

# Brick Lane

A Novel by Monica Ali

Monica Ali was born in East Pakistan to a Pakistani father and a British mother. When she was three years old, she and her family moved to Bolton, England.

*Brick Lane*, her first novel, was short-listed for the Man Booker Prize. She has written three other novels: *Alentejo Blue*, *In the Kitchen*, and *Untold Story*.

## Other Immigrant Narratives:

*Jasmine* by Bharati  
Mukherjee, *Breath, Eyes,  
Memory* by Edwidge  
Danticat, and *Americanah*  
by Chimamanda Ngozi  
Adichie.

## Books similar to Brick Lane:

“Bangladesh’s bloody history under Partition and during the War of Independence, read **Tahmima Aman’s novel *A Golden Age***, which tells the story of a family torn apart by the political events of the time”

**Zadie’s Smith’s *White Teeth***, which chronicles the everyday lives of immigrants living in London, focusing on the intersections of British and African, Asian, and Caribbean cultures



**The protagonist of Brick Lane  
was born in an East Pakistan  
village in 1967**

**Prior to the Bangladesh  
Liberation war**

**In 1971= the nation won its  
independence but suffered  
devastating famine and  
political turmoil + a series of  
military coups**

**2001= the narrative mostly  
takes place in 2001**

**It concerns events in a  
Muslim immigrant  
community IN LONDON**

**Before and after the World  
Trade center tragedy**



**The narrative reveals how  
Nazneen wins her autonomy and  
her nation's status as the fourth  
largest textile exporter**





**Nazneen is born = a fated sign that her mother (RUPBAN)  
connects to endurance by means of passive acceptance**

**Nazneen is different in the beginning from her sister  
HASIA**

**Hasia= is a free spirit who follows her passion**

**Nazneen is separated from her family**

**She is relocated to London through  
an arranged marriage to a man nearly  
twice her age**

**Nazneen's husband= Chanu**

**At the age of 18, Nazneen prepares her 1st dinner party  
for DR AZAD**

**Dr Azad= a friend of her husband, CHANU**

**Chanu- a Bengali immigrant who has lived in London for  
decades**

**While Nazneen prepares for her 1st dinner party- she receives a letter from Hasina**

**Hasina has news of her passionate marriage to her teenage boyfriend, with whom she fled the village**

**(gossip about a fallen woman who just plunged to her death)**

Nazneen adapts to her new  
environment

**She settles into the routine of the  
young wife of a Bengali immigrant**

**She throws away the debris of her  
husband's corns**

**She puts up with his snores**

There is a birth of a son

The baby dies in infancy despite his  
parents efforts to have him healed

**Western medicine versus fate**

## **Friendship with jovial RAZIA**

**This is important part of Nazneen's development**

**The 2 women build a strong friendship**



A release from her persistent tension

Reading letters from her sister

Her sister has constant news of the ups and downs of  
her passionate affairs

Nazneen cherishes the letters as a window to another  
world, a world of desire forbidden to her as a dutiful wife  
in an arranged marriage

**The specter of the fallen woman  
hangs over NAZNEEN as she adapts  
to life in her new environment**



**Nazneen's mother RUPBAN's body was discovered leaning low over the sacks of rice, "stacked through the heart by a spear."**

**Their mother is the FALLEN WOMAN, haunting the sisters, marking their lives through her tragic and unforeseen suicide**

**THE MYSTERY SURROUNDING  
THE LITERAL PIERCING of their  
mother's heart drives the plot**

**As a youth, Nazneen never  
questioned the details of her death-  
like why she was wearing her best  
sari, though it wasn't a holiday and  
why her aunt MUMTAZ never spoke  
to her father afterwards**

**The narrative passes the years through  
Hasina's letters**

**Nazneen gives birth to 2 girls + Hasina falls  
into homelessness**



## **2001+ Entry of Karim**

**The story reaches January 2001**

**Chanu comes with computer and sewing machine (tools of technology)- this give Chanu and Nazneen entry into the wider world**

**This bounty comes at a price-  
Nazneen learns from RAZIA that they  
will never be able to escape Mrs Islam**

**Mrs Islam- who loaned them money**

**Nazneen is torn between saving  
money for her sister and paying debt  
to a usurer**



**Chanu says he has a new job driving a  
taxi**


**Karim = a new middleman**

**Karim and Nazneen become lovers**



**Climax:** Nazneen finishes paying the debt she and her husband, Chanu, owe to the corrupt and cruel Mrs. Islam, refusing, despite intimidation from the woman's two thuggish sons, to hand over any more money in interest. This act of defiance gives Nazneen the courage to end her relationship with her lover, Karim, and tell Chanu that she will not return to Bangladesh with him but will, instead, be making a life for herself and her daughters in London.

- Full Title: *Brick Lane*
- When Written: 2003
- Where Written: London, England
- When Published: June 2, 2004
- Literary Period: Contemporary Literature, Migrant Literature
- Genre: Novel
- Setting: East Pakistan, late 1960s; Dhaka, Bangladesh, early nineties to early 2000s; London, early 90s to early 2000s



**The Bard of Bengal.** As a self-proclaimed “educated man,” Chanu is always trying to instill in his daughters a love of Bangladesh and Bengali culture. With the pro-West Shahana, a character Monica Ali admits is based on her young self, he fails miserably, but Bibi is more interested. At one point in the novel, Chanu prompts his daughters as they recite the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore, a poet and musician often referred to as “the bard of Bengal.” The first non-European to win the Nobel Prize in Literature, he wrote everything from dance-dramas to essays to political tracts. Chanu’s political leanings mirror those of Tagore, who passionately advocated for independence and often wrote and spoke out against British colonial rule.

**In case of any doubts:**

**Instagram  
Neerja Raheja**



**Thank You**