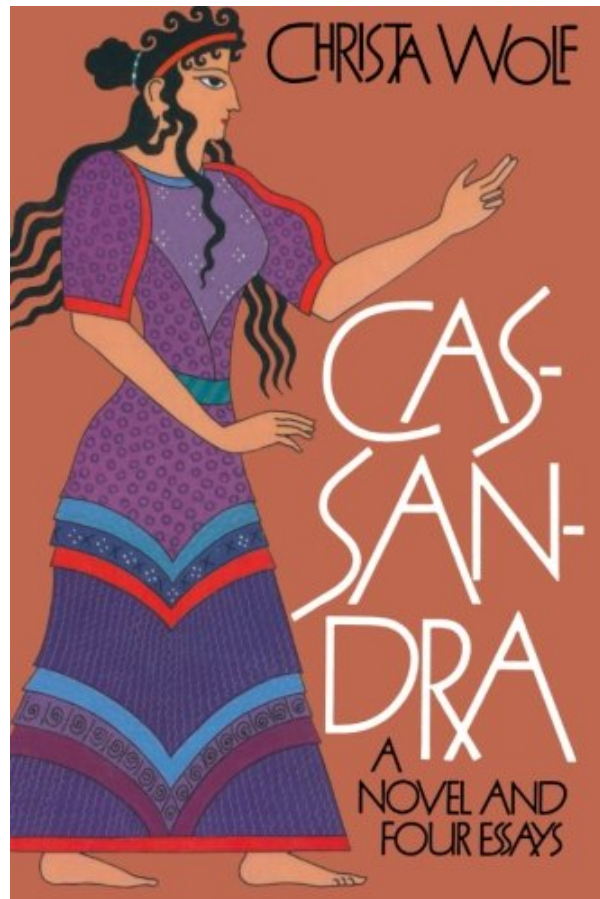
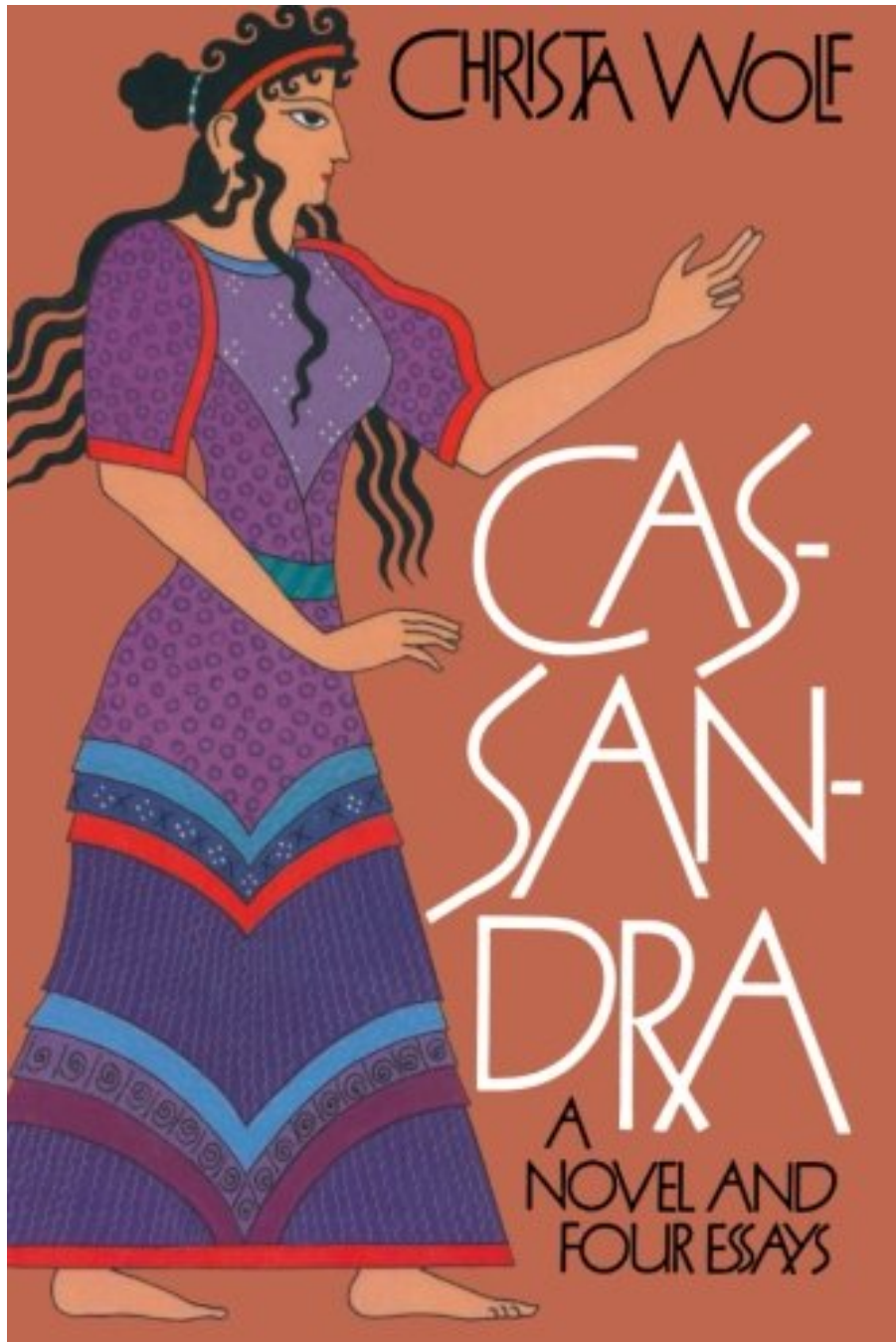


# CASSANDRA: A NOVEL AND FOUR ESSAYS BY CHRISTA WOLF



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Language Notes

Text: English, German (translation)

About the Author

In 1980 East German author Christa Wolf took a trip to Greece accompanied by her husband, Gerhard. In 1982 she was awarded a guest lectureship at the University of Frankfurt, where in May she delivered a series of five "Lectures on Poetics" relating to her Greek travels and studies. The fifth "lecture" was ad raft of the novel *Cassandra*, which she then revised and expanded for publication. The four introductory lectures were published separately in Germany under the title *Conditions of a Narrative: Cassandra; The Frankfurt Lectures on Poetics (Voraussetzungen einer Erzählung: Kassandra)*. This volume presents the novel first, followed by its companion lectures, which illuminate its background and implications.

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In this volume, the distinguished East German writer Christa Wolf retells the story of the fall of Troy, but from the point of view of the woman whose visionary powers earned her contempt and scorn. Written as a result of the author's Greek travels and studies, Cassandra speaks to us in a pressing monologue whose inner focal points are patriarchy and war. In the four accompanying pieces, which take the form of travel reports, journal entries, and a letter, Wolf describes the novel's genesis. Incisive and intelligent, the entire volume represents an urgent call to examine the past in order to insure a future.

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- Number of items: 1
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- Binding: Paperback
- 320 pages

## Language Notes

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## Most helpful customer reviews

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful.

### Myth Retelling

By A and B

Christa Wolf retells a myth from the perspective of a woman who was only given a few lines in Euripides' *Agamemnon* (and mentioned once or twice in the *Iliad*.)

What's gripping about this story is not the fact that it's another variation of the sack of Troy, but the fact that someone had the guts to write it in Cassandra's words. Cassandra, whom the Greeks and Trojans call a crazy witch is the only person to oppose corruption when she sees it. She is strong and honest and powerful and

intelligent, but Troy and Greece deny her a voice because she is a woman.

Some people insist that Christa Wolf grabs this fact (that she's another alienated woman) and runs on a feminist spree. Others insist that she addresses those oh-so-common themes in feminist literature: having no voice and lacking an identity in a patriarchal culture. But FRIENDS, these themes aren't only reserved for women, men also struggle with these issues. Look at Kleist and Murakami, these authors also express an inner turmoil because of the lack of an individual identity or the existence of a collective cultural one that alienates its members.

Cassandra isn't an overly feminine, esoteric, and hard-to-read piece of literature. It's beautiful not only for its content but the stream of consciousness that takes you into the very black and white core of Troy. It's honest and funny and sad and aggressive and beautiful and powerful and dark. It's one of those "good" books your brain craves for after reading every James Patterson and Linda Howard novel you might have bought from the Shoprite book aisle. :)

8 of 9 people found the following review helpful.

Beautiful prose, but not quite enough...

By Jacquelyn Gill

"Cassandra" does not read like a novel. Rather, one feels as though one is a member of the jury set to judge the entire life of one woman when the sentence (death) has already been decided. Christa Wolf doesn't retell the fall of Troy from the perspective of a female narrator. Instead, she invites the reader into the mindset of a woman in a society that is losing itself to war and to the male realm. Wolf's Cassandra is a starkly lonely figure, suffering from her isolation even before the siege of Troy begins. Bringing in a number of feminist themes to her rendition of the classic Greek tale, she weaves beautiful prose to give perspective to Cassandra's last hours.

In the traditional myth the prophetess Cassandra predicts that Troy will fall to the Greeks but no one believes her, and she is ultimately shunned in the end when her prophecy holds true. Wolf entraps the reader in Cassandra's mind, which often teeters on the brink of madness for reasons that lay largely unexplained. I felt intimately connected to the narrator at the end but largely dissatisfied. There are really no other characters in the novel - merely shadows of other relationships that are never given life in and of themselves. Wolf's writing is exquisite, but I often felt more like someone sneaking a read at a forbidden diary, where I felt at the mercy of the revelations the writer felt like making. Allusions are made to friendships, loves, passions, childhood memories, but are not made explicit enough to resonate. Despite the well-crafted passages, I gave the novel 3 stars for this reason; it simply wasn't enough. I recommend it as an interesting glimpse into the mind of a woman immobilized by her empowerment in an increasingly masculinized age (even though the strength of this perspective has lessened some since the novel was written on the heels of the 2nd wave of the feminist movement) At times Cassandra's self-fixation became almost too much to bear, but Wolf's excellent writing carried me through until the end.

18 of 19 people found the following review helpful.

It's a powerful book, intellectually engrossing.

By A Customer

For about five years I have read, reread and taught (to eleventh graders) Cassandra, and each time I have groped deeper into its human and literary likelihoods. It's still compelling to me for its myriad facets of content and form, but I can't help wondering about the real-politics of Ms Wolf's life and the masculine-feminine politics of our time. There is great learning in it and cause for great deliberation--by a woman awaiting violent death: Would what we call civilization be differently composed if even half our history, philosophy, psychology, politics, art had been penned by women? How was human prehistory ordered? Why is God-presence so matter of fact, and goddess-presence so contentious, if admitted? Who/What is Cybele, really? I

can't wait to read Medea.

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