

DORIS LESSING
**THE GOLDEN
NOTEBOOK**

Read by **Juliet Stevenson**



NAXOS
AudioBooks

1	Free Women 1 – Anna meets her friend Molly in the summer...	6:06
2	Anna, in the face of this unspoken but clear determination...	6:28
3	There was a note of humorous, even childish pleading in this.	7:57
4	Now Anna could not reply...	5:19
5	Richard came into the room.	6:24
6	Meanwhile Molly, talented in so many directions...	6:12
7	Molly promptly went to the door, opened it, listened.	5:32
8	Molly ignored Anna and attacked.	7:13
9	Richard was on the point of exploding out of his chair...	5:48
10	Richard made a movement as if to get up and go...	4:46
11	Molly sighed, histrionically...	5:48
12	There was another sound, like a cough...	5:36
13	Tommy allowed them both a tolerant smile...	6:20
14	For the first time Tommy showed a touch of humour.	6:00
15	Anna closed her eyes a moment, smiling painfully.	7:42
16	Anna held herself quiet, with effort.	7:38
17	But at this Molly got up, and said quickly...	6:05
18	'But I think I'll mention three of the comrades...'	6:02
19	'And there's your friend de Silva.'	5:39
20	They kissed, briskly.	4:12

21	The Notebooks – The Black Notebook	7:49
22	(Opposite this was written:)	5:30
23	Yet I am incapable of writing the only kind of novel...	6:44
24	When I think back to that time...	6:46
25	For us, then...	8:14
26	About then I met Willi Rodde and got involved with politics.	5:58
27	But I don't want to write Willi's history...	6:47
28	The most striking of the three...	6:39
29	In this he was different from Jimmy McGrath...	5:13
30	Ted Brown was the most original.	6:58
31	The Gainsborough Hotel was really a boarding-house...	6:09
32	Willi ran a cheap fifth-hand car.	6:50
33	The main block of the hotel stood directly by the main road...	8:16
34	We were all very tired.	8:24
35	We did not return for a month.	6:12
36	June spent most of her time on the verandah...	6:04
37	Now it was Mrs. Boothby...	5:13
38	George Hounslow, a roads man, lived a hundred miles...	5:34
39	In parenthesis I must say that this is exactly what happened...	5:30
40	At about midnight, the glare of a lorry's headlights...	6:45

41	I've thought about that often since.	6:23
42	George looked at Willi, waiting for him to protest.	7:23
43	I remember George's long puzzled look at Willi.	5:26
44	At last we managed to get Jimmy on his feet.	8:03
45	We walked up to the big room through the hot sunlight...	6:16
46	On this morning Stanley had stacked the top of the piano...	7:54
47	Paul turned his head with his characteristic indolent charm...	6:07
48	'Anna?' appealed George, looking at me.	6:09
49	George looked at me again...	7:14
50	He shut his eyes.	7:33
51	It must have been about six or eight months...	6:11
52	And then there was the affair of George's son.	5:51
53	All this time we'd been making jokes...	7:02
54	Next day bad temper prickled through the hotel.	5:33
55	It was nearly midnight when Paul remarked...	6:15
56	I left Willi in the bedroom and stood on the verandah.	5:55
57	Paul left me and I went into the bedroom.	5:49
58	The Red Notebook – The second notebook, the red one...	3:32
59	The next day.	5:11
60	5th Feb., 1950	5:09

61	3rd Jan., 1952	5:50
62	I see that I wrote yesterday, I would leave the Party.	8:51
63	I went up to canvass, three afternoons.	7:13
64	Jean Barker. Wife of minor Party official.	3:39
65	The Yellow Notebook – The yellow notebook looked like...	5:36
66	Julia's last remark had struck a familiar note.	6:13
67	The idea for this novel had come to Ella...	7:02
68	Here was Dr West's house...	7:06
69	Now the talk began again...	6:05
70	Meanwhile she was restless to get away from him...	5:26
71	It was time to go home.	7:16
72	Paul was late...	7:48
73	This was so personal, that it was her turn to glance...	5:32
74	Later – and not so much later, he would say...	6:46
75	They did not speak again until they reached the main road...	3:45
76	From the feeling of the house she knew it was still empty.	5:54
77	Being with Paul Tanner that night...	7:15
78	That night Paul was humorous and very tender.	7:39
79	The next evening they met full of defences on either side.	4:12
80	Five years.	6:44

81	The motif of Paul's attitude to his profession.	6:56
82	The end of the affair.	7:10
83	As for me, Anna, it was a remarkable fact...	8:23
84	They ate, and he looked over at her and said...	4:05
85	One day she went with him to his home.	7:55
86	Later that evening he said, laughing...	5:47
87	Ella had a dream which was unpleasant and disturbing.	7:26
88	The Blue Notebook – The blue notebook began with a sentence...	5:43
89	9th October, 1946	6:37
90	Jan. 19th, 1950	6:50
91	Jan. 31st, 1950	7:42
92	15th March, 1950	6:00
93	9th June, 51	6:02
94	28th June, 52	6:22
95	December 3rd, 52	7:55
96	9th April, 1954	6:22
97	Free Women 2 – Two visits, some telephone calls...	6:56
98	He sat down, arranged himself neatly...	6:35
99	Tommy lowered his head, sat frowning.	5:49
100	Tommy said: 'After I went to my father's office...'	5:40

101	This shock reached Anna's diaphragm...	7:35
102	She said at last: 'I know what you've come here for.'	6:25
103	Some time later, perhaps as long as an hour...	6:03
104	Now he came and sat down opposite her...	5:31
105	Marion, when she came in, smiled...	6:05
106	'Why don't you go to bed?'	7:09
107	The Notebooks – The black notebook continued empty...	6:31
108	'Oh, my dear, you are so marvellous...'	5:12
109	'Do you remember the excitement you talked about?'	5:36
110	Letter from Mrs. Edwina Wright...	7:54
111	'Anna, I liked your book so much.'	8:59
112	Now we are suddenly both very angry.	4:41
113	The Red Notebook – August 28th 1954	4:29
114	I dreamed marvellously.	5:08
115	Here were pasted in some scribbled sheets...	6:29
116	The talk became desultory...	5:11
117	'I often wonder if I am getting the correct advice...'	5:20
118	The Yellow Notebook continues – The Shadow of the Third	5:26
119	Next morning she slept too long...	6:02
120	His face, his full eyes, were momentarily immobilised...	7:38

121	And now she made a decision.	5:56
122	Near her a man was sitting, absorbed in magazines...	8:44
123	Her son woke her two hours later...	8:17
124	He had a bed-sitting room and a bath in an expensive hotel.	5:32
125	She thought this one out slowly...	7:00
126	Ella spent the following evening with him.	8:23
127	The Blue Notebook continued – 15th September 1954	6:35
128	It must be about six o'clock.	8:54
129	Now it is nearly eight o'clock...	6:49
130	And now I must hurry.	6:59
131	I ought really to be thinking over the coming encounter...	5:48
132	When I get off the bus...	6:41
133	Meanwhile Comrade Butte sits waiting.	4:10
134	There is a startled silence...	4:51
135	I read magazines and periodicals published in English...	5:11
136	Before I start on the 'welfare work'...	8:07
137	About eighteen months ago...	6:42
138	For a year I have been answering these letters...	5:47
139	I say 'Jack, when I leave, will there be anyone...'	4:42
140	And now I see his face has put on a stubborn closed look...	4:22

141	It is raining again, a small tedious drizzle.	7:17
142	And now the cooking for Michael.	3:51
143	I realise it is getting late.	7:22
144	Free Women Three – Tommy adjusts himself to being blind...	7:07
145	There never was a moment at which Tommy broke down.	7:14
146	It was expressed by the single fact...	6:41
147	A few days later Molly telephoned...	7:16
148	Richard's lips actually trembled...	5:32
149	Refusing to help him, not only out of dislike for him...	5:36
150	Richard with an effort took himself to his desk...	7:09
151	She opened her eyes, giddy and afraid...	6:42
152	Anna reached the cleanliness of her own flat...	7:44
153	Marion said: 'I'm sorry if I gave you a fright...'	5:48
154	She sat staring, serious, ironical.	7:08
155	'Do you remember that black leader...'	5:27
156	Marion left, creeping downstairs...	5:44
157	With which she went to the bathroom, to get ready for bed.	8:59
158	That was the dream she woke with in the morning...	5:03
159	The Notebooks – The black notebook now fulfilled...	5:48
160	12 th November	5:59

161	In every direction, all around us, were the insects, coupling.	7:19
162	Suddenly Paul sprang over and trod deliberately...	6:36
163	We prepared for a lazy interval.	7:12
164	There was again an intense silence.	6:41
165	Time passed. We smoked. We waited.	7:28
166	Maryrose closed her eyes again.	5:50
167	'Look,' said Jimmy.	6:17
168	The right side of the black notebook, under the heading...	5:28
169	Came to know the young American writer James Schaffer.	8:23
170	Easter Sunday	3:03
171	Blood on the Banana Leaves	8:48
172	Here was pinned to the page a review...	5:35
173	The Red Notebook continued – 13th November 1955	8:07
174	The Yellow Notebook continued – The Shadow of the Third	6:51
175	A few weeks later, Ella sees Julia, tells her...	7:41
176	Next day she telephones Julia...	8:22
177	That evening Ella goes to Julia's house...	5:56
178	Ella finds this story inside herself...	3:53
179	About this time Ella pays a visit to her father.	8:21
180	Ella, alone in her room, looks into her private pool...	6:47

181	For something like eighteen months, the blue notebook...	6:51
182	I remember how she sat opposite me...	6:47
183	'What do you want me to say then?'	5:47
184	At this point, another thick black line across the page.	7:05
185	Telling Mother Sugar of this dream...	4:12
186	What is happening is something new in my life.	7:13
187	Another heavy black line.	6:06
188	Within a week of my having gone to bed with Nelson...	6:42
189	Well, from the moment Nelson came in...	6:01
190	It was quite late, as I've said, about midnight...	6:44
191	But now, suddenly, the tiny blonde woman...	7:44
192	He went off, shouting and screaming at me – at women.	6:08
193	I suddenly had a telephone call from him...	6:16
194	Later on in the evening he told me the following story.	4:39
195	In the morning I gave him breakfast.	6:50
196	Free Women 4 – Anna and Molly influence Tommy...	6:32
197	Molly telephoned, in a state of near collapse, soon after.	7:49
198	The stairs were narrow and dark.	6:58
199	Anna's voice cracked.	7:25
200	At this moment a sound from the foot of the stairs.	7:01

201	Anna went home slowly.	6:37
202	The Notebooks – The black notebook now abandoned...	3:47
203	The red notebook, like the black notebook...	7:17
204	Meanwhile our old friendship had been restored...	7:10
205	The yellow notebook continued.	6:57
206	*7 A Short Story	6:29
207	*12 A Short Story	5:57
208	*19 The Romantic Tough School of Writing	5:52
209	The blue notebook continued, but without dates.	7:33
210	I put myself back into the state of mind...	6:21
211	The American, Mr. Green, was coming today...	5:17
212	Saul Green came to see the room and to leave his things.	5:06
213	(From this point on in the diary, or chronicle...)	8:50
214	Spent today playing ‘the game’.	6:57
215	I felt my stomach clench...	5:03
216	He has a way of being about at the time...	6:28
217	I wrote the last sentence three days ago...	5:16
218	I slept lightly, with terrible dreams.	5:33
219	Then we went to drink coffee, and we talked about politics...	6:12
220	I sat in the kitchen and thought over what I’d just said.	7:56

221	When he came back, I knew I'd been waiting...	6:11
222	Then the delight vanished as I came across an entry...	4:02
223	I've just been up to have another look at the diary...	6:24
224	Today he came in and I knew by instinct...	6:04
225	He gave me a quick, startled look and walked out.	6:01
226	He stopped in his striding walk around the room...	7:15
227	(*17) We have had a week of being happy.	5:33
228	He said: 'Come here' – moving away and gesturing...	4:42
229	Last night, when I had finished writing...	7:05
230	But now, writing it, and reading what I've written...	6:32
231	We began discussing the state of the left in Europe...	5:26
232	Then in front of my eyes I saw the letter...	5:36
233	Saul had not moved.	6:56
234	When he came down it was late...	8:10
235	I said to myself in my sleep...	5:28
236	And then I got up and switched on the lights...	7:52
237	After breakfast I took my shopping basket...	6:59
238	The Golden Notebook	6:27
239	As his feet went down the stairs...	7:21
240	Then the dream, or the sleep, became quite thin...	7:39

241	This voice faded; but already the film had changed.	5:14
242	I woke into the stuffy dark of the room...	6:25
243	I put on some early Armstrong. I sat on the floor.	6:50
244	I rang Molly's number, and I said...	6:14
245	And suddenly he leaped up and off the bed...	7:45
246	He was cold, so I held him in my arms, full of happiness.	4:29
247	I stood and thought...	5:05
248	As soon as the dream came on...	6:35
249	A short story: or a short novel: comic and ironic...	8:52
250	I cooked and we slept.	8:46
251	Free Women 5 – Molly gets married and Anna has an affair	5:39
252	Anna found that she was spending her time in a curious way.	5:57
253	One afternoon she went to sleep and dreamed.	6:00
254	Late that night the bell rang.	6:13
255	He returned to the table and remarked...	5:23
256	At last he said: 'Well, that's fixed. Another soul for sanity.'	7:56
257	In the morning she felt him deadly cold in her arms...	4:20
258	When Janet came home she found Anna...	5:05

Total time: 29:45:10

DORIS LESSING

(b.1919)

THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK

Doris Lessing is not a comfortable writer. Her life has been dedicated to examining the received wisdoms of her age and concluding that they aren't wise and shouldn't be received as such. Having recognised these evident facts, she has set about exploring them through powerfully autobiographical writing that has startled, alarmed, amazed and frequently irritated. The irritation of course is because she refuses to do what she is expected to do, even by those who might have thought she was on their side: some who reviewed her early novels favourably were irritated by her decision to write science-fiction; and those feminists who admired her fearless exploration of gender inequalities were annoyed by her refusal to be a poster-child for them.

Doris Lessing is used to this. She has refused to allow the standard morality to determine her moral choices, and the result has often been ostracism, either by others

or self-imposed. Stultified by her mother's attempts to give her an upper-middle-class Edwardian upbringing while living on a farm in Southern Rhodesia, she ran away from home at 15. Determined not to be trapped into a state of impotence by marriage and motherhood, she divorced her first husband, leaving him and their two children. Disillusioned by the Left in Africa, she divorced her second husband and moved to London with their child. By 1956 she had been prohibited from Southern Rhodesia and South Africa for her outspoken opposition to apartheid and nuclear arms. In the UK and America she was criticised for arrogating to women the rights of men – the right to read freely, think freely, act freely and have sex with whomever you choose.

She was born in Persia, now Iran, to British parents who had met when her father, who lost his leg in the First World War, was recovering in the hospital where

her mother was a nurse. He was a clerk in the Imperial Bank of Persia at the time of Lessing's birth in 1919, but the family moved to Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) five years later in the hope of making a new life as farmers. Lessing's childhood was largely miserable, and not just because of the vast distances between their farm and any of the neighbours'. The maize farm was a failure, but worse was Lessing's being sent away aged 7 to a convent school, where she was profoundly unhappy. She was no happier at a girls' high school and she left it at the age of 14. Already deeply attached to reading, she continued to educate herself through classic literature – and after leaving the potentially suffocating atmosphere of her home she supported herself in various jobs (including telephone operator and nursemaid, where she was ineffectually wooed by her employer's brother-in-law). Frustrated in almost every regard, she married Frank Wisdom, a Civil Servant, but after the birth of their two children, she realised she was in danger of falling into precisely the kind of life she so wanted to abjure, and so divorced him.

Intelligent and socially aware, she was drawn to politics, particularly the Left, and this brought her into contact with other intellectuals. One of them was Gottlieb Lessing, whom she met through the Left Book Club and married in 1945 despite not liking him very much. By him she had another child. When that marriage ended, Lessing left Africa for the United Kingdom, bringing her son with her, and set up home in London intending to make a living as a writer. By the age of 30 she had forcefully determined her own destiny on several occasions despite the social expectations and considerable obstacles of the time. She was to stay in London where, for all the claims of greater freedoms, the ingrained attitudes of the previous generations were showing no external signs of dying out. It is this world which is the immediate backdrop to *The Golden Notebook*, and there is plenty of autobiographical material in the finished novel. She was a member of the British Communist Party until 1956, for example; and Willi bears more than a passing similarity to Gottlieb.

Indeed, much of her work is pro-

foundly autobiographical, reflecting not just the worlds in which she grew up – wrenched by wars, empire-building and clashes of civilisations – but also the worlds within her. Initially, the broader geographical context was most noticeable. She arrived in London with the manuscript of her first novel *The Grass is Singing*, a critique of the white civilisation in Africa, and followed it with a collection of short stories touching similar themes, and with the opening novels in *The Children of Violence* sequence. The heroine in these novels showed many of the traits that would become familiar to Lessing's readers – a strong, complex woman, one who is engaged, active, seeking a better world politically and socially, and searching the layers and alternative personalities that make up her character.

The Golden Notebook, published in 1962, has something over and above this. While it was championed as a feminist work, sniped at for being anti-men, lauded for its sexual (even biological) explicitness, criticised for its criticisms of social inequities, and is again deeply autobiographical, it is also a triumphant

piece of literary invention. There are layers upon layers of authors, contexts, realities and self-referential meta-textual games – a fictional character keeps detailed notebooks, including one which is a novel in which a fictional character is very like the fictional character in the fictional book... and so on.

The structure is brilliantly original, if relatively straightforward to describe: there is a short novel called *Free Women*, about Anna Wulf and her friends. This story is broken up by a series of excerpts from Anna's various notebooks, each one of which is colour-coded. The notebooks cover every aspect of her life – personal, professional and political. This combination of structural invention, social questioning, political engagement and frankly honest self-analysis gave the book its immediate impact, opening a closed world of feminine intelligence and sexuality to the wider world. But the theme of the fractured self, reflected in the book's structure as much as in its content, and the examination of the fragmented nature of the personality have had at least as lasting an effect.

Doris Lessing is one of the most

prolific authors of the 20th century, and she has received awards from all over the world. Her work includes multi-volume sagas and short stories; poetry, novels, plays and opera librettos; reviews, essays and memoirs; non-fiction, science fiction, books on cats – and of course autobiography (directly or otherwise). *Alfred and Emily* (2008), which she describes as her final book, is another kind of indirect autobiography, a fictional book about her parents, and how they were formed and forged by war. Doris Lessing is still questing, crusading and exploring her past, herself and her imagination in search of truths about ourselves and our world – whether they are comfortable or not.

Notes by Roy McMillan



Juliet Stevenson, one of the UK's leading actresses, has worked extensively for the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal National Theatre. She received an Olivier Award for her role in *Death and the Maiden* at the Royal Court, and a number of other awards for her work in the film *Truly, Madly, Deeply*. Other film credits include *The Trial*, *Drowning by Numbers* and *Emma*. She has recorded *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Emma*, *Northanger Abbey*, *Persuasion*, *Stories from Shakespeare*, *To the Lighthouse*, *Bliss and Other Stories* and *The Road Home*, all for Naxos AudioBooks.

Credits

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Produced by Roy McMillan

Recorded at Motivation Sound Studios, London

Edited by Sarah Butcher

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THE
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Produced by
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DORIS LESSING

THE GOLDEN NOTEBOOK

Read by **Juliet Stevenson**

Everything is falling apart. The atmosphere is heavy with the threat of war; the sexual freedoms promised by a new generation are fraught with emotional traps; the proud belief in a changed world order is being shattered.

In London, in the late 1950s, Anna is a novelist and a single mother. Liberated from the stereotypes of her time, she is struggling to cope as her personal life, her political certainties and her own sanity collapse around her. *The Golden Notebook* weaves together Anna's story and her notebooks, exploring the lives and loves of a generation formed by the aftermath of war.

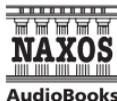
The breakthrough novel of the 2007 Nobel Laureate for Literature, *The Golden Notebook* is a brilliantly realised narrative of fragmentation – social, political, personal and sexual.



Juliet Stevenson is one of the UK's leading actresses. Her film credits include *Truly, Madly, Deeply* and *Emma*. She has recorded *Lady Windermere's Fan*, *Sense and Sensibility*, *Mansfield Park*, *To the Lighthouse* and many more, all for Naxos AudioBooks.

CD ISBN:
978-962-634-158-2

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