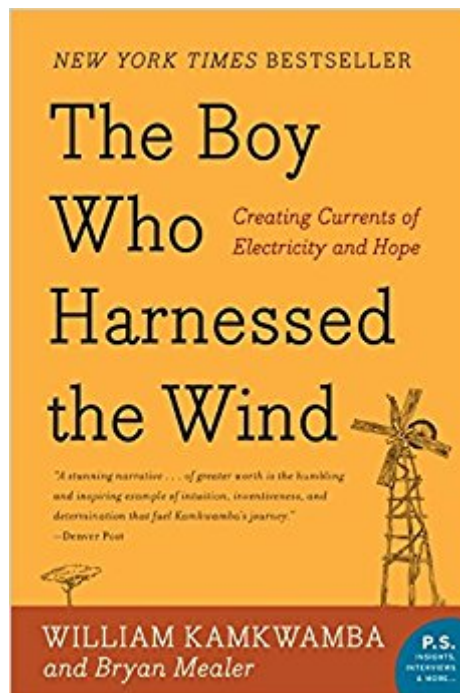




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# The Boy Who Harnessed The Wind: Creating Currents Of Electricity And Hope (P.S.)



## Synopsis

William Kamkwamba was born in Malawi, a country where magic ruled and modern science was mystery. It was also a land withered by drought and hunger. But William had read about windmills, and he dreamed of building one that would bring to his small village a set of luxuries that only 2 percent of Malawians could enjoy: electricity and running water. His neighbors called him misala—crazy—but William refused to let go of his dreams. With a small pile of once-forgotten science textbooks; some scrap metal, tractor parts, and bicycle halves; and an armory of curiosity and determination, he embarked on a daring plan to forge an unlikely contraption and small miracle that would change the lives around him. *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind* is a remarkable true story about human inventiveness and its power to overcome crippling adversity. It will inspire anyone who doubts the power of one individual's ability to change his community and better the lives of those around him.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 11 - 17 years

Grade Level: 6 - 12

## Customer Reviews

Best of the Month, September 2009: Discarded motor parts, PVC pipe, and an old bicycle wheel may be junk to most people, but in the inspired hands of William Kamkwamba, they are instruments

of opportunity. Growing up amid famine and poverty in rural Malawi, wind was one of the few abundant resources available, and the inventive fourteen-year-old saw its energy as a way to power his dreams. "With a windmill, we'd finally release ourselves from the troubles of darkness and hunger," he realized. "A windmill meant more than just power, it was freedom." Despite the biting jeers of village skeptics, young William devoted himself to borrowed textbooks and salvage yards in pursuit of a device that could produce an "electric wind." The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind is an inspiring story of an indomitable will that refused to bend to doubt or circumstance. When the world seemed to be against him, William Kamkwamba set out to change it. --Dave Callanan

Starred Review. American readers will have their imaginations challenged by 14-year-old Kamkwamba's description of life in Malawi, a famine-stricken, land-locked nation in southern Africa: math is taught in school with the aid of bottle tops ("three Coca-Cola plus ten Carlsberg equal thirteen"), people are slaughtered by enemy warriors "disguised... as green grass" and a ferocious black rhino; and everyday trading is "replaced by the business of survival" after famine hits the country. After starving for five months on his family's small farm, the corn harvest slowly brings Kamkwamba back to life. Witnessing his family's struggle, Kamkwamba's supercharged curiosity leads him to pursue the improbable dream of using "electric wind"(they have no word for windmills) to harness energy for the farm. Kamkwamba's efforts were of course derided; salvaging a motley collection of materials, from his father's broken bike to his mother's clothes line, he was often greeted to the tune of "Ah, look, the madman has come with his garbage." This exquisite tale strips life down to its barest essentials, and once there finds reason for hopes and dreams, and is especially resonant for Americans given the economy and increasingly heated debates over health care and energy policy. --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

William's world was not my world. His life was filled with ancient magic and mystery, security was having sacks of corn and not having them was death. A delicious treat wasn't got at the local ice cream shop, but by catching delicious flying ants or trapping birds between a slingshot and a stack of homemade Adobe bricks. Going to school was far from guaranteed, and when famine meant the teachers and students were starving to death, in the schools, it also wasn't a place to find food or shelter. The more William lost, the more he craved. He wanted to learn and when he was blocked from school by his inability to pay the fees, he found the free library, and a book about energy. He figured out how a windmill worked, and "I tried and I made it" barely covers the amazing fact that he built it from recycled trash, only after building the tools he needed, no drill? Heat a nail to red hot

and insert it in a corn cob for a handle. The windmill was only one step in his understanding. He had to figure out AC/DC and voltage and insulation, he had to figure out how to make a generator and switches and a circuit breaker to keep his created electricity from burning down the grass roofed hut they lived in, and when his wires collapsed the termite riddled supports of the roof he had to call in the chickens to get the termites out of his bedding. He blended science with hard work and creativity to bring light and a water pump to his village, and to make the world realize that even the starving kids in Malawi have much to offer.

I love this book. I loved reading it and I have bought several as gifts. It is beautiful and inspiring. Be aware that there are several disturbing passages in it. Most are okay for younger readers and describe truthfully the extreme hunger he faced (I can never forget the passage where he describes boiling leather for food), but there were a few bits about his early family life which were too mature for me to give this to my middle schooler. So I would recommend the "Young Reader's Version" for kids who aren't ready for this. But it is a very, very good book and inspiring story. William Kamkwamba also has his own website if you want to learn more about him and his story.

**The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind** This is a story of a young man who's thirst for knowledge and an indomitable spirit. Among the hardships of his local village, poverty, and devastating famine, William Kamkwamba endured and succeeded. The author's spirit and determination carries him through all of these challenges. Along the way we get a picture of the crushing poverty of this region in Africa. There is a picture here that points the way for the promise of new technology. Implementing these new technologies in the creation of wind driven electricity, creative means in the pumping of fresh water and the utilization of biogas production for fuel points the way for a brighter future for the impoverished people in Africa and elsewhere I would like to point out that, perhaps, the donor nations should reconsider some of their project requirements. It may be that small scale projects down at the village level might bring promising results without all of the waste and corruption of large scale development projects that promise so much and often deliver so little. This book is an inspiring read.

I read this book each night with my 12 year old son. It was a brilliant choice and really quite eye opening for a 12 year old to hear about how he was lucky to be able to go to school. It was interesting for my son and I to talk about what life might be like for people who are denied an education. We also tried to imagine what it would be like to have no electricity, to have to go to bed

simply because it was dark and you could not see anything. The story is very well written and I loved the photos of the windmill that the author built. It was fantastic to see how William managed to salvage parts from the junk yard to build his creation. You can also watch the author's presentation on TED. This is a wonderful book to read as a family. It is great when someone's life story ends up happy and is inspirational. I love it when we as humans do the right thing for a change. If you have not read this book then you really need to. It is a book that works for any age group or gender who would enjoy reading a book about personal triumph over adversity. We read it for a special event at our local book club. We chose to do a "bring a teenager" with you to discuss this particular book. It worked well as it brought a different perspective to our discussion and it was a great way of including children in a hobby that I hope they will all preserve as they grow older.

This is the nonfictional story of William Kamkwamba, a boy who grew up in extreme poverty in Africa. William tells the story of his childhood in a loving home that lacked basic sanitation and food, and farmed what little food they had. His entire country suffered disease and starvation which resulted in a high mortality rate as a result of famine. In addition to the hardship this placed on his family, he was deprived of his secondary education because his parents couldn't afford the tuition. In spite of this, William's insatiable curiosity and a chance library book on physics provided him the desire to build his own windmill out of tools and supplies he fashioned out of discarded junk. Get the book and read it to learn the rest of the story-you won't be sorry.

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