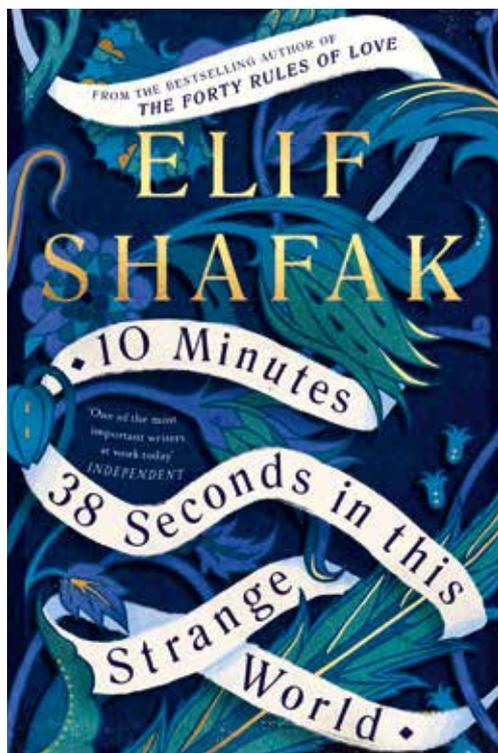


Readers' Guide



10 Minutes 38 Seconds in This Strange World

Elif Shafak

Viking

Other novels by Elif Shafak
Three Daughters of Eve (2016)
Black Milk (2011)
The Gaze (2006)

About the author

Elif Shafak is an award-winning British-Turkish novelist and the most widely read female author in Turkey. She writes in both Turkish and English, and has published seventeen books, eleven of which are novels. Her work has been translated into fifty languages. Shafak holds a PhD in political science and she has taught at various universities in Turkey, the US and the UK, including St Anne's College, Oxford University, where she is an honorary fellow. She is a member of Weforum Global Agenda Council on Creative Economy and a founding member of ECFR (European Council on Foreign Relations). An advocate for women's rights, LGBT+ rights and freedom of speech, Shafak is an inspiring public speaker and twice a TED Global speaker, each time receiving a standing ovation. Shafak contributes to major publications around the world and she has been awarded the title of Chevalier des Arts et des Lettres. In 2017 she was chosen by Politico as one of the twelve people who would make the world better. She has judged numerous literary prizes and chaired the Wellcome Prize 2019.

About the book

For Leila, each minute after her death brings a sensuous memory: the taste of spiced goat stew, sacrificed by her father to celebrate the long-awaited birth of a son; the sight of bubbling vats of lemon and sugar which the women use to wax their legs while the men attend mosque; the scent of cardamom coffee that Leila shares with a handsome student in the brothel where she works. Each memory, too, recalls the friends she made at each key moment in her life – friends who are now desperately trying to find her...

What the judges thought

"Elif Shafak's audacious, dazzlingly original storytelling brings Istanbul's seething underworld vividly to life via the haunting and tender memories of sex worker Tequila Leila, recently dumped for dead in a rubbish bin. A work of fearless imagination, the story takes the reader into the vertiginous world of its irresistible heroine, whose bloody-minded determination and fierce optimism make her an unforgettable character. Courageous and utterly captivating, this is a telling novel of our inglorious times."

Discussion points

What effect does using smells and tastes to spark each memory have?

What injustices does Leila experience as a woman in Turkey?

The second half of the novel focuses on her five friends who are all seen as outcasts by society. Do you think it's important to hear from these voices? What can we learn from them?

What impact do the historical events mentioned both in Turkey and around the world have?

Themed reading

Zeba Takhani *My Past Is a Foreign Country*
Orhan Pamuk *The Museum of Innocence*
Rabih Alameddine *An Unnecessary Woman*
Azar Nafisi *Reading Lolita in Tehran*

Useful links

<https://www.elifsafak.com.tr/home>

<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2019/jun/12/10-minutes-38-seconds-in-this-strange-world-by-elif-shafak-review>

<https://www.ft.com/content/10be5b18-7ae4-11e9-8b5c-33d0560f039c>

<https://www.spectator.co.uk/2019/07/washed-up-in-istanbul-10-minutes-38-seconds-in-this-strange-world-by-elif-shafak-reviewed/>