



A Passage to India (Penguin Classics)

By E M Forster

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Exploring issues of colonialism, faith and the limits of comprehension, E.M. Forster's "A Passage to India" is edited by Oliver Stallybrass, with an introduction by Pankaj Mishra. When Adela Quested and her elderly companion Mrs Moore arrive in the Indian town of Chandrapore, they quickly feel trapped by its insular and prejudiced 'Anglo-Indian' community. Determined to escape the parochial English enclave and explore the 'real India', they seek the guidance of the charming and mercurial Dr Aziz, a cultivated Indian Muslim. But a mysterious incident occurs while they are exploring the Marabar caves with Aziz, and the well-respected doctor soon finds himself at the centre of a scandal that rouses violent passions among both the British and their Indian subjects. A masterly portrait of a society in the grip of imperialism, "A Passage to India" compellingly depicts the fate of individuals caught between the great political and cultural conflicts of the modern world. In his introduction, Pankaj Mishra outlines Forster's complex engagement with Indian society and culture. This edition reproduces the Abinger text and notes, and also includes four of Forster's essays on India, a chronology and further reading. E. M. Forster (1879-1970) was a noted English author and critic and a member of the Bloomsbury group. His first novel, "Where Angels Fear To Tread" appeared in 1905. "The Longest Journey" appeared in 1907, followed by "A Room With A View" (1908), based partly on the material from extended holidays in Italy with his mother. "Howards End" (1910) was a story that centred on an English country house and dealt with the clash between two families, one interested in art and literature, the other only in business. Maurice was revised several times during his life, and finally published posthumously in 1971. If you enjoyed "A Passage to India", you might like Rudyard Kipling's "Kim", also available in "Penguin Classics". "His great book...masterly in its presence and its lucidity". (Anita Desai).

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

What really happened in the Marabar caves? This is the mystery at the heart of E.M. Forster's 1924 novel, *A Passage to India*, the puzzle that sets in motion events highlighting an even larger question: Can an Englishman and an Indian be friends?

"It is impossible here," an Indian character tells his friend, Dr. Aziz, early in the novel.

"They come out intending to be gentlemen, and are told it will not do.... Why, I remember when Turton came out first. It was in another part of the Province. You fellows will not believe me, but I have driven with Turton in his carriage--Turton! Oh yes, we were once quite intimate. He has shown me his stamp collection.

"He would expect you to steal it now. Turton! But red-nosed boy will be far worse than Turton!

"I do not think so. They all become exactly the same, not worse, not better. I give any Englishman two years, be he Turton or Burton. It is only the difference of a letter. And I give any Englishwoman six months. All are exactly alike."

Written while England was still firmly in control of India, Forster's novel follows the fortunes of three English newcomers to India--Miss Adela Quested, Mrs. Moore, and Cyril Fielding--and the Indian, Dr. Aziz, with whom they cross destinies. The idea of true friendship between the races was a radical one in Forster's time, and he makes it abundantly clear that it was not one that either side welcomed. If Aziz's friend, Hamidullah, believed it impossible, the British representatives of the Raj were equally discouraging.

"Why, the kindest thing one can do to a native is to let him die," said Mrs. Callendar.

"How if he went to heaven?" asked Mrs. Moore, with a gentle but crooked smile.

"He can go where he likes as long as he doesn't come near me. They give me the creeps."

Despite their countrymen's disapproval, Miss Quested, Mrs. Moore, and Mr. Fielding are all eager to meet Indians, and in Dr. Aziz they find a perfect companion: educated, westernized, and open-minded. Slowly, the friendships ripen, especially between Aziz and Fielding. Having created the possibility of esteem based on trust and mutual affection, Forster then subjects it to the crucible of racial hatred: during a visit to the famed Marabar caves, Miss Quested accuses Dr. Aziz of sexually assaulting her, then later recants during the frenzied trial that follows. Under such circumstances, affection proves to be a very fragile commodity indeed.

Arguably Forster's greatest novel, *A Passage to India* limns a troubling portrait of colonialism at its worst, and is remarkable for the complexity of its characters. Here the personal becomes the political and in the breach between Aziz and his English "friends," Forster foreshadows the eventual end of the Raj. --*Alix Wilber*

From School Library Journal

Grade 9 Up-By E.M. Forster. Narrated by Flo Gibson.

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Review

Novel by E.M. Forster published in 1924. Considered one of the author's finest works, the novel examines racism and colonialism as well as the need to maintain both ties to the earth and a cerebral life of the imagination. The book portrays the relationship between the British and the Indians in India and the tensions that arise when a visiting Englishwoman, Adela Quested, accuses a well-respected Indian man, Dr. Aziz, of attacking her during an outing. Aziz has many defenders, including the compassionate Cecil Fielding, the principal of the local college. During the trial Adela hesitates on the witness stand and then withdraws the charges. Aziz and Fielding go their separate ways, but two years later they have a tentative reunion. As they ride through the jungles, an outcrop of rocks forces them to separate paths, symbolizing the racial politics that caused a breach in their friendship. --The Merriam-Webster Encyclopedia of Literature

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