

A Suitable Boy

Vikram Seth

Reviewed by: Keertana Sripathi, 15

Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity

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A Suitable Boy is an Indian fiction novel by Vikram Seth. This novel is a love story set a few years after India's independence from the British and India's partition, leading to India and Pakistan as neighboring countries. The heroine and protagonist of the story is Lata Mehra, who is a young woman studying literature in Brahmipur. The novel starts with the wedding of Lata's elder sister Savita and Pran Kapoor. During the wedding, Lata's widowed mother Mrs. Rupa Mehra tells Lata strictly that she will marry a man only of her choice. The novel is about whom Lata will marry, the man she loves irrationally or the man of her mother's choice who is the most practical choice for Lata. *A Suitable Boy* is written in an omniscient point of view, allowing the reader to understand what is going on from many characters' perspectives. Although this story is mainly a love story, politics and religion are also written about a lot. Lata has three siblings who are the easily raged Arun who partially takes the role of his father after his death and is married to the cold but glamorous Meenakshi, the soft-spoken and sweet Savita happily married to Pran Kapoor who is the son of the former Minister of Revenue, and Varun who is fond of horse races but very much dominated by his elder brother Arun. Lata does not think much about marriage but as the story progresses, she starts to understand its beauty and purpose.

There are three suitable boys who take place in *A Suitable Boy* who are Kabir Durrani, Amit Chatterji, and Haresh Khanna. Kabir and Lata fall in love but Lata after finding out that Kabir is a Muslim, is well aware that their marriage would not be well received by her family and thus unsuccessfully attempts to forget about him. The sometimes cynical but mostly kind Amit is a well known poet in Calcutta who realizes that he has feelings for Lata and proposes to her. Haresh is a businessman in the industry of shoes who has worked extremely hard from nothing to an influential role in the Praha Shoe Company located in Prahapore. Mrs. Rupa Mehra finds him through a friend and wants Lata to marry him. Lata finds many endearing qualities in him but also some things that she dislikes but soon throws away as she is blinded by Haresh's caring, affectionate, and thoughtful nature. Lata finds herself in a dilemma where she cannot choose which man to marry. Conflicts in the political world also take place as well as religious riots between Hindus and Muslims which lead to disastrous outcomes. The father of Pran Kapoor, Mahesh Kapoor, is the sole author of the Zamindari Abolition Act and goes through many conflicts in Congress in trying to get it passed as opposition is quite strong. Music is a very common motif during the entire novel, as many of the characters are either musicians or strong aficionados of music.

One thing that I loved about *A Suitable Boy* is how convincing and captivating all of the characters are. The heroine of the novel, unlike many novels and movies, is not the most attractive character in the novel. Instead her best friend Malati Trivedi is. The fact that the protagonist of the story is not the most glamorous and attractive gives a very refreshing change to all readers because through many of the novels, being the most beautiful or handsome physically is seen as being very important. But in *A Suitable Boy* inner beauty is more appreciated as all three men see how beautiful Lata truly is. However, Lata is said to be a lovely and enchanting but slightly reserved young woman with a beautiful smile that Amit has once noted. She is found to be very attractive by all three suitable boys but her inner beauty is much

more appreciated. One slightly unfavourable aspect of this novel is that it is a quite long book. It has more than a thousand pages but it is really is an amazing book because the reader will turn out to be bewitched by *A Suitable Boy*'s delightful language and fascinating story. The age group appropriate for this book are ages 18 and up.

This book should definitely be bought as a gift because it is a book that one will read over and over again. The characters themselves are a treat to read about in this story because they are just so genuinely authentic and believable for the readers.

Book Recommendations:

An Equal Music by Vikram Seth

Two Lives by Vikram Seth

The Namesake by Jhumpa Lahiri