



Biography

Orhan Pamuk was born in Istanbul in 1952 and grew up in a large family similar to those which he describes in his novels *Cevdet Bey and His Sons* and *The Black Book*, in the wealthy westernised district of Nisantasi. As he writes in his autobiographical book *Istanbul*, from his childhood until the age of 22 he devoted himself largely to painting and dreamed of becoming an artist. After graduating from the secular American Robert College in Istanbul, he studied architecture at Istanbul Technical University for three years, but abandoned the course when he gave up his ambition to become an architect and artist. He went on to graduate in journalism from Istanbul University, but never worked as a journalist. At the age of 23 Pamuk decided to become a novelist, and giving up everything else retreated into his flat and began to write.

His first novel *Cevdet Bey and His Sons* was published seven years later in 1982. The novel is the story of three generations of a wealthy Istanbul family living in Nisantasi, Pamuk's own home district. The novel was awarded both the Orhan Kemal and Milliyet literary prizes. The following year Pamuk published his novel *The Silent House*, which in French translation won the 1991 Prix de la découverte européenne. *The White Castle* (1985) about the frictions and friendship between a Venetian slave and an Ottoman scholar was published in English and many other languages from 1990 onwards, bringing Pamuk his first international fame. The same year Pamuk went to America, where he was a visiting scholar at Columbia University in New York from 1985 to 1988. It was there that he wrote most of his novel *The Black Book*, in which the streets, past, chemistry and texture of Istanbul are described through the story of a lawyer seeking his missing wife. This novel was published in Turkey in 1990, and the French translation won the Prix France Culture. *The Black Book* enlarged Pamuk's fame both in Turkey and internationally as an author at once popular and experimental, and able to write about past and present with the same intensity. In 1991 Pamuk's daughter Rüya was born. That year saw the production of a film *Hidden Face*, whose script by Pamuk was based on a three-pages story in *The Black Book*.

His novel *The New Life*, about young university students influenced by a mysterious book, was published in Turkey in 1994 and became one of the most widely read books in Turkish literature. *My Name Is Red*, about Ottoman and Persian artists and their ways of seeing and portraying the non-western world, told through a love story and family story, was published in 1998. This novel won the French Prix du meilleur livre étranger, the Italian Grinzane Cavour (2002) and the International IMPAC Dublin literary award (2003). From the mid-1990s Pamuk took a critical stance towards the Turkish state in articles about human rights and freedom of thought, although he took little interest in politics. *Snow*, which he describes as "my first and last political novel" was published in 2002. In this book set in the small city of Kars in northeastern Turkey he experimented with a new type of "political novel", telling the story of violence and tension between political Islamists, soldiers, secularists, and Kurdish and Turkish nationalists. *Snow* was selected as one of the best 100 books of 2004 by *The New York Times*. In 1999 a selection of his articles on literature and culture written for newspapers and magazines in Turkey and abroad, together with a selection of writings from his private notebooks, was published under the title *Other Colours*. Pamuk's most recent book, *Istanbul*, is a poetical work that is hard to classify, combining the author's early memoirs up to the age of 22, and an

essay about the city of Istanbul, illustrated with photographs from his own album, and pictures by western painters and Turkish photographers.

In 2008 Pamuk published *The Museum of Innocence*, a novel about a man's lifelong infatuation with a young woman and his attempt to build a museum housing the objects associated with his love. Pamuk opened the museum itself in 2012 in the Çukurcuma neighborhood of Istanbul. The catalogue of the museum, *The Innocence of Objects*, was published the same year. Pamuk's second collection of essays was published in Turkey in 2010 under the title of *Fragments of the Landscape*, while his Charles Norton Eliot lectures on the art of the novel, entitled *The Naïve and The Sentimental Novelist*, were published in 2011. In 2014, Pamuk published his ninth novel, *A Strangeness in My Mind*. Pamuk's one of the fastest selling work in Turkish, *A Strangeness In My Mind* is a love story and a modern epic. It is the story of *boza* seller Mevlut, the woman to whom he wrote three years' worth of love letters, and their life in Istanbul.

Orhan Pamuk's books have been translated into 63 languages, including Georgian, Malayan, Czech, Danish, Japanese, Catalan, as well as English, German and French. Pamuk has been awarded The Peace Prize, considered the most prestigious award in Germany in the field of culture, in 2005. In the same year, *Snow* received the Le Prix Médicis étranger, the award for the best foreign novel in France. Again in 2005, Pamuk was honoured with the Richarda Huck Prize, awarded every three years since 1978 to personalities who "think independently and act bravely." In the same year, he was named among world's 100 intellectuals by *Prospect* magazine. In 2006, *TIME* magazine chose him as one of the 100 most influential persons of the world. In September 2006, he won the Le Prix Méditerranée étranger for his novel *Snow*. Pamuk is an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters, and holds an honorary doctorate from Tilburg University. He is an honorary member of the American Academy of Arts and Letters as well as the Chiese Academy for Social Sciences. Pamuk gives lectures once a year in Columbia University. He received the 2006 Nobel Prize for Literature, becoming the second youngest person to receive the award in its history. In 2014, Orhan Pamuk's Museum of Innocence received the European Museum of the Year Award (EMYA) given by European Museum Forum in Tallinn, Estonia. In the same year Pamuk also received Helena Vaz Da Silva European Award, an award which "acknowledges exceptional contributions to the communication on cultural heritage and European ideals". In 2015, he received two significant prizes in Turkey for his ninth novel, *A Strangeness in My Mind*: Aydın Doğan Foundation Award and Erdal Öz Literary Prize. In 2016 Orhan Pamuk receives The Yasnaya Polyana Literary Award (from the Museum and Estate of Leo Tolstoy) for "Foreign Literature" category with his novel *A Strangeness in my Mind*.

Orhan Pamuk's tenth novel, *The Red-Haired Woman* (2016) is the story of a well-digger and his apprentice looking for water on barren land. It is also a novel of ideas in the tradition of the French *conte philosophique*.

In mid-1980s Istanbul, Master Mahmut and his apprentice use ancient methods to dig new wells; this is the tale of their back-breaking struggle, but it is also an exploration—through stories and images—of ideas about fathers and sons, authoritarianism and individuality, state and freedom, reading and seeing. This short, compelling novel is at once a realist text investigating a murder which took place thirty years ago near Istanbul, and a fictional inquiry into the literary foundations of civilizations, comparing two fundamental myths of the West and the East respectively: Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* (a story of patricide) and Ferdowsi's tale of Rostam and Sohrab (a story of filicide).

Throughout runs the demonic voice of the eponymous red-haired woman.

Apart from three years in New York, Orhan Pamuk has spent all his life in the same streets and district of Istanbul, and he now lives in the building where he was raised. Pamuk has been writing novels for 40 years and never done any other job except writing.

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