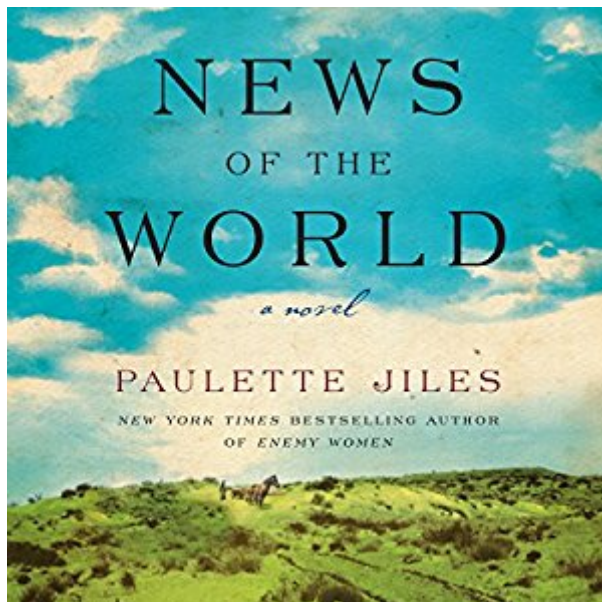


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News Of The World: A Novel



Synopsis

In the aftermath of the Civil War, an aging itinerant news reader agrees to transport a young captive of the Kiowa back to her people in this exquisitely rendered, morally complex, multilayered novel of historical fiction from the author of *Enemy Women* that explores the boundaries of family, responsibility, honor, and trust. In the wake of the Civil War, Captain Jefferson Kyle Kidd travels through northern Texas, giving live readings from newspapers to paying audiences hungry for news of the world. An elderly widower who has lived through three wars and fought in two of them, the captain enjoys his rootless, solitary existence. In Wichita Falls, he is offered a \$50 gold piece to deliver a young orphan to her relatives in San Antonio. Four years earlier, a band of Kiowa raiders killed Johanna's parents and sister; sparing the little girl, they raised her as one of their own. Recently rescued by the U.S. army, the ten-year-old has once again been torn away from the only home she knows. Their 400-mile journey south through unsettled territory and unforgiving terrain proves difficult and at times dangerous. Johanna has forgotten the English language, tries to escape at every opportunity, throws away her shoes, and refuses to act "civilized." Yet as the miles pass, the two lonely survivors tentatively begin to trust each other, forming a bond that marks the difference between life and death in this treacherous land. Arriving in San Antonio, the reunion is neither happy nor welcome. The captain must hand Johanna over to an aunt and uncle she does not remember - strangers who regard her as an unwanted burden. A respectable man, Captain Kidd is faced with a terrible choice: abandon the girl to her fate or become - in the eyes of the law - a kidnapper himself.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is such an impressive novel. Not for a moment does it feel researched. Rather it feels very much of the time (1870). Every character lives and breathes and functions in unexpected yet appropriate ways that are faithful to the people author Jiles has drawn. I loved Captain Kidd and the depth of his heart and his mind; and young Johanna was an incredibly clever and touching child. This tale of these two making their way through perils both natural (swollen rivers) and human (Indians and male predators) on the lengthy trip from Wichita Falls to San Antonio is completely absorbing. This was another of the very rare books from which I couldn't bear to be separated. It went everywhere with me; it was in my hands as soon as I had a few free minutes. There are few historical books I've read that could begin to compare with *News of the World*. And comparisons being truly odious, I would do a great disservice to the author by naming the one or two that come to mind. So I'll just say that this novel has my highest recommendation. It's a wonderful book, a great accomplishment.

The grizzled former Army Captain Jefferson Kidd has raised his two daughters, and now is passing time until he can convince them to move from the ruins of the post Civil War south to Texas. The former printer turned news reader makes his living and tries to save against the family's future travel costs and expenses by going from one remote community in Texas to another, reading to awe struck residents from the newspapers, telling them about faraway countries and doings there, from the difficulty of taking a census in countries where social and religious mores forbid women from uttering the names of their husbands to scientific experiments and explorations. In short, the last thing he needs is to be asked to escort a 10 year old girl, captive for four years among the Kiowa, to her uncle and aunt. She's the sole survivor from her immediate family, who were murdered in an Indian raid, and has few memories. Indeed, the young Johanna now sees herself as Kiowa, not white, and can't grasp what is happening to her, much less the logic behind such rules as not stripping down in public to bathe in the river... Nonetheless, Kidd takes on the assignment, and so begins this gem of a novel, which was sheer delight to read, and is still lingering in my mind some two weeks after finishing it. It's short, perfectly paced and constructed, and chronicles Kidd's journey with Johanna: both the physical voyage they make across the Texas landscape, and the obstacles they surmount together, and his internal journey, as he bonds with the young girl who begins to call him, alternatively, "Keh-pun", or the Kiowa word for grandfather. When Kidd discovers her aunt and

uncle have a reputation for using their young relatives as indentured servants and working them to the bone, the dilemma is even more dramatic. What can or should he do, when all he wants is a peaceful old age? I can't recommend this too highly. Like any great historical novel, it captures both a place and an era almost perfectly. Ostensibly it's a great Western adventure yarn, in the tradition of the shows those of a certain age might watch on their TVs or at the movies. But the real adventure is an emotional one. This packs a powerful emotional punch, and the writing is superb. Just don't miss it. It's a safe prediction that this slim volume is going to have everyone talking about it when it hits bookstores.

A jewel! A jewel, I say! Paulette Jiles snagged me into her reader's circle with her first book, *Enemy Women*. My affection for her prose only grows. Her newest offering is *News of the World*. The Wild West did seem to be quite the place to make your mark as an individual. As Jiles reveals it though, the white world and the Indian worlds are in a constant battle for a way of life. In *News of the World*, the Captain wanders from town to town, holding town halls where he reads the latest news. He can count on packed houses to hear what is going on in China or England and even in the U.S. post Civil War. His very being circles around the news. Then he meets Johanna, a 10 year old coming back to the white world from capture by the Kiowa. What transpires is beautiful, mystical, magical. It defines the power of love, the power of self, the power of freedom. Oh, please, please read this wonderful book! You will smile, I guarantee it. This post is also to be seen on goodreads.com and my blog, *A Word in Time*.

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