



Small Island: A Novel

By Andrea Levy

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Small Island is an international bestseller. It won the Orange Prize for Fiction, The Orange Prize for Fiction: Best of the Best, The Whitbread Novel Award, The Whitbread Book of the Year Award, and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize. It has now been adapted for the screen as a coproduction of the BBC and Masterpiece/WGBH Boston.

Hortense Joseph arrives in London from Jamaica in 1948 with her life in her suitcase, her heart broken, her resolve intact. Her husband, Gilbert Joseph, returns from the war expecting to be received as a hero, but finds his status as a black man in Britain to be second class. His white landlady, Queenie, raised as a farmer's daughter, befriends Gilbert, and later Hortense, with innocence and courage, until the unexpected arrival of her husband, Bernard, who returns from combat with issues of his own to resolve.

Told in these four voices, *Small Island* is a courageous novel of tender emotion and sparkling wit, of crossings taken and passages lost, of shattering compassion and of reckless optimism in the face of insurmountable barriers---in short, an encapsulation of that most American of experiences: the immigrant's life.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Andrea Levy's award-winning novel, *Small Island*, deftly brings two bleak families into crisp focus. First a Jamaican family, including the well-intentioned Gilbert, who can never manage to say or do exactly the right thing; Romeo Michael, who leaves a wake of women in his path; and finally, Hortense, whose primness belies her huge ambition to become English in every way possible. The other unhappy family is English, starting with Queenie, who escapes the drudgery of being a butcher's daughter only to marry a dull banker. As the chapters reverse chronology and the two groups collide and finally mesh, the book unfolds through time like a photo album, and Levy captures the struggle between class, race, and sex with a humor and tenderness that is both authentic and bracing. The book is cinematic in the best way—lighting up London's bombed-out houses and wartime existence with clarity and verve while never losing her character's voice or story. --Meg Halverson

From Publishers Weekly

Starred Review. After winning the Orange Prize and the Whitbread Book of the Year Award, Levy's captivating fourth novel sweeps into a U.S. edition with much-deserved literary fanfare. Set mainly in the British Empire of 1948, this story of emigration, loss and love follows four characters—two Jamaicans and two Britons—as they struggle to find peace in postwar England. After serving in the RAF, Jamaican Gilbert Joseph finds life in his native country has become too small for him. But in order to return to England, he must marry Hortense Roberts—she's got enough money for his passage—and then set up house for them in London. The pair move in with Queenie Bligh, whose husband, Bernard, hasn't returned from his wartime post in India. But when does Bernard turn up, he is not pleased to find black immigrants living in his house. This deceptively simple plot poises the characters over a yawning abyss of colonialism, racism, war and the everyday pain that people inflict on one another. Levy allows readers to see events from each of the four character's' point of view, lightly demonstrating both the subjectivity of truth and the rationalizing lies that people tell themselves when they are doing wrong. None of the characters is perfectly sympathetic, but all are achingly human. When Gilbert realizes that his pride in the British Empire is not reciprocated, he wonders, "How come England did not know me?" His question haunts the story as it moves back and forth in time and space to show how the people of two small islands become inextricably bound together. *Agent, David Grossman. (Apr.)*

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From School Library Journal

Adult/High School—This novel examines class, race, and prejudice in London in 1948, when a new multiracial England began to form. Through four principal narrators comprising two married couples, the author brings to life the dreams and fears of a generation. Gilbert, a Jamaican newlywed who served in the RAF during World War II, hopes for a prosperous future in London, though his experience of racial discrimination tells him this won't be achieved easily. His young wife, Hortense, is more naive. Arriving from the colonies prepared to take up a teaching career, she is soon in despair over rude rejections and her struggle to make herself understood, literally and figuratively, by white working-class neighbors who don't seem to comprehend the pristine English she learned on her home island. Even the small comforts provided by their affable landlady are soured when Queenie's long-missing husband returns and is less than pleased to meet the black boarders. As these mismatched pairs relate their sides of the story, the author's linguistic skill pitches their voices perfectly within time and place. Though none of the characters is very likable, all are nuanced personalities who make the book intriguing and believable throughout, even a final plot twist involving a coincidence of Dickensian proportions. Affecting, funny, and sad, this is a masterful depiction of

a society on the verge of major changes.—*Starr E. Smith, Fairfax County Public Library, VA*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Bruce Brown:

The book *Small Island: A Novel* can give more knowledge and also the precise product information about everything you want. So just why must we leave the great thing like a book *Small Island: A Novel*? Wide variety you have a different opinion about guide. But one aim in which book can give many details for us. It is absolutely right. Right now, try to closer using your book. Knowledge or details that you take for that, you could give for each other; you can share all of these. Book *Small Island: A Novel* has simple shape nevertheless, you know: it has great and big function for you. You can seem the enormous world by open and read a book. So it is very wonderful.

Michael Counts:

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James Mendoza:

Small Island: A Novel can be one of your starter books that are good idea. All of us recommend that straight away because this e-book has good vocabulary that could increase your knowledge in terminology, easy to understand, bit entertaining however delivering the information. The copy writer giving his/her effort to set every word into satisfaction arrangement in writing *Small Island: A Novel* yet doesn't forget the main point, giving the reader the hottest in addition to based confirm resource data that maybe you can be among it. This great information could drawn you into new stage of crucial considering.

Patricia Baker:

Your reading 6th sense will not betray you, why because this *Small Island: A Novel* book written by well-known writer whose to say well how to make book that can be understand by anyone who all read the book. Written with good manner for you, dripping every ideas and composing skill only for eliminate your personal hunger then you still skepticism *Small Island: A Novel* as good book not just by the cover but also through the content. This is one publication that can break don't evaluate book by its deal with, so do you still needing a different sixth sense to pick this particular!? Oh come on your reading through sixth sense already said so why you have to listening to another sixth sense.

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