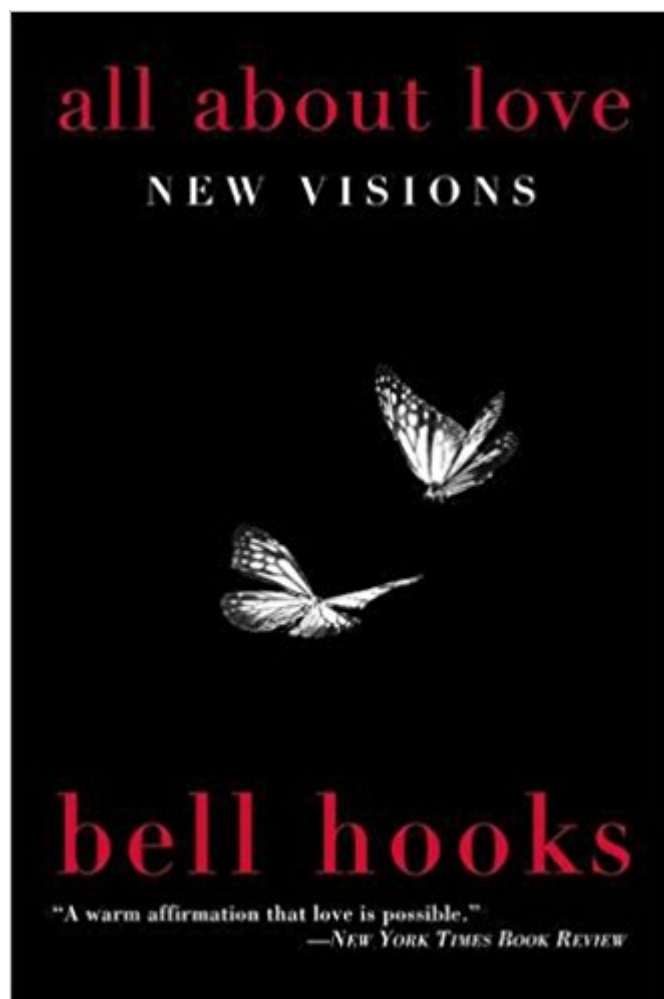


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# All About Love: New Visions



## Synopsis

"The word "love" is most often defined as a noun, yet...we would all love better if we used it as a verb," writes bell hooks as she comes out fighting and on fire in *All About Love*. Here, at her most provocative and intensely personal, the renowned scholar, cultural critic, and feminist skewers our view of love as romance. In its place she offers a proactive new ethic for a people and a society bereft with lovelessness. As bell hooks uses her incisive mind and razor-sharp pen to explore the question "What is love?" her answers strike at both the mind and heart. In thirteen concise chapters, hooks examines her own search for emotional connection and society's failure to provide a model for learning to love. Razing the cultural paradigm that the ideal love is infused with sex and desire, she provides a new path to love that is sacred, redemptive, and healing for the individuals and for a nation. The *Utne Reader* declared bell hooks one of the "100 Visionaries Who Can Change Your Life." *All About Love* is a powerful affirmation of just how profoundly she can.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Readers of bell hooks's fiery and eloquent attacks on racism and sexism might be surprised to see her take on the elusive subject of love, but in her own unique way, hooks beautifully weaves her childhood search for that emotion with society's misuse (and dire need) of it. *All About Love* takes apart the sentimental and often fleeting aspects of romance, stuck in the muddled urges of sex, and details the problems that arise from the confusion between the two. What hooks does best is reveal

that the true force of love lies in its spiritual, redemptive power, which can impact positively on humankind: "When angels speak of love they tell us it is only by loving that we enter an earthly paradise," she writes. "They tell us paradise is our home and love our true destiny." --Eugene Holley Jr.

Taking on yet another popular topic in her role as cultural critic, hooks blends the personal and the psychological with the philosophical in her latest book--a thoughtful but frequently familiar examination of love American style. A distinguished professor of English at City College in New York City, she explains her sense of urgency about confronting a subject that countless writers have analyzed: "I feel our nation's turning away from love as intensely as I felt love's abandonment in my girlhood. Turning away, we risk moving in a wilderness of spirit so intense we may never find our way home again." With an engaging narrative style, hooks presents a series of possible ways to reverse what she sees as the emotional and cultural fallout caused by flawed visions of love largely defined by men who have been socialized to distrust its value and power. She proposes a transformative love based on affection, respect, recognition, commitment, trust and care, rather than the customary forms stemming from gender stereotypes, domination, control, ego and aggression. However, many of her insights about self-love, forgiveness, compassion and openness have been explored in greater depth by the legion of writers hooks quotes liberally throughout the book, such as John Bradshaw, Lucia Hodgson, Thich Nhat Hanh, Thomas Merton and M. Scott Peck, among others. Still, every page offers useful nuggets of wisdom to aid the reader in overcoming the fears of total intimacy and of loss. Although the chapter on angels comes across as filler, hooks's view of amour is ultimately a pleasing, upbeat alternative to the slew of books that proclaim the demise of love in our cynical time. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I recall reading bell hooks in college. But I don't recall getting into a lot of her works. After reading this, that will change. This is one of those books you'd want to come back to as a refresher every now and again. It challenges you to expand your own definition of love or what you think it to be. It was like a breath of fresh air. And, for anyone who wants to dig deep on the topic, this is for you.

bell hooks gives us a breakdown of what we think we know what love is and what it could actually be. This book has made me question what I thought was love. I haven't thought about it the same after reading this book. She provides great definitions and ways of looking at love. A must have in the library.

I loved bell hooks take on love. She does a good job of asserting her feminist viewpoint, while still referencing important experts (like Scott Peck) who have already written extensively on the topic. It was very digestible and certainly something I will recommend to others when they are struggling with what real love means.

There aren't many public discussions of love in America outside of popular culture -- movies, music, books, magazines -- but there should be, because lack of an expansive understanding of and capacity for love is behind much that is wrong in our society. When bell hooks noticed that the world she was living in "was no longer open to love" and that "lovelessness had become the order of the day," she decided to write about it. "I began thinking and writing about love when I heard cynicism instead of hope in the voices of young and old," she says. The result is a book that's a refreshing change from relationship advice books that completely overlook the cultural context of love -- the ways in which love is difficult for both men and women, but especially for women, in a patriarchal culture; the ways in which a more expansive understanding of love is sorely needed to set things right in a country run by fear. hooks begins by addressing the pervasive confusion about what love is, defining it as M. Scott Peck does: "The will to extend oneself for the purpose of nurturing one's own or another's spiritual growth." The chapters in which hooks names "the ways we are seduced away from love" read as a litany of soul-corroding cultural norms. There is, most fundamentally, injustice to children in dysfunctional families in a culture where family dysfunction is normalized. Then there's the increasing prevalence of lying in public and private transactions alike, most recently exemplified in the Enron scandal and the priest-pedophile scandal in the Catholic Church. There's the cultural obsession with power and domination instead of a love ethic. (hooks pulls no punches when she states: "An overall cultural embrace of a love ethic would mean that we would all oppose much of the public policy conservatives condone and support.") There's also the vast and unending greed encouraged by a consumerist society. And last but not least, there's our collective fear of and at the same time worship of death. (What else could explain the great popularity of movies saturated with violence, such as "Lord of the Rings"?) Then there are the chapters where hooks explores the importance of self-love, the reality of divine love, the crucial role played by friendships and communities, the role of romantic love in helping us resolve and transform family-of-origin wounds if approached consciously, the real healing power of true love, and the yearning for love that lies behind the popular fascination with angels. The only topic I found missing from her comprehensive look at love is biophilia, that love of nature named by Harvard biologist

Edward O. Wilson. I'm coming to realize that any concept of intimacy with our particular place on earth is sorely absent from most American lives, imperiling our planet's health as well as our own. Throughout the book, it's hooks's personal revelations that make what she says credible and that especially strike a chord in me. I found in her a sister spirit. Just my age, she could be describing my relationship history when she describes her own. And herein lies my biggest quibble with the book: wishing to avoid the kind of disappointments in relationships with men I've had in the past, I want to believe that I can find satisfying love with a male, but the many generalizations hooks makes about men in our culture make me wonder. I fear she may be right when she says that "most men feel that they receive love and therefore know what it feels like to be loved; women often feel we are in a constant state of yearning, wanting love but not receiving it" (p. xx). According to hooks, many, if not most, men under patriarchy tell lies "to avoid confrontation or taking responsibility for inappropriate behavior" (p. 36), "use psychological terrorism as a way to subordinate women" (p. 41), "are especially inclined to see love as something they should receive without expending effort . . . [and] do not want to do the work that love demands" (p. 114), are usually prevented by sexist thinking from "acknowledging their longing for love or their acceptance of a female as their guide on love's path" (p. 156), "are convinced that their erotic longing indicates who they should, and can, love . . . [and] tend to be more concerned about sexual performance and sexual satisfaction than whether they are capable of giving and receiving love" (pp. 174, 176), and "choose relationships in which they can be emotionally withholding when they feel like it but still receive love from someone else. . . . [and ultimately] choose power over love" (p. 187). Hmmm. Men, what do you say to this? Can you deny it?" "Profound changes in the way we think and act must take place if we are to create a loving culture," writes hooks. I, for one, would welcome those changes and am working on making them in myself. Despite being marred by unfortunate typos ("Living by a Love Ethnic" [viii], "perfect love casts our fear" [220]), this is a courageous and important book that should be read widely and taken to heart.

This book changed the way I look at my own marriage of 16 years and also at the childhood visions I had of love and what the realistic outcome has been. I have recommended this book to many friends and sent it as gifts to others feeling stuck in their own personal relationships. Thank you for writing this refreshing take on love and its complexity.

I love Bell Hooks, and this book should be on everyone's bookshelf. And at this price, why not? She does well to redefine what love is, and it opens your eyes to letting go and forgiveness, and also

invites you to create a community where genuine love is practiced. Eye opening, a bit depressing, but a must have book.

This is probably my favorite book ever. I have purchased this for family members and lovers and recommended it to everyone I've ever spoken with on the subject of love. Sometimes, if I'm going to a dinner party or small gathering with beloved friends and family, I'll bring this book and just share a few quotes in a quiet moment before dinner. Every time people come up to me afterwards and ask me where they can get this book. Beautiful insights. Clear and easily understood writing. Gentle, but direct and powerful. bell hooks changed my life with this one, and I will be thanking her personally if I am fortunate enough to attend one of her open dialogues.

This book has become my bible. bell hooks talks about love in a tangible way and a way to actually heal. To take a step back and evaluate if you are loving and how. This changed my perspective on what loving is and has carried me to be a better version of myself. Read this book if you're ready to conquer what love is actually about.

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