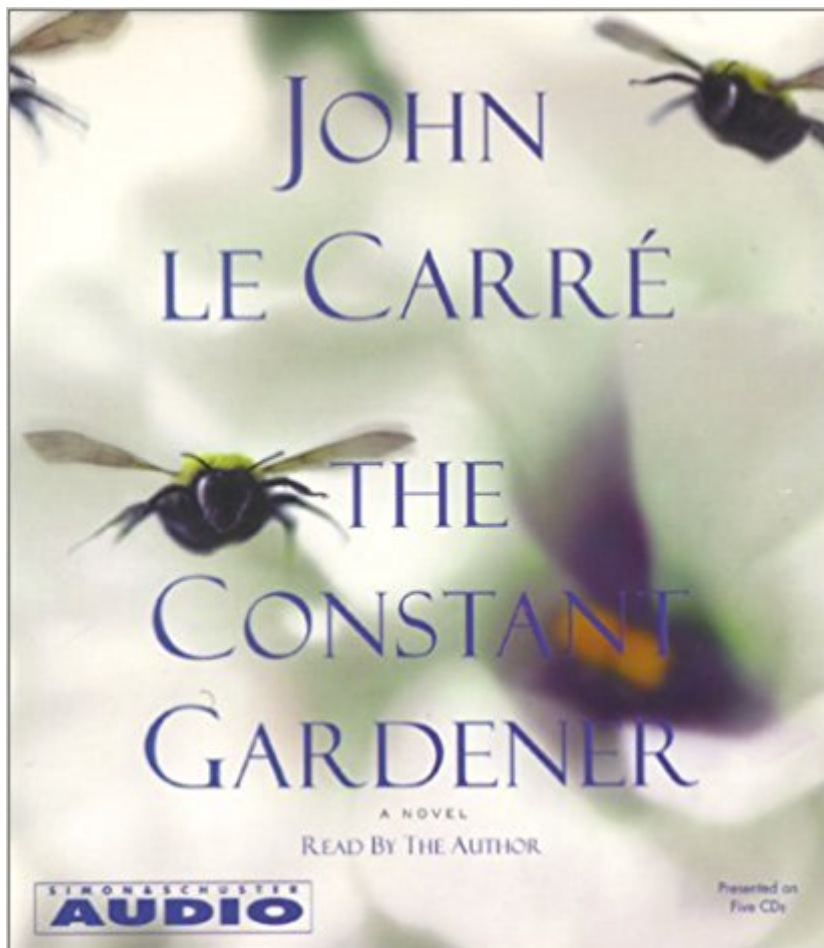


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# The Constant Gardener



## Synopsis

Frightening, heartbreaking, and exquisitely calibrated, John le Carré's new novel opens with the gruesome murder of the young and beautiful Tessa Quayle near northern Kenya's Lake Turkana, the birthplace of mankind. Her putative African lover and traveling companion, a doctor with one of the aid agencies, has vanished from the scene of the crime. Tessa's much older husband, Justin, a career diplomat at the British High Commission in Nairobi, sets out on a personal odyssey in pursuit of the killers and their motive. A master chronicler of the deceptions and betrayals of ordinary people caught in political conflict, le Carré portrays, in *The Constant Gardener*, the dark side of unbridled capitalism. His eighteenth novel is also the profoundly moving story of a man whom tragedy elevates. Justin Quayle, amateur gardener and ineffectual bureaucrat, seemingly oblivious to his wife's cause, discovers his own resources and the extraordinary courage of the woman he barely had time to love. *The Constant Gardener* is a magnificent exploration of the new world order by one of the most compelling and elegant storytellers of our time.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

British diplomat Justin Quayle, complacent raiser of freesias and doting husband of the stunning, much younger Tessa, has tended his own garden in Nairobi too long. Tessa is Justin's opposite, a fiery reformer, "that rarest thing, a lawyer who believes in justice," whose campaigns have earned her a nickname: "the Princess Diana of the African poor." But now Tessa has turned up naked, raped, and dead on a mysterious visit to remote Lake Turkana in Kenya. Her traveling companion (and lover?), the handsome Congolese-Belgian doctor Arnold Bluhm, has vanished. So has

Quayle's complacency. Tessa had been compiling data against a multinational drug company that uses helpless Africans as guinea pigs to test a tuberculosis remedy with unfortunately fatal side effects. Her report was destroyed by her husband's superiors; was she? It's all somehow connected to the sinister British firm House of ThreeBees, whose ad boasts that it's "buzzy for the health of Africa!" John le Carr symbolically associates ThreeBees with an ominous buzz in the Nairobi morgue: "Over [the corpses], in a swaying, muddy mist, hung the flies, snoring on a single note." The home office tries to take Quayle in out of the cold. He cleverly eludes their clammy embrace, turns spy, and takes off on a global chase to avenge Tessa and solve her murder. Le Carr has lost none of his gift for setting vivid scenes in far-flung places expertly described: London, Germany, Saskatchewan, Kenya. His sprinting thriller prose remains in great shape. And thanks to his 16 years in the British Foreign Office, his merciless send-up of its cutthroat intrigues and petty self-delusions is unbelievably good--or rather, believably so. This is global do-gooder satire on a literary par with Doris Lessing's *The Summer Before the Dark*. But you want to know if *The Constant Gardener* is as good as *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy*. Very nearly. Africa's nightmare is more complex than the cold war chess match, and the world pharmaceutical circus is tougher to dramatize than the old spy-versus-spy-versus-spymaster game. Still, le Carr can write a smart, melancholy page-turner, and his moral outrage (the real subject of his books) burns as brightly as ever. --Tim Appelo --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

As the world seems to move ever further beyond the comparatively clear-cut choices of the Cold War into a moral morass in which greed and cynicism seem the prime movers, le Carr's work has become increasingly radical, and this is by far his most passionately angry novel yet. Its premise is similar to that of Michael Palmer's *Miracle Cure*: cynical pharmaceutical firm allied with devious doctors attempts to foist on the world a flawed but potentially hugely profitable drug but the difference is in the setting and the treatment. Le Carr has placed the prime action in Africa, where the drug is being surreptitiously tested on poor villagers. Tessa Quayle, married to a member of the British High Commission staff in corruption-riddled contemporary Kenya, gets wind of it and tries in vain to blow the whistle on the manufacturer and its smarmy African distributor. She is killed for her pains. At this point Justin Quayle, her older, gentlemanly husband, sets out to find out who killed her, and to stop the dangerous drug himself at a terrible cost. Le Carr's manifold skills at scene-setting and creating a range of fearsomely convincing English characters, from the bluffly absurd to the irredeemably corrupt, are at their smooth peak here. Both *The Tailor of Panama* and *Single & Single* were feeling their way toward this wholehearted assault on the way the world works,

by a man who knows much better than most novelists writing today how it works. Now subject and style are one, and the result is heart-wrenching. (Jan. 9) Forecast: Admirers of the author who may have found some of the moral ambiguities and overelaborate set pieces of his last two books less than top-drawer le Carr will welcome a return to his best form. There is a wonderfully charismatic and idealistic heroine, which will bolster female readership, and the appearance of the book shortly after the release of a movie of Tailor (starring Jamie Lee Curtis) is bound to create an extra rush of media attention. Be prepared for the biggest le Carr sales in years. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Without giving away spoilers, I can honestly say this was a very fast paced book for how realistic it is and how most characters had their unlikable and likable sides. My first John le Carre book but I will be reading more! I highly recommend this book for anyone who is interested in tragic whistleblower stories.

I saw the movie when it first came out and didn't think much. I have long enjoyed reading John Le Carre, but didn't bother with this one because of the movie. I had read and really loved, "Our Kind of Traitor" but then I saw that movie, and it was terrible. So I thought maybe the same is true of The Constant Gardener? And I found that it was, of course, still a great novel and worth the read.

I'm not a fan of mysteries but had to read this for book club, and am glad. Le Carre's writing is beautiful and has a purpose. In the case of The Constant Gardener, the issue is Big Pharma's effect on the Third World, vis a vis the British High Commission in Nairobi. I liked how good the good guys are, as much as I was revolted by the super bad bad guys.

A writer of immense learning and insight. I learned so much about a world that is hidden and forbidden. The media refuse to go near such stories and when they do they do so with such a slanted bias as to make the facts unintelligible. I found this novel sweeping in scope, yet extremely human and believable. Should be required reading for college graduates in my opinion.

John le Carre has written another excellent, well written crime novel that takes place in Kenya. As usual he describes the ignorance and corruption that exists in diplomatic circles there and condemns the fraud a pharmaceutical industry giving drugs in Africa. Following the murder of his wife who is trying to expose the company. Justin ( the gardener in the title) takes up her cause. He is

hounded every where he goes to investigate, frequently escaping death. The complications and permutations become almost too hard to believe but the writing is so good and plot is so compelling you have to keep reading to the bitter end.

The character development of the individuals in this story is very complete. One gets to know the key players very well, especially, Justin and Tessa, making the account very real. Corruption of the most heinous, is described with the aplomb of one who has researched his theoretical plot extremely well. Everything occurring in Le Carre's treatment could and probably has happened, and reading such a story is not only riveting, but gives us pause, that such things likely do take place, in fields that profess to give relief to human suffering. A lot to think about with a view to watching the evening news somewhat more critically.

Felt every beat of the drum, every humid drop of thick water dripping and stuck to the sticky back of the shirt. Saw all the amazing creatures of the jungle looming in the shadows of the night and filling the skies in the day. Flew in the belly of tired and tough old iron birds peering at the broad vast landscapes of Africa. The story itself winding through the lives of people with high ideals, those who knew not where they were headed and others with morals as sinister and low as the fall to hell. In the end a beautiful love story of the human kind and one to make you want to see this interesting land called Africa.

Lovers of quality fiction will find much to admire in this new, thoughtful thriller by John LeCarre. Set initially in Kenya, it quickly turns from a gruesome murder mystery into a quirky yet fascinating personal odyssey to discover the truth about both the protagonist's murdered wife and about the state of the post-modern capitalist world in general. Indeed, like most of the best-selling works that came before this one from the unchallenged master of the intelligent spy thriller John LeCarre, this is a penetrating treatise on the hidden and conflicted corners of the human heart. For LeCarre, who made his reputation chronicling the particulars of the internecine aspects of the cold war and the spy trade, the ending of the post-war period and the coming of the new world order provides a whole new set of circumstances with which to peer meaningfully at the human beings inhabiting the so-called civilized areas of the planet as well as the darker side of humanity itself. In so doing, he mines new tunnels of cunning, deceit, and betrayal, all the while weaving a quite memorable story in the spaces parsed brilliantly into the plotline. British career diplomat Justin's beautiful and much younger wife Tessa is brutally and mysteriously murdered, and her rumored black lover, a doctor

with an aid organization, is nowhere to be found. Unsatisfied with the quick and dirty investigation conducted by both local authorities and an unsettling discomfort exuding from his fellow diplomats, Justin decides to take things into his own hands, beginning a fateful journey of discovery and at the same time setting many other wheels into motion with this action. Of course, all of this is merely the opening salvo of in the tirade of events, characters, and places that whirl into centrifugal force in this wonderful examination of the underside of human nature and the complexities of the human heart. LeCarre is a master at detailing the deceptions, betrayals, and complexities people bring to bear in their conduct, and the layers of complexity peel like skins from an onion as he delves deeper and deeper into what is going on. With his usual style, suspenseful prose, and intellectual gamesmanship, LeCarre stirs the reader's interest and dismay as we see quite dreadful games set into motion with deadly earnest by everyone involved; his fellow Brits, the local profiteers, and even darker forces that come to bear as the plot spins into overdrive later in the book. This is a stunning, suspenseful, and somewhat rueful tale of what unfolds when the protagonist begins to discover the motives lurking behind what seemed to be a simple homicide, and he gets sucked deeper into the geopolitical politics swirling around the affair like a evil whirlwind, predictable, evil, and quite possibly totally out of control. As one can expect from such a well-described albeit shadowy and complex geopolitical world of espionage and power that LeCarre writes so brilliantly and unforgettably about, there are no simple answers or easy foregone conclusions. Instead, the reader is spun along the twist and turns of both the plot and the wonderful characterizations; fascinated by the power of observation and description LeCarre brings to bear. This is a wonderful read and a marvelous book, and has the ring of more real-life veracity and worldly wisdom than one can easily find on the non-fiction side of the bookstore aisle. Enjoy!

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