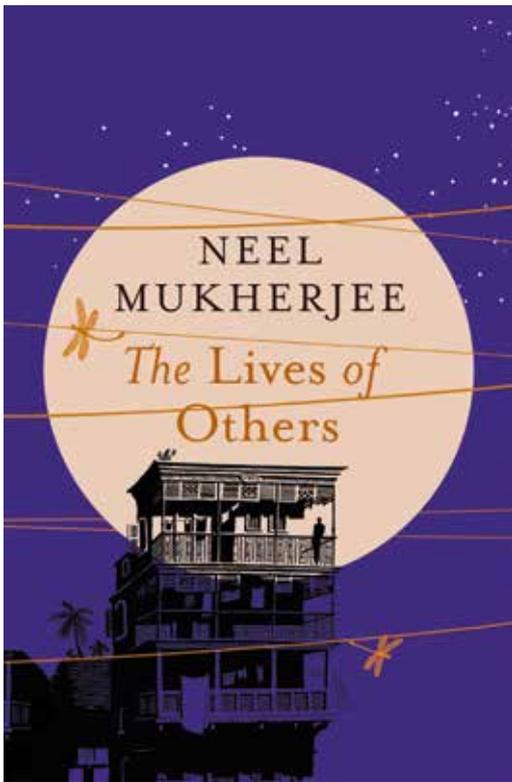




# Reader's Guide



Other novels by Neel Mukherjee  
*A Life Apart* (2010)

## The Lives of Others Neel Mukherjee

Chatto & Windus

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## About the author

Neel Mukherjee was born in Calcutta. His first novel, *A Life Apart* (2010), won the Vodafone–Crossword Award in India, the Writers' Guild of Great Britain Award for best fiction, and was shortlisted for the inaugural DSC Prize for South Asian Literature. He lives in London.

## *The Lives of Others*

Calcutta, 1967. Unnoticed by his family, Supratik has become dangerously involved in extremist political activism. Compelled by an idealistic desire to change his life and the world around him, all he leaves behind before disappearing is a note...

The ageing patriarch and matriarch of his family, the Ghoshes, preside over their large household, unaware that beneath the barely ruffled surface of their lives the sands are shifting. More than poisonous rivalries among sisters-in-law, destructive secrets, and the implosion of the family business, this is a family unravelling as the society around it fractures. For this is a moment of turbulence, of inevitable and unstoppable change: the chasm between the generations, and between those who have and those who have not, has never been wider.

## Discussion points

*The Lives of Others* begins with a prologue which initially appears unconnected to the rest of the narrative. Why do you think Neel Mukherjee chose to frame the narrative in this way? What does Nitai Das's story contribute to the novel as a whole?

What do you think of the title, *The Lives of Others*? What does it mean to you, and what point do you think Mukherjee may be trying to make with this choice?

*The Lives of Others* has two narrative strands, the first is the portrait of the Ghosh family and the other is in the form of letters from the eldest grandson, Supratik, to a loved one whose identity is revealed towards the end. Why might Neel Mukherjee have chosen to tell the story in this way?

How does *The Lives of Others* expose the gulf between rich and poor, young and old, tradition and modernity?

To what extent and in what ways does *The Lives of Others* pose a "challenge to middle-class reading tastes, in particular the enduring love of post-Colonial English readers for Indian novels which charm rather than confront". (Patrick Gale, *The Independent*)

## Themed reading

Anita Desai *The Inheritance of Loss*  
Thomas Mann *Buddenbrooks*  
Jhumpa Lahiri *The Lowland*  
Jonathan Franzen *The Corrections*  
VS Naipaul *A House for Mr Biswas*

## Useful links

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