

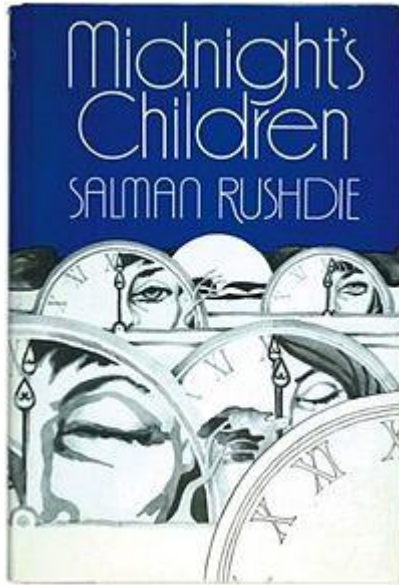
# *Midnight's Children*

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For the film based on the novel, see [Midnight's Children \(film\)](#).

## *Midnight's Children*



First edition cover

<b>Author(s)</b>	<a href="#">Salman Rushdie</a>
<b>Cover artist</b>	Bill Botten
<b>Country</b>	United Kingdom
<b>Language</b>	English
<b>Genre(s)</b>	<a href="#">Novel</a> ; <a href="#">Magic Realism</a> ; <a href="#">Historical Fiction</a>
<b>Publisher</b>	<a href="#">Jonathan Cape</a>
<b>Publication date</b>	April 1981
<b>Media type</b>	Print ( <a href="#">Hardback</a> & <a href="#">Paperback</a> )
<b>Pages</b>	446 pp (first edition, hardback)
<b><a href="#">ISBN</a></b>	<a href="#">ISBN 022401823X</a> (first edition, hardback)
<b><a href="#">OCLC</a> Number</b>	<a href="#">8234329</a>

*Midnight's Children* is a [1981](#) book by [Salman Rushdie](#) that deals with India's transition from [British colonialism](#) to [independence](#) and the [partition of India](#). It is considered an example of [postcolonial literature](#) and [magical realism](#). The story is told by its chief protagonist, Saleem Sinai, and is set in the context of actual historical events as with [historical fiction](#).

*Midnight's Children* won both the [Booker Prize](#) and the [James Tait Black Memorial Prize](#) in 1981. It was awarded the "[Booker of Bookers](#)" Prize and the best all-time prize winners in 1993 and 2008 to celebrate the Booker Prize 25th and 40th anniversary.<sup>[\[1\]](#)[\[2\]](#)</sup> It was also added to the list of [Great Books of the 20th Century](#), published by [Penguin Books](#).

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## [\[edit\]](#) Background and plot summary

The novel has a multitude of named characters; see the [List of \*Midnight's Children\* characters](#).

*Midnight's Children* is a loose [allegory](#) for events in India both before and, primarily, after the independence and [partition of India](#). The protagonist and narrator of the story is [Saleem Sinai](#), born at the exact moment when India became an independent country. He was born with telepathic powers, as well as an enormous and constantly dripping nose with an extremely sensitive sense of smell. The novel is divided into three books.

The book begins with the story of the Sinai family, particularly with events leading up to India's Independence and Partition. Saleem is born precisely at midnight, August 15, 1947, and is, therefore, exactly as old as the independent republic of India. He later discovers that all children born in India between 12 a.m. and 1 a.m. on that date are imbued with special powers. Saleem, using his telepathic powers, assembles a *Midnight Children's Conference*, reflective of the issues India faced in its early statehood concerning the cultural, linguistic, religious, and political differences faced by a vastly diverse nation. Saleem acts as a telepathic conduit, bringing hundreds of geographically disparate children into contact while also attempting to discover the meaning of their gifts. In particular, those children born closest to the stroke of midnight wield more powerful gifts than the others. Shiva "of the Knees", Saleem's nemesis, and Parvati, called "Parvati-the-witch," are two of these children with notable gifts and roles in Saleem's story.

Meanwhile, Saleem's family begin a number of migrations and endure the numerous wars which plague the subcontinent. During this period he also suffers [amnesia](#) until he enters a quasi-[mythological exile](#) in the jungle of Sundarban, where he is re-endowed with his memory. In doing so, he reconnects with his childhood friends. Saleem later becomes involved with the [Indira Gandhi](#)-proclaimed [Emergency](#) and her son [Sanjay's "cleansing" of the Jama Masjid slum](#). For a time Saleem is held as a political prisoner; these passages

contain scathing criticisms of Indira Gandhi's overreach during the Emergency as well as what Rushdie seems to see as a personal lust for power bordering on godhood. The Emergency signals the end of the potency of the *Midnight Children*, and there is little left for Saleem to do but pick up the few pieces of his life he may still find and write the chronicle that encompasses both his personal history and that of his still-young nation; a chronicle written for his son, who, like his father, is both chained and supernaturally endowed by history.

## [\[edit\]](#) Major themes

The technique of [magical realism](#) finds liberal expression throughout the novel and is crucial to constructing the parallel to the country's history.<sup>[3]</sup> Nicholas Stewart in his essay, "Magic realism in relation to the post-colonial and *Midnight's Children*," argues that the "[narrative framework](#) of *Midnight's Children* consists of a tale – comprising his life story – which Saleem Sinai recounts orally to his wife-to-be Padma. This self-referential narrative (within a single paragraph Saleem refers to himself in the first person: 'And I, wishing upon myself the curse of Nadir Khan.' and the third: 'I tell you,' Saleem cried, 'it is true. ...') recalls indigenous Indian culture, particularly the similarly orally recounted [Arabian Nights](#). The events in Rushdie's text also parallel the magical nature of the narratives recounted in *Arabian Nights* (consider the attempt to electrocute Saleem at the latrine (p.353), or his journey in the 'basket of invisibility' (p.383))."<sup>[3]</sup> He also notes that, "the narrative comprises and compresses Indian cultural history. 'Once upon a time,' Saleem muses, 'there were [Radha](#) and [Krishna](#), and [Rama](#) and [Sita](#), and [Laila and Majnun](#); also (because we are not unaffected by the West) [Romeo and Juliet](#), and [Spencer Tracy](#) and [Katharine Hepburn](#)," (259). Stewart (citing Hutcheon) suggests that *Midnight's Children* chronologically entwines characters from both India and the West, "with post-colonial Indian history to examine both the effect of these indigenous and non-indigenous cultures on the Indian mind and in the light of Indian independence."<sup>[3]</sup>

## [\[edit\]](#) Reception

*Midnight's Children* was awarded the 1981 [Booker Prize](#), the [English Speaking Union](#) Literary Award, and the [James Tait Prize](#). It also was awarded the [Best Of The Booker](#) prize twice, in 1993 and 2008 (this was an award given out by the Booker committee to celebrate the 25th and 40th anniversary of the award).<sup>[2]</sup>

In 1984 [Indira Gandhi](#) brought an action against the book in the British courts, claiming to have been defamed by a single sentence in chapter 28, penultimate paragraph, in which her son [Sanjay Gandhi](#) is said to have had a hold over his mother by him accusing her of contributing to his father's [Feroze Gandhi](#)'s death through her neglect. The case was settled out of court when Salman Rushdie agreed to remove the offending sentence.<sup>[4]</sup>

## [\[edit\]](#) Adaptations

In the late 1990s the [BBC](#) was planning to film a five-part miniseries of the novel with [Rahul Bose](#) in the lead, but due to pressure from the [Muslim community](#) in [Sri Lanka](#), the filming permit was revoked and the project was cancelled.<sup>[5]</sup> Later in 2003, the novel was adapted for the stage by the [Royal Shakespeare Company](#).<sup>[6]</sup>

Director [Deepa Mehta](#) is collaborating with Rushdie on a new version of the story, the forthcoming film *Midnight's Children*.<sup>[7][8]</sup> Indian-American actor [Satya Bhabha](#) will play the role of Saleem Sinai<sup>[9]</sup> while other roles will be played by [Shriya Saran](#), [Seema Biswas](#), [Shabana Azmi](#), [Anupam Kher](#), [Siddharth Narayan](#), Rahul Bose, [Soha Ali Khan](#),<sup>[10]</sup> [Shahana Goswami](#), Anita Majumdar<sup>[11]</sup> and [Darsheel Safary](#).<sup>[12]</sup> The film is scheduled to be released in 2012.<sup>[13]</sup>

## **[[edit](#)] See also**

- [List of Midnight's Children characters](#)
- [Le Monde's 100 Books of the Century](#)

## **[[edit](#)] Notes**

- <sup>^</sup> [Midnight's Children wins the Best of the Booker](#)
- <sup>^</sup> <sup>*a*</sup> <sup>*b*</sup> ["Rushdie wins Best of Booker prize". BBC News. 2008-07-10.](#)
- <sup>^</sup> <sup>*a*</sup> <sup>*b*</sup> <sup>*c*</sup> [Stewart, N. Magic realism as postcolonialist device in \*Midnight's Children\*](#)
- <sup>^</sup> This is reported by Salman Rushdie himself in his introduction to the 2006 25th Anniversary special edition, Vintage books, dated 25 December, 2005 [ISBN 9780099578512](#)
- <sup>^</sup> [Rushdie, Salman](#) (2002). *Step across this line: collected nonfiction 1992-2002*. Random House. p. 77. [ISBN 0679463348](#).
- <sup>^</sup> [The Literary Encyclopedia: Midnight's Children](#)
- <sup>^</sup> [Rushdie visits Mumbai for 'Midnight's Children' film](#)
- <sup>^</sup> [I'm a film buff: Rushdie](#)
- <sup>^</sup> ["Deepa finds Midnight's Children lead". Times of India. 21 August 2010. Retrieved 9 April 2011.](#)
- <sup>^</sup> [Dreaming of Midnight's Children](#)
- <sup>^</sup> [Irrfan moves from Mira Nair to Deepa Mehta](#)
- <sup>^</sup> [Jha, Subhash K. \(31 March 2011\). "Darsheel Safary Darsheel Safary in Midnight's Children". Times of India. Retrieved 20 May 2011.](#)
- <sup>^</sup> [Nolen, Stephanie \(15 May 2011\). "Mehta at midnight". Globe and Mail. Retrieved 17 May 2011.](#)

## **[[edit](#)] References**

- Santiago, Juan-Navarro. ["The Dialogic Imagination of Salman Rushdie and Carlos Fuentes: National Allegories and the Scene of Writing in \*Midnight's Children\* and \*Cristóbal Nonato\*."](#) *Neohelicon* 20.2 (1993): 257-312.

## **[[edit](#)] External links**

- [2009 retrospective review](#) by [Jo Walton](#)

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### Awards

Preceded by [Man Booker Prize recipient](#) Succeeded by

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[Schindler's Ark](#)

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- [Grimus](#) (1975)
- *Midnight's Children* (1981)
- [Shame](#) (1983)
- [The Satanic Verses](#) (1988)
- [The Moor's Last Sigh](#) (1995)
- [The Ground Beneath Her Feet](#) (1999)
- [Fury](#) (2001)
- [Shalimar the Clown](#) (2005)
- [The Enchantress of Florence](#) (2008)

**[Story collections:](#)**

- [East, West](#) (1994)
- [The Jaguar Smile: A Nicaraguan Journey](#) (1987)
- [Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981–1991](#) (1992)

**[Non-fiction:](#)**

- *Homeless by Choice* (1992)
- *Step Across This Line: Collected Nonfiction 1992–2002* (2002)



**[Plays:](#)**

- *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (with Tim Supple and David Tushingham)
- *Midnight's Children* (with Tim Supple and Simon Reade)

**[Children's books:](#)**

- [Haroun and the Sea of Stories](#) (1990)
- [Luka and the Fire of Life](#) (2010)

**[Anthology:](#)**

- *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing* (co-editor)

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