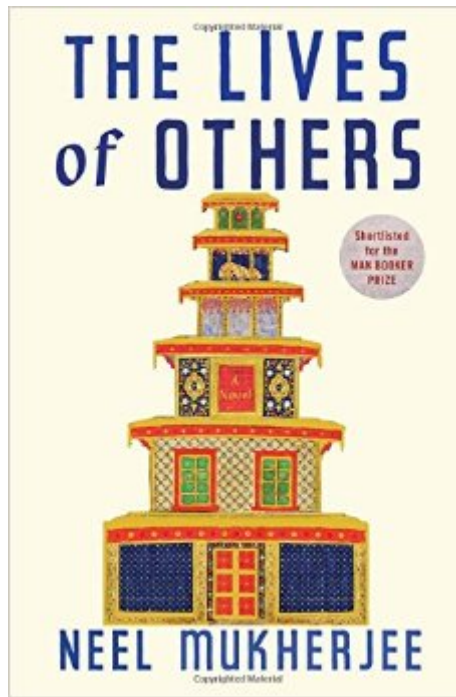


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The Lives Of Others



Synopsis

Shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize, Neel Mukherjee delivers a powerful, epic story of a family and a nation. The aging patriarch and matriarch of the Ghosh family preside over their large household, made up of their five adult children and their respective children, unaware that beneath the barely ruffled surface of their lives the sands are shifting. Each set of family members occupies a floor of the home, in accordance to their standing within the family. Poisonous rivalries between sisters-in-law, destructive secrets, and the implosion of the family business threaten to unravel bonds of kinship as social unrest brews in greater Indian society. This is a moment of turbulence, of inevitable and unstoppable change: the chasm between the generations, and between those who have and those who have not, has never been wider. The eldest grandchild, Supratik, compelled by his idealism, becomes dangerously involved in extremist political activism—a action that further catalyzes the decay of the Ghosh home. Ambitious, rich, and compassionate, *The Lives of Others* anatomizes the soul of a nation as it unfolds a family history, at the same time as it questions the nature of political action and the limits of empathy. It is a novel of unflinching power and emotional force.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

In *The Lives of Others*, Neel Mukherjee takes a more than averagely dysfunctional family and employs it as a metaphor for the State and the state of West Bengal in the late 1960s. Patriarch Prafullanath, his children Adinath, Priyonath, venomous unmarriageable Chhaya, Bholanath, late addition Somnath, and grandchildren, revolutionary Supratik, Suranjan, Baishakhi, Arunima, maths

prodigy Sona and shy Kalyani. Thank goodness for the (frequently referred to) family tree at the outset; even so, the cast of characters is confusing, what with pet names, prefixes, relational terms and so forth. There is also some confusion, it must be said, with the arrangement of this narrative. The reader is dropped into the Ghosh family home from the height of the top-floor terrace where 16-year old Baishakhi is carrying on a roof-top flirtation with the boy next door. Mukherjee takes us down through the various levels of the big house in which all the Ghoshes live and as he gradually reveals the family members' back-stories, we come to understand the pecking order, the beefs and jealousies, the blood bonds and the blood-boiling bust-ups. In alternate chapters (set in different type), first grandson Supratik, conducts a correspondence with an unknown party. He has rejected his comfortable, middle-class upbringing to become a left-wing political activist. Leaving a note for his inconsolable mother, he disappears into the villages of remote rural districts where he and his band of comrades hope to harness the hunger of the peasant class to ignite an uprising. This is a powerful story, complex in the telling.

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