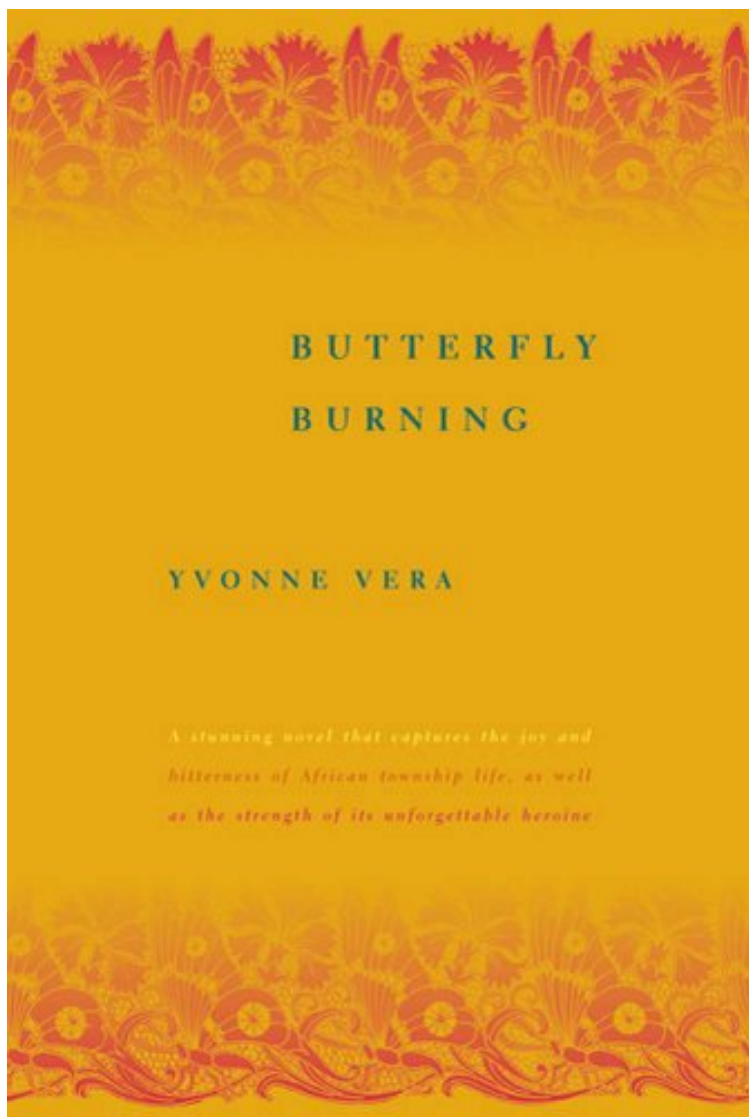


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# Butterfly Burning: A Novel



*Par Yvonne Vera*  
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**Description :** Description du produitButterfly Burning brings the brilliantly poetic voice of Zimbabwean writer Yvonne Vera to American readers for the first time. Set in Makokoba, a black township, in the late 1940s, the novel is an intensely bittersweet love story. When Fumbatha, a construction worker, meets the much younger Phephelaphi, he "wants her like the land beneath his feet from which birth had severed him." He in turn fills her "with hope larger than memory." But Phephelaphi is not satisfied with their "one-room" love alone. The qualities that drew Fumbatha to her, her sense of independence and freedom, end up separating them. And the closely woven fabric of township life, where everyone knows everyone else, has a mesh too tight and too intricate to allow her to escape her circumstances on her own. Vera exploits language to peel away the skin of public and private lives. In Butterfly Burning she captures the ebullience and the bitterness of township life, as well as the strength and courage of her unforgettable heroine.

Prsentation de l'diteur Butterfly Burning brings the brilliantly poetic voice of Zimbabwean writer Yvonne Vera to American readers for the first time. Set in Makokoba, a black township, in the late 1940s, the novel is an intensely bittersweet love story. When Fumbatha, a construction worker, meets the much younger Phephelaphi, he "wants her like the land beneath his feet from which birth had severed him." He in turn fills her "with hope larger than memory." But Phephelaphi is not satisfied with their "one-room" love alone. The qualities that drew Fumbatha to her, her sense of independence and freedom, end up separating them. And the closely woven fabric of township life, where everyone knows everyone else, has a mesh too tight and too intricate to allow her to escape her circumstances on her own. Vera exploits language to peel away the skin of public and private lives. In *Butterfly Burning* she captures the ebullience and the bitterness of township life, as well as the strength and courage of her unforgettable heroine. From Publishers Weekly

In the 1940s, the choices for women in British-ruled Zimbabwe were depressingly few, as Vera (thrice shortlisted for the Commonwealth Writers Prize-African region) illustrates in this slim scorcher. Beautiful, innocent Phephelaphi appears to middle-aged laborer Fumbatha as if in a dream, when she wades out of the river that winds through the black township of Makokoba. He immediately desires her "like the land beneath his feet from which birth had severed him." Her carefree spirit soon tires of his devoted love, however, which she cannot return, although she continues to live with him without the benefit of marriage. Before her mother's tragic murder, Phephelaphi was given a smattering of education, which she knows is the key to her freedom and to her self-realization. "She wanted more than obligation, not a fleeting excitement among male strangers with enticing tongues and a flirtatious oneness. She wanted a birth of her own." After gaining a coveted position at a local nursing school, however, Phephelaphi is grounded by the unthinkable: she learns she is pregnant and no longer eligible for the training course. A searing chapter describes an abortion Phephelaphi performs on herself, which changes the course of her still uncertain destiny. After learning of Phephelaphi's abortion, Fumbatha destroys what little is left of Phephelaphi's self-worth by admitting to adultery and shedding a tragic light on her own parentage. "Falling to pieces, easy, easier than she imagined. Much much easier than holding a man in your arms," she muses. Written in lyrical, metaphor-laden, heavily symbolic prose, this mesmerizing first U.S. appearance of Vera's work is sure to garner attention. (Sept.)

Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. From *Library Journal* Zimbabwean Vera has received wide acclaim in her homeland but is relatively unknown in the United States, where her work has appeared in an anthology and through a small press. Her latest novel is a rare work of beauty, capturing the oft-tragic poetry of life in a black township of Rhodesia in the 1940s. Surrounded by poverty and oppression, where blacks are not even permitted to walk on the pavement, young Phephelaphi searches for her own freedom and fulfillment in spite of the love of Fumbatha, a construction worker more than twice her age. Vera's phrasing and style make mundane tasks like cutting tall grass or waiting for a train sing with a music all their own and give a simple story of love, longing, and betrayal a lyric quality. Readers of Isabel Allende, A.S. Byatt, or Toni Morrison will all enjoy this introduction to fine African literature. Highly recommended. D. Ellen Flexman, Indianapolis-Marion Cty. P.L. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.