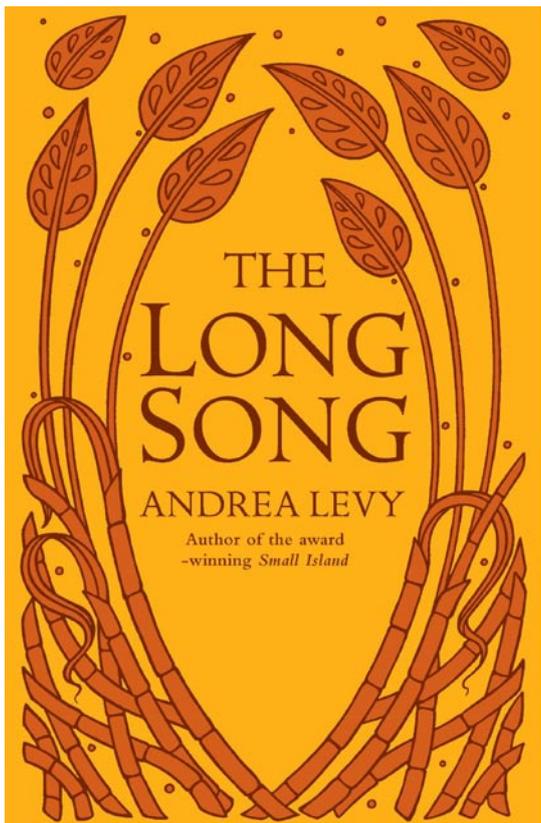




Reader's Guide



Other books by Andrea Levy

Every Light in the House Burnin' (1995)
Never Far From Nowhere (1996)
Fruit of the Lemon (1999)
Small Island (2004)

The Long Song Andrea Levy

Headline Review
Price £18.99

www.themanbookerprize.com

About the author

Andrea Levy was born in England to Jamaican parents who came to Britain in 1948. She has lived all her life in London. After attending writing workshops when she was in her mid-thirties, Levy began to write the novels that she, as a young woman, had always wanted to read – entertaining novels that reflect the experiences of black Britons, which look closely and perceptively at Britain and its changing population and at the intimacies that bind British history with that of the Caribbean.

She has written four previous novels, *Every Light In The House Burnin'*, *Never Far From Nowhere*, *Fruit Of The Lemon* and *Small Island*. She has been a judge for the Orange Prize for Fiction, Orange Futures and the Saga Prize, and has been a recipient of an Arts Council Award. Her second novel, *Never Far From Nowhere*, was long listed for the Orange Prize, and *Small Island* won the Orange Prize for Fiction, the Orange Prize for Fiction: Best of the Best, the Whitbread Novel Award, the Whitbread Book of the Year Award and the Commonwealth Writers' Prize. It has now been adapted into a major BBC TV drama.

The Long Song

The Long Song is Andrea Levy's first novel in six years, following the critically-acclaimed and award-winning *Small Island*. Told by July, a slave girl born on a Jamaican sugar plantation in the nineteenth century, this is the story of her life during and after the last years of slavery:

'You do not know me yet but I am the narrator of this work. My son Thomas, who is printing this book, tells me it is customary at this place in a novel to give the reader a little taste of the story that is held within these pages. As your storyteller, I am to convey that this tale is set in Jamaica during the last turbulent years of slavery and the early years of freedom that followed.'

Discussion points

July is clearly an unreliable narrator; what impact does this have on the reader? How did your feelings for her develop and change throughout the novel?

Levy's aim, she says, was to write a book that instilled pride in anyone with slave ancestors. Do you think she achieved this?

When she was doing research for the novel, Andrea Levy found plenty of accounts of slavery in Jamaica by white plantation owners, but the voices of the plantations' slaves seemed lost. How successfully does the novel give a voice to the previously unheard?

How does Andrea Levy use humour to tackle some of the difficult and disturbing issues surrounding slavery?

There is a link between *Small Island* and *The Long Song*. Did you spot this?

Themed reading

Zoë Heller *Notes on a Scandal*
Toni Morrison *Beloved*
Monica Ali *Brick Lane*
Mike Phillips and Trevor Phillips *Windrush: The Irresistible Rise of Multi-Racial Britain*

Useful links

www.themanbookerprize.com
www.andrealevy.co.uk
www.headline.co.uk
<http://www.lovereadings.co.uk/book/4030/The-Long-Song-by-Andrea-Levy.html>