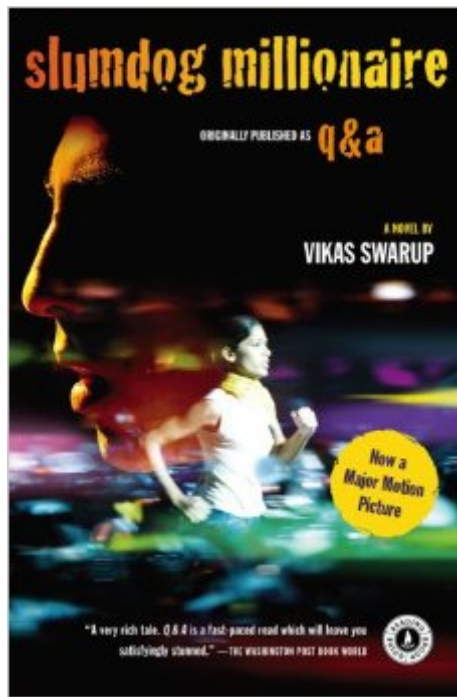


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Slumdog Millionaire: A Novel



Synopsis

Ram Mohammad Thomas has been arrestedâ for answering twelve questions correctly on TVâ Who Will Win a Billion? Ram has never gone to school and never read a newspaper. There is no way a poor orphan from Jimmyâ Bar could know the names of the planets or the plays of Shakespeare ... unless he cheated. Rescued from his police cell by a lawyer, Ram reviews television footage of his flawless performance and takes us on an amazing tour of his life growing up in Asiaâ biggest slumâ from the day he is salvaged from a garbage can, to his job with a faded Bollywood star, to working as an over-creative tour guide at the Taj Mahal, to falling in love with Nita, a young prostitute. A brilliantly conceived fable with a modern sensibility, Slumdog Millionaire is a comic and charming novel that paints an enthralling portrait of humanity. Originally published as Q&A. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Despite heartrending descriptions of sexual abuse, racism, poverty, homeless and much, much, more in modern India, this is an utterly enjoyable picaresque adventure that is one of the best reads of the year. In the hands of another author, the brief life story Ram Mohammad Thomas would probably be told as a simple tearjerker tragedy and the reader would be left to shake their head sorrowfully at the plight of another poor third-world soul. However, Swarup has a gimmick framework up his sleeve, and it works like a charm. Granted, one has to be willing to go along with the premise that this entire structure is based on coincidence of colossal proportions -- readers who

aren't willing to suspend disbelief will probably not last more than a few chapters. We first meet the 18-year-old protagonist in jail, where he sits accused of defrauding the popular TV game show "Who Wants to Be A Billionaire?" (in rupees). Despite being abandoned at birth, uneducated, and left to fend for himself for most of his life, it seems Ram somehow managed to answer the show's twelve questions correctly. To all outside observers, his social standing and lack of education appear to preclude this happening legitimately. However, just as the police are about to unleash some heavy manners on him, a mysterious lawyer intervenes and takes him away. The story then unfolds question by question, as Ram tells her via flashbacks to his life just how he managed to know each answer. Ram's life story unfolds as a series of episodes ranging from the horrific to the merely tragicomic, and in a sense, one can view him as emblematic of India's lost children, and the book as caustic social commentary on contemporary India.

Ram Mohammad Thomas is a boy from the Indian slums who has entered a "Who wants to be a millionaire" style television quiz show. Despite his lack of formal education, his life experiences have perfectly equipped him to answer each question that comes up. Because the show's organizers are sure that he must have cheated, they ask him to explain how he was able to answer such difficult and obscure questions. Each chapter deals with another question and answer, and as the book progresses his very colorful life story is also gradually revealed. This is not the most well written book I've read, but the way that the plot unfolds is very clever and keeps the reader's attention throughout. As each question is revealed, you can't help thinking "okay, now how is he going to integrate THIS into Ram's story?" and it's fun to see the way that he does, while also advancing the central plot. Slumdog Millionaire tears along at a quick pace: some parts are very amusing while others are very sad, but Swarup doesn't dwell on either. The way it all comes together at the end is highly contrived, but does make for a satisfactory conclusion. If you enjoy books about India, there are other books that are more realistic or better written (I especially recommend the wonderful and highly moving novel "A Fine Balance"), but this is an easy and entertaining story that captures much of the essence of this fascinating country. UPDATED 12/27: I have now seen the film Slumdog Millionaire. While the film has taken the central theme and structure of the book, it also has many differences - for starters, the hero's name. Many plot elements of Ram/Dev's life story are entirely different in the film vs the book.

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