



Reader's Guide



Other novels by Ruth Ozeki
All Over Creation (2003)
My Year of Meats (1998)

A Tale for the Time Being Ruth Ozeki

Canongate

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About the author

Ruth Ozeki was born and raised in New Haven, Connecticut, by an American father and a Japanese mother. She graduated from Smith College and then moved to Japan to study classical Japanese literature. Upon her return to New York, she worked as a television producer and director and made several independent films. In June 2010 she was ordained as a Zen Buddhist priest. She lives in British Columbia and New York.

She is the author of three novels: *My Year of Meats* (1998), which won the Kiriya Pacific Rim Award, the Imus/Barnes and Noble American Book Award, and a Special Jury Prize of the World Cookbook Awards in Versailles; *All Over Creation* (2002), the recipient of a 2004 American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation, as well as the Willa Literary Award for Contemporary Fiction; and *A Tale for the Time Being* (2013), longlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 2013.

A Tale for the Time Being

Ruth, a novelist living on a remote island of Canada's Pacific northwest shore, discovers a Hello Kitty lunchbox washed up on the beach. Within it lies a diary that expresses the hopes and dreams of a young Japanese schoolgirl. Ruth suspects it might have arrived on a drift of debris from the 2011 tsunami. With every turn of the page, she is sucked deeper into an enchanting mystery.

In a small cafe in Tokyo, 16-year-old Nao Yasutani is navigating the challenges thrown up by modern life. In the face of cyberbullying, the mysteries of a 104-year-old Buddhist nun and great-grandmother, and the joy and heartbreak of family, Nao is trying to find her own place - and voice - through a diary she hopes will find a reader and friend who finally understands her.

Discussion points

A Tale for the Time Being starts with the first-person narrator expressing curiosity about the unknown person who might be reading her narrative. How did you respond to this opening and its unusual focus on the reader?

Is there a way in which Nao and Ruth form two halves of the same character?

In a recent interview Ruth Ozeki said "I would be happy if the book conveys the ways in which we and the world are intimately interconnected in time and space. I would be happy if readers came away feeling grateful for the precious and fleeting moments we have here on earth. And I would be overjoyed if readers felt an appreciation of the earth, itself, and resolved to treat it more kindly". Did *A Tale for the Time Being* leave you with any of these feelings?

A Tale for the Time Being expresses concern about the environment. How do Ruth Ozeki's observations about the environment affect the mood of her novel?

Do you agree with the reviewer (Beth Jones, *The Telegraph*) who wrote "What binds it all together is the voice of Nao, who manages to be both a convincingly self-obsessed Tokyo teenager and a sympathetic and engaging narrator".

Themed reading

John Gribbin *In Search of Schrödinger's Cat*

Useful links

[Author's website](#)

<http://www.ruthozeki.com>

[Publisher's website](#)

<http://www.canongate.tv>

[Guardian interview](#)

<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2013/mar/07/ruth-ozeki-interview-time-being>