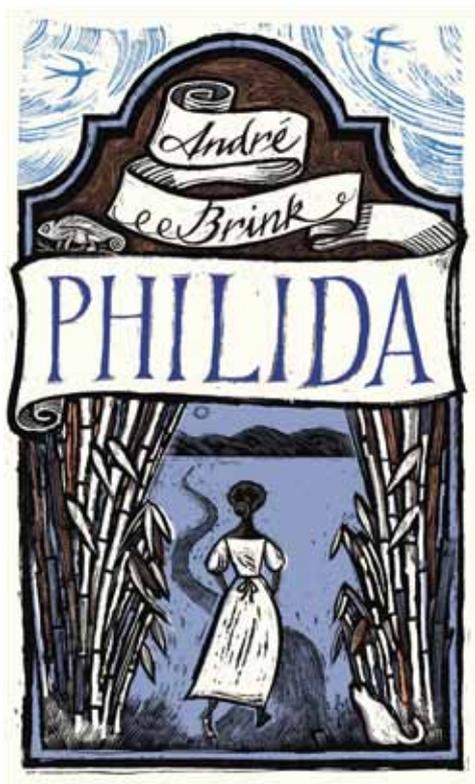


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Reader's Guide



Other novels by André Brink

Other Lives (2008)
The Blue Door (2007)
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Before I Forget (2004)
The Other Side of Silence (2002)
The Rights of Desire (1998)
Devil's Valley (1998)
States of Emergency (1998)
Imaginations of Sand (1996)
On the Contrary (1993)
The First Life of Adamastor (1993)
An Act of Terror (1991)
The Wall of the Plague (1988)
A Chain of Voices (1981)
A Dry White Season (1979)
Rumours of Rain (1978)
An Instant in the Wind (1976)
Looking on Darkness (1974)
The Ambassador (1964)

Philida

André Brink

Harvill Secker

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About the author

André Brink was born in May 1935 in Vrede, South Africa. He has been made a Commander of the Order of Arts and Letters and awarded the Legion of Honour by the French government. In 1992 he was awarded the Monismann Human Rights Award from the University of Uppsala, for making known the injustice of apartheid to the wider world. He has won South Africa's most important literary prize, the CNA Award, three times and has had two novels shortlisted for the Booker Prize: *An Instant in the Wind* (1976) and *Rumours of Rain* (1978).

Philida

The year is 1832 and the Cape is rife with rumours about the liberation of the slaves. Philida made a pact for freedom with François Brink, the son of her master, but he has reneged on his promise to set her free. Deciding to take matters into her own hands, Philida risks her life by setting off on foot for distant Stellenbosch, in a journey that begins with the small act of saying no.

Discussion points

In the afterword, André Brink explains how he wove together fact and fiction in the writing of the novel. How does this change your perception of the novel?

Philida is, as we find out at the end of the novel, a real woman – a slave owned by one of André Brink's ancestors. What responsibilities do you think authors have when writing about real people and real history? Does this change if, like André Brink, the author is themselves connected to the story?

At the end of the novel Brink writes, 'In using historical sources it is of course necessary always to remain conscious of not only what is narrated, but also what is unsaid.' What do you think he means by this?

Do you think *Philida* could be described as a love story?

We hear from multiple voices in *Philida* as there are several narrators – including François and Philida herself. What effect does this have on the narrative, and why do you think André Brink chose to allow several different voices to give their version of the story?

Themed reading

André Brink's memoir *A Fork in the Road*
JM Coetzee *Disgrace*
Toni Morrison *Beloved*
Alex Haley *Roots*

Useful links

[The Guardian interview with André Brink](http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/jun/05/writing-life-andre-brink)
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/jun/05/writing-life-andre-brink>