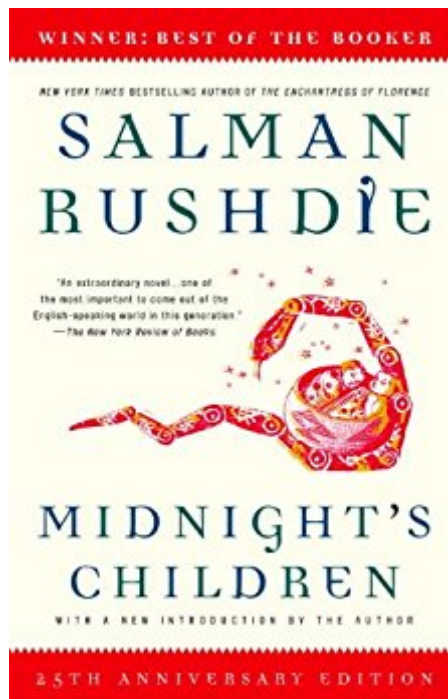


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# Midnight's Children



## Synopsis

Selected by the Modern Library as one of the 100 best novels of all time Winner of the Booker of Bookers Saleem Sinai is born at the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947, the very moment of India's independence. Greeted by fireworks displays, cheering crowds, and Prime Minister Nehru himself, Saleem grows up to learn the ominous consequences of this coincidence. His every act is mirrored and magnified in events that sway the course of national affairs; his health and well-being are inextricably bound to those of his nation; his life is inseparable, at times indistinguishable, from the history of his country. Perhaps most remarkable are the telepathic powers linking him with India's 1,000 other "midnight children," all born in that initial hour and endowed with magical gifts. This novel is at once a fascinating family saga and an astonishing evocation of a vast land and its people—a brilliant incarnation of the universal human comedy. Twenty-five years after its publication, *Midnight's Children* stands apart as both an epochal work of fiction and a brilliant performance by one of the great literary voices of our time.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

This is, in every way, a perfect novel. Both humorous and heartbreaking. I found myself deeply moved and very surprised that I enjoyed this novel as much as I did. I have never been very

interested in Indian history, and knew close to nothing about it. But upon reading this novel, I found myself drawn into the rich fictional history of the Aziz family, as well as the equally rich history of India. Rushdie may have ruined reading for me, as every book I read will now have much higher standards! Not for light reading, though. I imagine this is a book that you could read over and over and still find something new each time. This is a tough novel, and it takes a lot of work to truly "get it". The only reason I stuck with it is because I had to for class. But it was very rewarding in the end. The novel reveals itself in layers, with recurring themes and motifs that grow in extremely deep and powerful meanings. The character of Saleem, self-described savior of India, is one of the most memorable characters to have graced the pages of a novel. I have heard some people say that this book is a let down in the end, as though it never comes to a full climax. In answer to that: I felt that was the whole point. Saleem's dreams are always dreams, they are never completely realized. The language is beautiful and lyrical, and the plot is highly detailed, as though each sentence was carefully planned. Rushdie may be the ultimate architect of this century when it comes to plot building. As a writer myself, I was both green with envy and speechless with awe over this novel. I have never read anything else by Rushdie, but now I definitely plan to! A couple of tips: 1. There are many different characters, so you may want to make a family tree to keep track. 2.

*Midnight's Children* is considered to be Rushdie's masterpiece; it won the Booker Prize, and then, in 1993, it won the 'Booker of Bookers', ie the best book to have won the Booker Prize in the first 25 years of the award. In addition to this, Rushdie's reputation is not built upon his literary merits so much as the surrounding controversy of another book, *The Satanic Verses*, which all but condemned him to years of hiding and constant moving about in an effort to escape fundamentalist Muslim assassination-attempts. The premise for this novel is amazing. At the stroke of midnight on August 15th, 1947, India achieved independence and became a valid country, free from the shackles of Britain. One thousand and one children were born in the hour from midnight to 1am, one thousand and one children with magical powers, the potency of which increases the closer the child was born to midnight. The narrator, Saleem Sinai, was one of two children born on the exact stroke of midnight, and throughout the novel various allusions to yin and yang, good and evil, up and down, et cetera are made between Saleem and Shiva, the other child, but unfortunately nothing really comes from this. Although mentioned often and with great vehemence on the part of the narrator, Shiva never really came across as a 'bad guy', or even someone that should be worried about at all. The story meanders through thirty odd years of life before Saleem's birth, detailing the lives and idiosyncracies of his parent's and grandparent's adventures, which, admittedly, are

described with great sweeping motions and tantalizing literary strokes. Sentences marvel, paragraphs sing with wit or beauty, but...what was the point?

Salman Rushdie's "Midnight's Children" appears to be an allegory, spiced with satirical commentary, on the political course of modern India and the in-fighting of its various social and religious factions. It is an endlessly inventive book with a cheeky sense of humor and wild, exotic imagery, but it does not eschew somber moments. Rushdie presents this novel as the autobiography of Saleem Sinai, writing from his current residence at a Bombay pickle factory under the critical eye of his frequently interruptive lover/fiance Padma. Saleem was born on the stroke of midnight on August 15, 1947, the precise moment of India's independence from Great Britain and Pakistan's formation. He and one thousand other babies (the Midnight's Children) born in India throughout the hour each has some supernatural power such as witchcraft, time travel, gender alteration, etc., or otherwise is simply a mutant. Kind of like the X-Men, except they're too self-serving to band together and fight crime (and too bad, as there is a lot of narrative potential in this idea). Saleem routinely hides in a washing-chest in his house to find inner peace away from neighborhood kids who taunt him for his large misshapen nose and other odd facial features. One day in the chest, he has a strange accident -- he sniffs a pajama cord up his nose, triggering an effect which causes him to hear voices in his head and realize he has telepathic powers. By telepathy, he establishes communication with the (heretofore unknown to him) other Midnight's Children, but they prove unwilling to unite. An operation performed on his nose to stop his severe dripping snot problem clears his nasal passages to reveal an uncanny olfactory ability, enabling him to sniff out emotions and ideas as well as smells.

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