

AP Post Colonial Lit, Level 4 W239634

A Passage to India, E.M. Forster

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To prepare you for the literature and issues explored in this course, you should read and annotate *A Passage to India* by E.M. Forster.

The novel was published in 1924 at the height of the Indian independence movement from British colonial occupation. When Adela and her elderly companion Mrs. Moore arrive in the Indian town of Chandrapore, they quickly feel trapped by its insular and prejudiced British community. Determined to explore the "real India," they seek the guidance of Dr. Aziz, a cultivated Indian Muslim. But a mysterious incident occurs while they are exploring the Marabar caves with Aziz, and the well-respected doctor soon finds himself at the center of a scandal that rouses violent passions among both the British and their Indian subjects.

This work is essential to the curriculum and must be finished by the opening of the school year. When classes begin in August, you will be asked to write an in-class essay addressing the ideas present in the novel.

As you read, annotate for passages that respond to the following questions:

- Postcolonial critics such as Edward Said argue that western novels may portray non-Western cultures through an "Orientalist" lens. How does Forster represent India and Indian characters in the novel?
- In his review of the book on its 100th anniversary, writer Sameer Pandya observes that Forster builds his narrative around "muddles"—moments of miscommunication that expose the limits of cross-cultural understanding. How do ambiguity and miscommunication shape key events in the novel?
- In his introductory essay to your Penguin edition of the novel, Pankaj Mishra examines how the novel exposes the tensions and inequalities of British rule in India. How does Forster, as a British writer, use the novel to critique imperialism?
- In a *New York Times* book review, critic Herbert S. Gorman argues that "*A Passage to India* seems to assert the hopelessness of any agreement between India and her conquerors. Two peoples who will never mix are here, and when this is so there must always be two groups. The house will always be divided." How are relationships shaped by power structures in the novel? To what extent does the novel suggest that genuine human connection across the colonial divide is possible?