

From the time I picked up the book I was drawn in by the characters. The characters are of the Homo erectus species so it allows the reader to use his imagination while reading. I often caught myself wondering what life was like for them during that time. Is science correct about who they were or what they did or are we totally missing it?

Austin brought a solid story line filled with adventures and life occurrences that are all too familiar now in the 21st century. There are village wars due to religion, homosexuality and clashing of the sexes. Everyone wants to be the dominant one and tradition isn't always easy for everyone to go along with. It's amazing how we still deal with these same issues that tear families, cultures and countries apart. In the author's note, Austin said, "We have always been just the same, and unimaginably different."

Rachel says

This book is a lot better than I thought it was going to be. It does have parts in it that I don't like, whether because of annoying characters, annoying choices the author made, or whatever, but overall it's really, really good.

Katilyn says

"Daughter of Kura" by Debra Austin is a book about family, love, war and growing up... 500,000 years ago. Snap lives in a matriarchal society of hunters and gatherers whose lives are governed by the seasons. She is the third most important female in her community. However, when her grandmother dies and her mother takes a mate who has strange, new ideas, Snap feels her way of life threatened. Her own mate nowhere to be found, Snap leaves the relative safety of her village. Will she make it in a dangerous world of lions, scorpions, brutal weather and warring tribes?

The novel reads easily and is not filled with overbearing historical details which makes it accessible to most anyone. However, a taste for speculative fiction or a good bit of suspension of disbelief is necessary to immerse oneself in the world. Recommended for those who enjoy coming of age stories with a romance you won't find in most other stories.

JennanneJ says

Snap is in line to be the Mother of her tribe, but that destiny is not what life has in store for her. It takes some guessing, but this book is set several thousand years ago in southern Africa and follows the lives of a tribe of people and more specifically the granddaughter of the current 'Mother' or chief of her tribe.

Newcomers to the tribe change thoughts about spirituality and lifestyle, and the conflict causes Snap to break out on her own.

One of the unique features of this novel is that the characters don't have an oral language; they 'speak' with sign language and only use grunts and hoots, hisses and growls to express feelings or call attention to something.

I never really understood the point of the novel. It kept me reading until the end, but felt that there was no definite conclusion. But perhaps that was the point - life goes on.

Rosie says

What an interesting book. It's not everyday you get to read fiction that presents a fully functioning matriarchal, non-monogamous, non-religious society! It's refreshing. I liked the language the author used to describe the characters' language of sounds, signs, and gestures.

Teri says

Once I picked up this book I could not put it down. I was pretty fascinated by the culture and people portrayed.

It is an easy to read story with an intriguing storyline and is written well. The story is fairly quick simple to read and digest.

I think the Author did a fantastic job researching pre-historic (and pre Homo-Sapien) life and then used that knowledge to create a working culture. A working culture that was not only believable, right down to the type of communications used, but also intriguing and engaging as a focus in the story.

The Characters were well developed and appealing.

The idea of a "preacher" of a belief system, something altogether new to this race of beings, being the catalyst for such huge changes and strife was very well laid out and delivered to the end. It was a fascinating look at how prehistoric clans could have started developing parts of our culture that are still intact to this day.

Benjamin Thomas says

This novel depicts a tribe of ancients (*Homo Erectus*) in Africa, in a village called Kura. It is a matriarchal society where the protagonist, a daughter in line to become leader someday, must choose a mate and deal with the resulting consequences for her and her village.

On the positive side, this novel is not just about survival. It looks at some less concrete concepts as well, including conflicting outlooks based on how one is raised, and also humanity's first thoughts of the concept of religion. Even in those days, the author suggests, differing viewpoints on religion could be the source of banishment, strife, and even war-like behavior.

Unfortunately though, this is no "Clan of the Cave Bear". I found the beginning of the book to be a bit slow to get started. The setting was fine, the writing style was fine, and the plot seemed to be shaping up fine, but somehow, I was not captivated. I think it was mostly due to the characterization which was lacking and that, for me, is a hard problem to get past. I'd really hoped the author's knowledge of ancient societies would come into play here as we see the culture that she described but her message in the afterward makes it clear we don't know enough about them so this is all speculation.

As the novel progresses, the plot picks up and we get to experience the inevitable conflicts of interactions from other tribes/groups and their potentially conflicting approaches to the best way to do things.

Unfortunately the plot itself is somewhat thin and unbalanced. The author's word choice is good but she falls prey to some rookie mistakes with storytelling. For example we get to read page after page of the "berry picking" aspects of day-to-day life but only two paragraphs devoted to a personal tragedy that happens to the main character.

I read in the author's afterward that Ms Austin chooses to describe very little of the physical nature of her characters for fear that future scientists might discover something that contradicts what she wrote. What? Perhaps Ms Austin has never read any science fiction but there is a whole genre of successful storytelling that may well one day be disproven. That doesn't make the story itself bad in any way. We all appreciate accurate historical facts in our fiction reading but at the end of the day, a successful novel is a great story, not about what fact therein may or may not be proven inaccurate in the future.

Another example: the author chose to have her characters sign to each other rather than speak since we may someday discover that their voice boxes were not fully developed yet. And yet we readers still "see" what they sign because the words are in quotation marks. Their "speech" is not simple and even includes complex concepts...just like most novels. Their sign language would have to have been as robust as today's signing but how do we know they had the mental acuity to sign such concept thoughts? I'm being a bit facetious here but it seems difficult to reconcile when the author chooses when to use that particular excuse and when to ignore it.

One more gripe: the characters' names are sounds that they could make while signing, such as "Snap", "Whistle," "Hum", etc. Talk about a way to severely hamper your story-telling ability! There are quite a few characters in this book and it was impossible to keep them all straight. They are not described in any way other than their name and gender and I often forgot which gender they were; i.e. what gender would you say "Rattle" is? We never find out how they dressed, how tall they are, or what they look like. All of this led me to really not caring what happened to them and thus a promising story became merely mediocre.

Ana Mardoll says

Mother of Kura / 978-1-439-11266-3

According to the dust jacket for "Daughter of Kura", author Debra Austin is an amateur writer with an avid interest in paleontology. As a result, "Daughter of Kura" is a mix of interesting paleontological ideas and factoids, a rather basic and thin-worn plot, and poor overall characterizations. As such, although this is a decent first attempt at a novel, I think the bulk of the book's happy readers will be interested due to the niche appeal of pre-history literature.

A crippling factor in the poor character development is that author Austin is deeply concerned about writing only what we 'know' about these pre-historical races. In the epilogue, for instance, she explains that she refrained from giving the characters in the book a spoken language because we don't yet know whether they had the requisite voice boxes needed in order to speak and she didn't want the novel to be rendered inaccurate due to future discoveries. This timid "but I might be wrong later" approach is a terrible way to write a novel and means that after the basic "must have" characterizations are filled in, we are given nothing else about the characters. There are literally *no* physical descriptions about any of the characters in this book except that the head-woman is old, the villain has a shaved head, and the men have varying degrees of erections when they meet with the main character (male erections are featured prominently in whether or not she feels she can trust a man).

As a general rule of thumb, when a detail might be wrong, Austin therefore gives us none. After reading this 300+ page novel, I cannot tell you whether the characters wear clothes for either warmth or decoration, whether they bathe for either sanitation or vanity, whether or not they (or others in the area) have attempted to domesticate animals or tried to create their own groves of edible plants. I can't tell you whether the characters have purely decorative items like statues or 'mirrors' made from, I don't know, reflective turtle shells or something. I can't tell you if they wear beads or jewelry or have any kind of ornaments to indicate status. I can't even say with authority how much body hair they have, although it's suggested that they are hairier than us. How much hairier? Austin doesn't know, so neither do we. The practical upshot of this is that it is next to impossible to tell all the characters apart when the only thing we know about them is their name. Is 'Whistle' the mother of 'Snap', or was it 'Warble'? Was 'Hum' the older aunt or was that 'Bubble'? What is the gender of 'Rustle' or was it 'Ripple' or am I thinking of 'Rumble'? This complete lack of characterization means that each character is forgotten as rapidly as the turn of a page.

The plot, unfortunately, is as two-dimensional as the characters. The villain shows up early and might as well be twirling a mustache for all the subtlety he presents. (Snap knows he is evil because he doesn't have an erection when he first meets her, unlike all the other men.) After about 100+ pages of hemming and hawing, he pretty much takes over the village by proclaiming that a god exists (the Kurans have been atheists up to this point) and that this god sends orders directly to him and him alone. Also, people who stand in his way to power have a tendency to fall off of cliffs while hunting alone with him. I can't tell if the fact that no one finds this suspicious except the main character is because Austin is making the old mistake that "everyone must be dumb in order to facilitate the plot" or a new mistake along the lines of "everyone must be dumb because this is a pre-historical society".

The "religion and men are bad, atheism and women are good" mentality drives most of the plot, and I would have liked it if Austin had maybe taken a moment to point out that the underlying issue isn't necessarily

religion, per se, but rather an egotistical, power-tripping murderer who is using religion as a club to consolidate power, but that distinction is never made. I find it strange and odd that a society that is surprisingly rigid and structured under the circumstances (for example, Whistle's mother is absolutely furious when Whistle breaks the rules and doesn't pick a mate at the yearly Bonding ceremony because her usual mate is a few days late to return in a world without clocks or GPS devices) would suddenly turn a complete about-face and change every one of their customs and practices on the say so of a complete stranger. I find it irksome that no one notices that people have a tendency to accidentally die when they are alone with the villain, as if they are all such innocent children of nature that the concept of murder is completely foreign to them. For that matter, it seems particularly odd that none of them have ever heard of religion or gods until the stranger shows up (where are the rudimentary thunder-gods and volcano-gods?) and it is doubly odd that the first god they come up with feels suspiciously close to a personal Christian god, given that they are always asking for close personal favors from this 'Great One'. I'm not an avid paleontological enthusiast, but I'm pretty sure that religion generally doesn't usually evolve from "atheism" to "loving spirit who loves you" in one generational leap.

If you're an avid reader of pre-history fiction, this book will probably grab your attention. I'm certainly willing to believe that it's one of the better ones in a niche market like this - the book has been carefully written and edited, and the plot and characters are passable if not stellar. Though I felt the plot was very predictable and the characters frustratingly dense, I didn't hate reading the book, but I probably won't read it again either. Check it out at a library first, would be my recommendation.

NOTE: This review is based on a free Advance Review Copy of this book provided through Amazon Vine.

~ Ana Mardoll

Jonathon Danyluk says

i am not sure what i expected when i started this book, but it went above and beyond what i was thinking it could be, i would definitely recommend this book.

Renee says

Daughter of Kura was a bit slow to get going--in fact, this was my second attempt at starting it. (My first attempt only got me a few pages in.) For at least the first third of the book things were okay, but the plot was still being set in motion. Then I suddenly realized I was hooked. I cared about Snap and Ash. I was angry at Bapoto and hurt by Whistle. I have no idea when the book went from "meh" to "MUST FINISH!!!" but it did.

The only critique I have is that the villain went from relatively complex to cartoonish toward the end of the book, and it felt like some of the questions about religion and belief systems were glossed over a bit too easily. Of course, I'm partial to happy (or happyish) endings, but I couldn't help but feel that the payoff did not come naturally from the setup.

But all in all, the book was fascinating, imaginative, and thought-provoking, one that I would most likely read again.

Megan says

I did not find the story here very compelling. I thought the author mainly wrote this book so that she could flesh out her speculations and ideas about how homo erectus might have lived. Most of the detailed scenes explain certain aspects of the society, like how Snap gives birth and how food is prepared. To me, the plot line was just fitted around these speculations to make it into a novel. It was interesting, sure, but really the style, I could take it or leave it. I almost wish the author had expanded in her note at the end a little more to include where she got some of her information and why she chose to make things certain ways. For example, she said her matrilineal society was modeled after baboons and hyenas...why baboons? People are much more closely related to chimps or gorillas, that would have made more sense to me. Overall this is not a book I would read again. I did not become attached to any of the characters.

Mary says

The writing style was kind of odd to me. Most of it was pretty simple; which makes sense with the book being about homo erectus (a ancestors of humans). However, occasionally there would be some really advanced words. I thought it was almost jarring and interrupted the flow of the story. Lastly, I thought the ending was a bit anticlimactic.
