



## A Suitable Boy: A Novel (Modern Classics)

By Vikram Seth

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Vikram Seth's novel is, at its core, a love story: Lata and her mother, Mrs. Rupa Mehra, are both trying to find -- through love or through exacting maternal appraisal -- a suitable boy for Lata to marry. Set in the early 1950s, in an India newly independent and struggling through a time of crisis, *A Suitable Boy* takes us into the richly imagined world of four large extended families and spins a compulsively readable tale of their lives and loves. A sweeping panoramic portrait of a complex, multiethnic society in flux, *A Suitable Boy* remains the story of ordinary people caught up in a web of love and ambition, humor and sadness, prejudice and reconciliation, the most delicate social etiquette and the most appalling violence.

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## A Suitable Boy: A Novel (Modern Classics) By Vikram Seth Bibliography

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Seth previously made a splash with his 1986 novel in verse, *The Golden Gate*. Here he abandons the compression of poetry to produce an enormous novel that will enthrall most readers; those who are fazed by a marathon read, however, may gasp for mercy. Set in the post-colonial India of the 1950s, this sprawling saga involves four families--the Mehra, the Kapoors, the Chatterjis and the Khans--whose domestic crises illuminate the historical and social events of the era. Like an old-fashioned soap opera (or a Bombay talkie), the multi-charactered plot pits mothers against daughters, fathers against sons, Hindus against Muslims and small farmers against greedy landowners facing government-ordered dispossession. The story revolves around independent-minded Lata Mehra: Will she defy the stern order of her widowed upper-caste Hindu mother by marrying the Muslim youth she loves? The search for Lata's husband expands into a richly detailed and exotically vivid narrative that crisscrosses the fabric of India. Seth's panoramic scenes take the reader into law courts, religious processions, bloody riots, academia--even the shoe trade. Portraits of actual figures are incisive; the cameo of Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, for example, captures his high-minded, well-meaning indecision. Seth's point of view is both wry and affectionate, and his voluble, palpably atmospheric narrative teems with chaotic, irrepressible life. 100,000 first printing; \$200,000 ad/promo; BOMC main selection; QPB alternate; author tour.

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From Library Journal

Opening and closing with a wedding, this novel is ostensibly the story of a Hindu family trying to find a suitable husband for their younger daughter, Lata. Who will the suitable boy turn out to be? The dashing Kabir, with whom Lata falls in love? The ambitious businessman whom Lata's mother favors? Or the sophisticated poet her relatives choose? The interwoven stories of four families linked by marriage form the background for this marital quest. It proves slow-moving at first, but the patient reader will inevitably be caught up in the compelling rhythms of a richly complex tale. The setting--India in the 1950s--is vividly realized: the enormity of the subcontinent, its overpowering heat, lush gardens, colorful festivals, and exotic foods. Memorable characters abound; not since Dickens has there been such a lively and idiosyncratic cast crowded into one novel. Drama is provided by the simmering conflict between Hindu and Muslim, which breaks out unexpectedly throughout the novel. This is old-fashioned storytelling at its best; highly recommended. BOMC and Quality Paperback alternates; previewed in Prepub Alert, LJ 1/93.

- *Beth Ann Mills, New Rochelle P.L., N.Y.*

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From Kirkus Reviews

Set in newly independent India, Nehru's early 1950's, this adipose saga counterbalances a book of social manners--the marrying off of a well-to-do educated young woman, Lata Mehra--with a historical account (even at the level of transcribed parliamentary debate) of the subcontinent trying to find its societal bearings vis-...-vis language, religion, and the redistribution of estate-lands taken off the hands of the elite. Set mainly in Brahmipur, the story encompasses four well-off families, with a focus mostly on the younger members--poets, academics, playboys, newlyweds--who stitch a pattern of peccadillo through their elders' expectations. Meanwhile, Seth, whose California novel in verse, *The Golden Gate* (1986), was clever and energetic in concept but dull and soapy in final effect, falls into the same trap here: lots of stuff obviously--at a marathon 1300-plus pages--but characters made out of cliché, with background-India the very stuffed pillow of local color that keeps them standing. The book, too, fairly squeaks with its own pleasure in itself, larded with poetry and a general recommendation of art over politics and money: the characters it spends the most time

over are narcissists. Anyone wanting to read how a marriageable daughter can X-ray a whole society ought to let this cream-puff-wrapped-in-a-cinder-block pass and return to Tanizaki's classic Japanese masterpiece, *The Makioka Sisters*. Fat (the publishing world's delayed reparation for Rushdie's *Satanic Verses*?) but fatuous. (First printing of 100,000; Book-of-the-Month Dual Selection for May) -- Copyright ©1993, *Kirkus Associates, LP*. All rights reserved.

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Mary Alexander:**

A Suitable Boy: A Novel (Modern Classics) can be one of your starter books that are good idea. We all recommend that straight away because this reserve has good vocabulary that can increase your knowledge in language, easy to understand, bit entertaining but delivering the information. The article writer giving his/her effort to place every word into pleasure arrangement in writing A Suitable Boy: A Novel (Modern Classics) although doesn't forget the main stage, giving the reader the hottest and also based confirm resource data that maybe you can be certainly one of it. This great information may drawn you into new stage of crucial pondering.

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