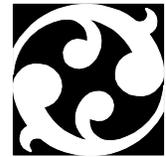


CAMELOT BOOK CLUB



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THE NAMESAKE

by Jhumpa Lahiri

“In *The Namesake*, ... the characters are always hungry: for a place to call home, for family, for love, and, of course, for food. Ashima, in an arranged marriage to Ashoke Ganguli, misses her native India as she sets up house far from her family in Massachusetts, a land of bleak winters that her family will never know, much less understand. Making Bengali food out of American substitutes, she searches desperately for the comfort of her childhood. Time gradually pulls her away from the past, and she learns the ways of America, becomes friends with other transplanted Bengalis, and begins a family. A quiet affection develops between Ashima and Ashoke as they raise their two children, oddly-named Gogol and his sister Sonia. The novel lovingly follows the family through decades of heartache and celebrations.

“Gogol is the novel’s center and its primary perspective, the namesake of the title. Although he does not know it until much later in life, Gogol is named after the Russian author ... because a copy of Gogol’s short stories saved Ashoke’s life after a train wreck. To Ashoke, the name of Gogol signifies a beginning, survival, ‘everything that followed’ the horrific night spent in the rubble. This idea is the heart of the novel; as immigrants the Gangulis must look forward to what lies ahead instead of what is past. In America, Ashima and Ashoke are reborn, just as their children must find their own paths.”

(Editor’s note: the above is copied without contrition from an Internet reader’s comment.)

CAMELOT’S DISCUSSION of the BOOK

We had a spirited discussion of *The Namesake*, all of us being interested in its insights into the Indian culture. Some of the high-lights of our discussion follow.

- Food and clothing become symbolic in the author’s telling of the story.
 - The marriage of Ashima and Ashoke was arranged by the family; they had not even met when he arrived to take Ashima as his wife.
 - The grandmother’s letter to name the new baby never came, so Ashoke named him Gogol; the name becomes a significant part of the story.
 - The train wreck where Ashoke was badly injured was described so clearly.
 - Gogol was whiney - didn’t like him.
 - Ashoke understood that Gogol didn’t like his name because he wanted to be an American boy.
 - Some of us hope to read *Interpretation of Maladies*, the author’s first book, which consists of short stories.
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NEXT MEETING

When? Friday, June 15, 2012, 1:30 p.m.
Where? At Tim Latta's house
Why? To have fun, and to discuss
State of Wonder
A tale of an epic journey in the Amazon
by Ann Patchett

CAMELOT COMMENTS

- ✓ I really liked it very much. The only part I didn't like was the ending.
- ✓ I liked it. Her writing was lovely. The guy was a bore.
- ✓ Loved the writing - such an insightful description of the Indian culture.
- ✓ I felt like the ending was not what I wanted. Didn't like the character.
- ✓ I enjoyed reading the book, but didn't like Gogol - such a weak person.
- ✓ I liked it.
- ✓ I liked the writing, didn't like the main characters. It helped understand the culture. Indians seem to have no space requirements - they have a crowded country, and are used to not having much space between persons.
- ✓ My thunder is stolen by comments above. The author writes in such a mature fashion for someone so young.
- ✓ Nice insights into the Indian culture.
- ✓ You know you're reading a good book when the plot is a slice of life and you can't put it down.

Hostesses coming up: July, Suzanne Tuite - Reader's Choice
August, Ann Seher - The Paris Wife: a novel

MEETING NOTES

Anne Simms' house was the setting for our meeting. After our conversations about the book, we solved a few problems of the world, as usual.

We had interesting talk about nicknames and/or middle names. Seems everyone had an interesting derivation: Lorena Anne, Martha Tim, Ann Carver, Judy Robin, Gwendolyn Sue, Peggy/Margaret, Ridgeway Watson, Lemonjello & Orangejello.

Our hostess served coffee, lemonade, and a scrumptious blackberry pie. Another lovely Camelot afternoon.

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CAMELOT BOOK CLUB IS GREAT

