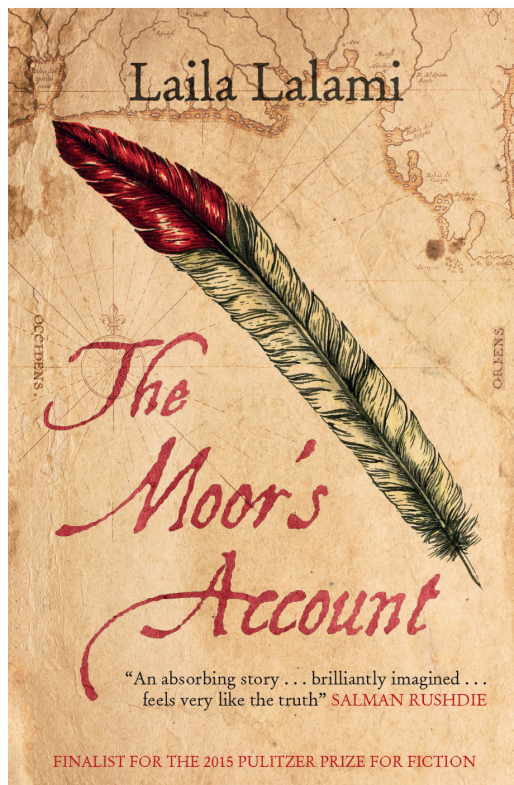


Reader's Guide



Other novels by Laila Lalami

Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits (2003)

Secret Son (2009)

The Moor's Account Laila Lalami

Periscope, Garnet Publishing

www.themanbookerprize.com

#FinestFiction



About the author

Laila Lalami was born in Rabat, Morocco in 1968, and is now based in Santa Monica, USA.

Lalami is the author of three novels, *Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits*, *Secret Son*, longlisted for the Orange Prize, and *The Moor's Account*. Her essays and opinion pieces have appeared in *The Guardian* and *The New York Times*, among other publications. She is the recipient of a British Council Fellowship, and is currently an associate professor of creative writing at the University of California at Riverside.

The Moor's Account was a finalist for the 2015 Pulitzer Prize.

The Moor's Account

The Moor's Account is a work of historical fiction following Estebanico, a Moroccan slave, who is one of four survivors of the failed Narváez expedition to colonise Spanish Florida in the sixteenth century. Of the four, his was the only testimony left off the record.

Lalami gives us Estebanico as history never did: as Mustafa, the vibrant merchant from Azemmur forced into slavery and a new name, and reborn as the first black explorer of the Americas, discovering and being discovered by hostile and compassionate tribes alike.

In Estebanico's telling, the survivors' journey across the New World transforms would-be conquerors into servants and outcasts into faith healers. He remains ever-observant, resourceful and hopeful that he might one day find his way back to his family, even as he experiences an unexpected (if ambiguous) camaraderie with his masters.

Discussion points

The Moor's Account is structured like a sixteenth-century Arabic travelogue. How does this help the story?

Is Estebanico a reliable narrator? Which parts of his story seem true and which might be flights of fancy?

How does Estebanico's relationship with Dorantes, Castillo, and Cabeza de Vaca change over the course of the novel?

How does Estebanico portray indigenous characters? How does his view of them change from the beginning to the end of the novel?

How would you describe the women in Estebanico's memoir and in his life?

Different characters offer different interpretations about the fate of the Narváez expedition. Which interpretations ring true and why?

Themed reading

Cabeza de Vaca *Chronicle of the Narvaez Expedition*

Ibn Battutah and Tim Mackintosh-Smith *The Travels of Ibn Battutah*

Useful links

www.themanbookerprize.com

www.lailalalami.com

www.npr.org/2014/09/07/345548759/fact-meets-fiction-in-tale-of-a-slave-explorer-and-survivor