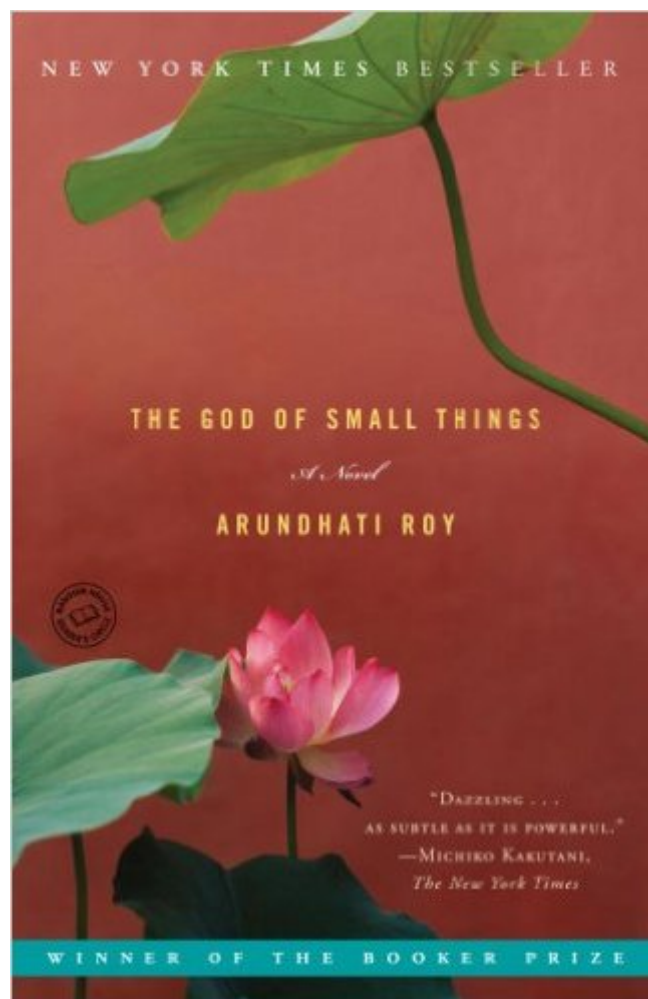


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# The God Of Small Things: A Novel



## Synopsis

Compared favorably to the works of Faulkner and Dickens, Arundhati Roy's debut novel is a modern classic that has been read and loved worldwide. Equal parts powerful family saga, forbidden love story, and piercing political drama, it is the story of an affluent Indian family forever changed by one fateful day in 1969. The seven-year-old twins Estha and Rahel see their world shaken irrevocably by the arrival of their beautiful young cousin, Sophie. It is an event that will lead to an illicit liaison and tragedies accidental and intentional, exposing the big things [that] lurk unsaid in a country drifting dangerously toward unrest. Lush, lyrical, and unnerving, *The God of Small Things* is an award-winning landmark that started for its author an esteemed career of fiction and political commentary that continues unabated.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Don't let this book's packaging fool you: it is poetry. It is just over 300 pages of poetry, meant to be read aloud, set down, thought about, slept on, read aloud some more, and thought about some more. And when you're done reading it, you should set it down, think about it, and reread it. No one part of *The God Of Small Things* can be understood without understanding the rest of it, but perhaps a chunk from the beginning of the book will reveal some of its beauty and form. Read it aloud if you'd like; that's probably the best way to appreciate it. The quote is this: "Their lives have a size and a shape now. Estha has his and Rahel hers. Edges, Borders, Boundaries, Brinks and Limits have appeared like a team of trolls on their separate horizons. Short creatures with long shadows, patrolling the Blurry End. Gentle half-moons have gathered under their eyes and they are

as old as Ammu was when she died. Thirty-one. Not old. Not young. But a viable die-able age."That quote is particularly apt, revealing as it does the poetic tragedy of the book. There is very little that is uplifting about *The God Of Small Things*, because nearly every image is surrounded by the knowledge -- which Ms. Roy plainly lays out early on -- that tragedy will befall the characters soon. As readers, we approach the tragedy with mounting horror, followed by something like resignation, followed by deep loss. The tragedies of this book are the tragedies of caste, of childhood lost, and of love destroyed. Outwardly, the book is the story of two twins and the broken lives that their childhoods yielded.

"May in Ayemenem is a hot, brooding month," and so is Arundhati Roy's novel *The God of Small Things*. Imagine a cold piece of butter slowly melting in a frying pan, setting the scene for the cooking to come, and you can see the way Roy's prose works. Words that are hot and brooding reel you into an intricate web of family politics and social mores, evoking a feeling similar to a written stream of consciousness. Roy writes in layers, except that the layers are both added and taken off; I was reminded of my childhood when I would eat wafer chocolates from the bottom and the top, leaving the middle until last, because that was the best part. Roy kindly dispels the, often torturous, anxiety of what happens in the end early on in the book. The reader is told what happened before it happened, what happened after it happened, and saves what happened for last. A format that seemingly would put off a reader becomes its most appreciated quality. This book is for everyone; murder mystery, love story, epic saga all in one. Even if you're not the romantic type, the social scrutiny of Indian customs provides for interesting reading. However, if you're interested in brain candy, forget it. There is too much to absorb. Emotion and intellect are needed in order to understand the emotion and intellect that are related. You could take in only what is superficially presented, as the plot alone is worthwhile, but you would be missing so much. Rahel, a dizygotic twin returns to the place of her childhood and subsequently a place of unhappiness to see her brother, the other twin, after more than twenty years of separation. Estha, the brother, has stopped talking, and Rahel has stopped feeling. Their reunion allows for the remembrance and grieving of their disastrous youths.

What is *The God of Small Things*? Small things are what we talk about when the big things are too difficult and too overwhelming. This book is the story of the childhood of non-fraternal twins, Rahel & Estha - a girl and a boy, family, forbidden lovers, politics, and tradition. Ammu is the twins' mother; a woman of a privileged family who married, then divorced her twins' alcoholic father. Baby

Kochamma is their manipulative spinster aunt who pines for a priest she met as a young girl. Sophie Mol is a visiting Indian/English cousin who meets her end soon after arriving. The story progresses, in a backwards and forwards manner, telling the tale(s) that ended their childhoods. The children, ultimately become pawns in the cruel "history" being played out by the adults around them. We often see the result of the action, before we know what occurred; a complex puzzle unfolding. This story incorporates issues of human relationships, the complicated emotions and repercussions of the caste system, brutality, and the ability to survive. Holding together the microcosms of the many "small" stories within this story is Roy's use of language. The silly rhymes of the children, their imaginative nicknames for adults, and their view of the love and cruelty of adults, and the interpretation of the world on their terms, creates a framework for this story. The use of "non-standard" English is widely used, which some reviews seem to believe is unintentional. For instance, verbs are sometimes capitalized in order to emphasize the inevitability, the concrete-ness, of the action. Sentences are often fragmented in order to express a thought, especially a child's thought. (I certainly don't think in complete, grammatical sentences myself). It's really quite beautifully written.

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