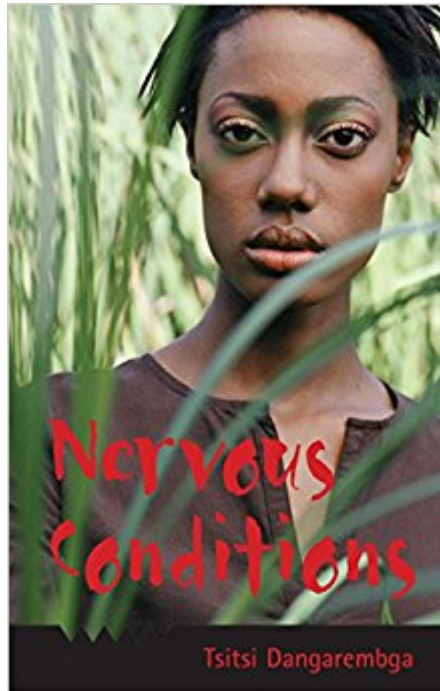




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# Nervous Conditions



## Synopsis

A modern classic in the African literary canon and voted in the Top Ten Africa's 100 Best Books of the 20th Century, this novel brings to the politics of decolonization theory the energy of women's rights. An extraordinarily well-crafted work, this book is a work of vision. Through its deft negotiation of race, class, gender and cultural change, it dramatizes the nervousness of the postcolonial conditions that bedevil us still. In Tambu and the women of her family, we African women see ourselves, whether at home or displaced, doing daily battle with our changing world with a mixture of tenacity, bewilderment and grace.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Tambu, an adolescent living in colonial Rhodesia of the '60s, seizes the opportunity to leave her rural community to study at the missionary school run by her wealthy, British-educated uncle. With an uncanny and often critical self-awareness, Tambu narrates this skillful first novel by a Zimbabwe native. Like many heroes of the bildungsroman, Tambu, in addition to excelling at her curriculum, slowly reaches some painful conclusions--about her family, her proscribed role as a woman, and the inherent evils of colonization. Tambu often thinks of her mother, "who suffered from being female and poor and uneducated and black so stoically." Yet, she and her cousin, Nyasha, move increasingly farther away from their cultural heritage. At a funeral in her native village, Tambu admires the mourning of the women, "shrill, sharp, shiny, needles of sound piercing cleanly and deeply to let the anguish in, not out." In many ways, this novel becomes Tambu's keening--a

resonant, eloquent tribute to the women in her life, and to their losses. Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Many good novels written by men have come out of Africa, but few by Black women. This is the novel we have been waiting for... it will become a classic. (Doris Lessing)Tsitsi Dangarembga -- Winner of the 1989 Commonwealth Writers' Prize is the late 1960s and Tambu is a 13- year-old in rural Zimbabwe. "Although our squalor was brutal," she says, "it was uncompromisingly ours." Her brother Nhamo has been sent to the mission school in town, his education paid for by her uncle, the family elder. Tambu is thirsty for knowledge, and feels the injustice of being kept on the family homestead, but Nhamo tells her she "d be better off with less thinking and more respect." Tsitsi Dangarembga's semi-autobiographical debut was first published in 1988, when it won a Commonwealth Writers prize. It has since become a staple on Eng Lit courses, and is now reissued with a scholarly introduction. A coming-of-age story, it ticks all the right boxes for student essayists -- colonialism, gender, race -- and provides a mine of information about Shona customs. Its appeal to lay readers lies with the guileless Tambu, who starts off as a rather prim little girl but turns into a perceptive and independent young woman. (The Guardian)Dangarembga raises issues about culture, conflict, displacement, family relationships, consciousness and emancipation in a postcolonial society. On another level, it illustrates what children raised between two cultures may have to contend with. Nervous Conditions will find an audience with young people (especially women) and those working in health, teaching and social work professions (Young Minds Magazine)

An engaging (and fast) read. A must read for any one in the African diaspora experiencing some kind of change in social class (e.g. being first in the family to attend college or graduate school) or otherwise having suspicions about the sources of their feelings of alienation. Specifically, this is an amazingly relevant depiction of the pain experienced by those who do as they're told and pursue education to "better themselves": the richness of this book's characters show just how many costs go unstated by those who have the privilege of not paying said costs and unacknowledged by those who haven't had to go through the violent process of being harshly disciplined into being acceptable by the dominant segments of society.Nyasha's character resonated most with me: I, too, feel frustrated by what seems to be an obvious oppressive reality around me as well as the extreme deprivation that can encourage oppressed people to appear complicit. Additionally, most of the

other characters also helped open my eyes to the ways that I have failed to understand why people with situations different from my own can seem complicit in their own subordination. The discussion of how gender plays out also may be eye-opening for those with little clarity on the violence that seeming innocuous hierarchies produce (e.g. even "good" people can enact said violence). I plan on reading the sequel, although I've heard it's not as good. I also recommend this book to:-Any person who doesn't understand the severity of the violence of colonization on those who have been colonized (e.g. people who aren't part of a colonized group, people who firmly believe today's racism is "less bad" than yesterday's)-Those who don't see why people in the African diaspora are often concerned with what often is written off as mere "identity politics" (as opposed to a legitimate sense of loss)-Any person who is having a hard time understanding how "nice" and "good" people are still among the hands that enact violence against colonized peoples-Any person who is having a hard time understanding how a "minority" can be among the hands that enact violence against (their own) colonized people (e.g. people who firmly believe in a rigid category of "sell-outs")

Another required text for my class, it was a good read. Loved the strong female characters and imagery. It was a fast read and the characters well developed. One of my faves for the class.

Congrats for the good job, Dangarembga! I could not wait getting this novel which is a masterpiece in the African literature. This is a must read for anyone interested in Postcolonial literature, the energy of women's rights, their cries and, lives in Rhodesia (Zimbabwe) in the 1960s. Fascinating characters in a fascinating and moving narrative with a compelling examination of the issue of freedom, Dangarembga's "Nervous Conditions" portrays the laborious and careful efforts to female subjectivity and the way to equality. This novel also offers a good read on the themes of colonization, the necessity of education, Christianity and the local religions...

The physical quality of the book was fine upon receipt from . I purchased this novel to read for my Gender Studies course: Women in Developing Countries. The story was amazing, it was hard to put down the book and it had a lot of interesting elements to it such as female-experience, colonial influence, and mental rupture that can occur to the colonized subject. A fantastic story, that leads to critical thought and analysis in the reader.

Starts off a little slow, but the story line picks up. I like how the character evolves and how her perspectives change as her world opens up. Great insight into the lives of a culture where some

grow up with 'privilege' and others are not as fortunate, but both have to overcome challenges. Classic case of 'things are not always as they seem', and 'the grass is not always greener on the other side'.

I am pleasantly surprised with this novel. The story begins a little slow and then, without me realizing it, I am hooked. The women in the story are powerful and complex. The story wrestles with class and culture, the patriarch and progressive education, and the impact it takes on this small African community..

Great story I had to read for my postcolonial Brit Lit course in college. The story is about a young girl who desperately strives to be educated, meanwhile her cousin has been significantly educated and anglicized, and therefore struggles with identity crisis. What happens to a native culture after they've been assimilated? Nyasha is a perfect example. She is "the other" to her native culture, and "the other" in Western culture.

I've been forced to read plenty of material for various classes; everything from Plato, to Marx, to Kerouac. This book is the only read I actually enjoyed. Tsitsi's tale of growing up in what is now Zimbabwe illustrates not only how she rose from abject poverty in a rural household to academia but also the stress she felt pulling away from her insular native culture to the larger world beyond Africa.

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