

# THE BEES

*The Bees book. Read reviews from the world's largest community for readers. The Handmaid's Tale meets The Hunger Games in this brilliantly imagined.*

Is this really how bees are born? Did that first priestess bee know something? At first, the reader questions everything. Another important piece of my forthcoming apiology dissertation: A bloody massacre is always great fun! Would you bind them in chastity a single moment longer? A cadre of spiders appears next to the hive, wise, truth-telling villains. Awful crime is her fate. When I finished the book, I stepped outside my door and into a spring day, full of buzzing and pollen, and I wanted to thank each and every bee for its service. Soon, Flora produces another egg, and she vows to care for it. When she finally makes it to the nursery, the fertility police have killed her child – a beautiful boy, a drone. Day after day, bees die, their bodies exhausted from luckless foraging. She is so busy foraging that she cannot visit it. Before she delivers the egg, she crafts herself a rough crib out of wax and hides the baby away in a secret chamber, one of many parts of the book that feel like a fairy tale. Share via Email "The crisis The Bees invokes is genuine, frightening and getting worse. The brief prologue and epilogue are the only sections of the book with humans, aside from a single scene halfway through in which a man harvesting honey comes off something like Godzilla. But there is more to this worker bee's fairytale biography than at first appears. The best animal fantasies, however well researched, are studies of human nature. We are in a beehive, after all, that beautiful feat of engineering, and it is great fun to see the antechambers and halls from the inside. Is Flora's special status the work of a faction in the hive government? But though Paull has taken plenty of liberties with bee biology, her "characters" are far more alien than Richard Adams's humanised rabbits. Many of the extraordinary facts packed into this fantasy novel are wonderfully realised. Despite the honor of being asked to make Flow, Flora is restless, and she quickly moves up the ranks, reinventing herself yet again as a skilled forager. Is this how they communicate? Or shall we fill our bellies with the strength of this hive, then free them with our swords? Even as Flora feels intense guilt about her own body, she wants to do what she knows she should not. Before I read The Bees, I wondered why Paull – a dramatist whose best work Boat Memory tackles deeply human issues of racism, prejudice and stolen lives – had chosen to make her literary debut in the insect world.