



The Golden Gate

By Vikram Seth

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“The great California novel been written, in verse (and why not?): *The Golden Gate* gives great joy.”—Gore Vidal

One of the most highly regarded novels of 1986, Vikram Seth’s story in verse made him a literary household name in both the United States and India.

John Brown, a successful yuppie living in 1980s San Francisco meets a romantic interest in Liz, after placing a personal ad in the newspaper. From this interaction, John meets a variety of characters, each with their own values and ideas of “self-actualization.” However, Liz begins to fall in love with John’s best friend, and John realizes his journey of self-discovery has only just begun.

“A splendid achievement, equally convincing in its exhilaration and its sadness.”—*The New York Times*

“Seth pulls off his feat with spirit, grace and great energy.”—*The New Yorker*

"A marvelous work . . . bold and splendid . . . Locate this book and allow yourself to become caught up, like a kite, in the lifting effects of Seth's sonnets."—*Washington Post Book World*

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Can 690 sonnets, rhyming a-b-a-b-c-c-d-d-e-f-f-e-g-g, be a novel? Definitely! First published in 1986 and still fresh (the sole sign of its publication date being the frequent use of the word *yuppie*), Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate* will turn the verse-fearing into admiring acolytes. Janet Hayakawa, a yet-to-be-discovered sculptor and drummer in the Liquid Sheep, secretly places a personal ad for her friend John, even though she too is single. "Only her cats provide distraction, / Twin paradigms of lazy action." The seventh letter does the trick. Lawyer Liz Donati's submission is two sonnets in toto and disarms John into meeting her. Soon they fall into brief bliss, as do her brother, Ed, and John's old college roommate, Phil. Unfortunately, the first couple's love is too soon destroyed, partly by a pet, partly by politics; and the second is rent by religion. Ed pulls away thanks to the Bible: "I have to trust my faith's decisions, / Not batten on my own volitions."

The rest of the novel leads less to the traditional comic ending--rapprochement and marriage all around--than to surprising sadness. But in between there is wit, wordplay, abounding allusion, and some marvelous animals, among them the iguana Schwarzenegger. The author even steps onto the stage on occasion: at a frou-frou publishing party a powerful editor accosts him, curious to hear about his new novel. When Seth tells him it's in verse, the temperature plummets. "How marvelously quaint," he said, / And subsequently cut me dead." Luckily, Seth's real editor did anything but.

From Publishers Weekly

While the idea of a novel in verse may be initially off-putting, readers of this tour de force are in for a treat. Using the sonnet form throughout, and varying his language from lyrical elegance to timely vernacular, Seth's tale of four California Yuppies is as fully dimensional as a good novel, and twice as diverting. In this witty, compressed style, he gives us fully delineated characters: John, a Silicon Valley executive seeking solace in a meaningful amatory relationship; his friend and ex-lover Janet, an artist and musician in a raucous rock band; Liz, a vivacious Stanford law grad whose parents produce superior California wine; her brother Ed, floundering between sin and religion; and John's pal Phil, abandoned by his wife and left with his son, his moral vision and his scientific career at Lungless Labs, a scene of antinuclear protests and rallies. It is an engaging story of the pangs and passions of love, interlaced with serious ruminations on homosexuality and religion and on the future of the earth in the atomic age; and some comic sallies on feline behavior, bumper stickers, responses to "personals" ads, and other facets of the contemporary scene as refracted through the California lifestyle. The bard does not hesitate to interrupt his story from time to time, to explain a change in the course of events or to comment upon the structure of his narration, as he defends himself against critics who would accuse him of folly in writing an entire novel in the sonnet form. Inspired by "the marvelous swift meter of Pushkin's Eugene Onegin," Seth (From Heaven's Lake performs imaginative acrobatic jests, quips and puns, delivering his social commentary with spirit and verve. In spite of some passages where he veers toward the maudlin and bathetic, Seth's experiment is a resounding success. 25,000 first printing; author tour.

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From Library Journal

This curious work narrates a tale of San Francisco yuppiedom in the iambic tetrameter, 14-line stanzas of Pushkin's classic "novel in verse," Eugene Onegin. Seth's plot uses Pushkinesque ironic reversals of fate: WASP John misses out on love because his emotions are straitened by weapons work; Jewish Phil drops out of Silicon Valley and finds love, but his male partner, tormented by Catholic guilt, leaves him; Phil and his ex-lover's sister (John's alienated woman friend) marry. There are powerful passages (a priest's anti-nuclear

speech; Phil's debate with his lover), well sketched landscapes, and beguiling asides. Often, however, the thud of clumsy stress jars the reader, and overall the work is a wordy, pedestrian imitation of Onegin's perfect fusion of form and plot. Bay dwellers will enjoy Seth's portrait of their milieu, Pushkinists may be amused, and poets should respect Seth's ambition. Mary F. Zirin, Altadena, Cal.
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Eric Chabot:

Book will be written, printed, or highlighted for everything. You can realize everything you want by a book. Book has a different type. As we know that book is important matter to bring us around the world. Beside that you can your reading expertise was fluently. A reserve The Golden Gate will make you to always be smarter. You can feel a lot more confidence if you can know about every little thing. But some of you think that will open or reading any book make you bored. It is far from make you fun. Why they could be thought like that? Have you trying to find best book or acceptable book with you?

Lea Severino:

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Robert Lindsey:

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