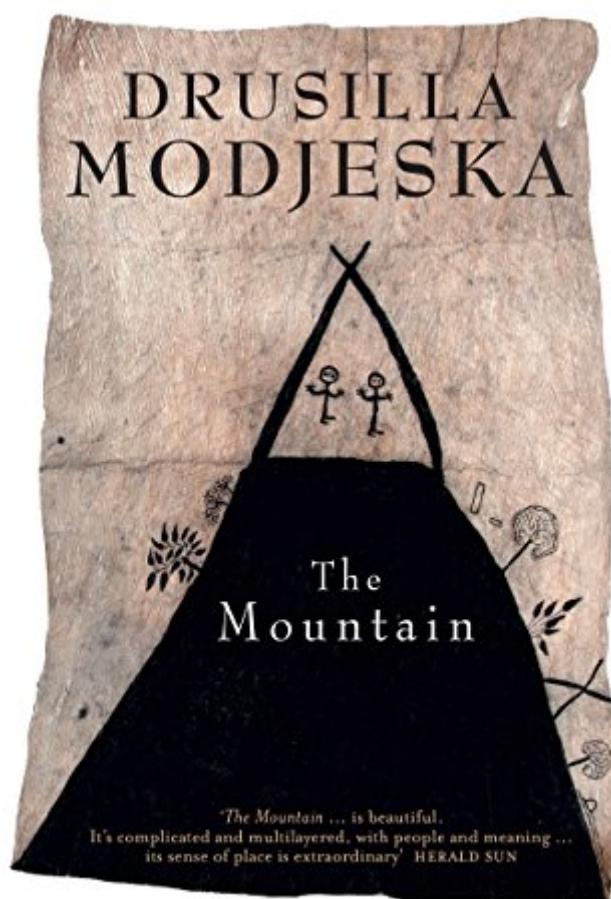


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# The Mountain



## Synopsis

'A novel as intricate and powerful as the bark-cloth paintings at its heart' - Anna Funder  
In 1968 Papua New Guinea is on the brink of independence, and everything is about to change. Amidst the turmoil filmmaker Leonard arrives from England with his Dutch wife, Rika, to study and film an isolated village high in the mountains. The villagers' customs and art have been passed down through generations, and Rika is immediately struck by their paintings on a cloth made of bark. Rika and Leonard are also confronted with the new university in Moresby, where intellectual ambition and the idealism of youth are creating friction among locals such as Milton - a hot-headed young playwright - and visiting westerners, such as Martha, to whom Rika becomes close. But it is when Rika meets brothers Jacob and Aaron that all their lives are changed for ever. Drusilla Modjeska's sweeping novel takes us deep into this fascinating, complex country, whose culture and people cannot escape the march of modernity that threatens to overwhelm them. It is a riveting story of love, loss, grief and betrayal.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Drusilla Modjeska is a highly respected Australian non-fiction author, and this is her first foray into

fiction. I had read a few of her earlier works (Poppy, in particular, stands out, though I also enjoyed Stravinsky's Lunch) so to be presented with this book was like a special treat. The story is in two parts. The first, set in 1968 and the years following, tells the story of Dutch-born photographer Rika and her English anthropologist husband Leonard, as they come to Papua New Guinea to make a film about the indigenous population, in the process falling in with the locals, both indigenous and colonial, who are making lives for themselves in this Australian colony seeking independence. The second part, set in 2005, looks at the experiences of the next generation as they try to make sense of what their country has become. I'm hesitant to say too much because most of what I say could be considered spoilers, but at the risk of ruining things for others I will make some comments.

Modjeska is very good at hinting at things without saying them outright, therefore making exposition seem more natural, but there were times that I wished she would just come out and say what she meant. The second part of the book, for example, seeks to explore why the tight friendship between Rika, Australian expat Martha and local Laedi fell apart and why Rika felt betrayed by the others, yet even when the events were revealed I still wasn't really sure what the issue was. I had trouble with some of the clan relationships, too; Jacob and Aaron were said to be brothers, yet were from rival clans. It's possible that this was explained away and on both my read-throughs I just missed it, but I did feel that the occasional clear explanation would have been merited.

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