

Glossary of French Words

allez (*ah-lay*)—go

Anjou (*ahn-zhoo*)—a region of France of which one of the king's great-grandsons was the duke

au secours (*oh seh-koor*)—help

Bastille (*bah-steel*)—France's main prison

bonjour (*bohn-zhoor*)—hello

bonsoir (*bohn-swahr*)—good evening

Bourgogne (*boor-guhn-yeh*)—Burgundy, a region of France of which the king's grandson was the duke

Bretagne (*breh-tahn-yeh*)—Brittany, a region of France of which one of the king's great-grandsons was the duke

Cendrillon (*sahn-dree-yohn*)—Cinderella

chaise longue (*shehz long*)—an upholstered reclining chair

chemise (*shuh-meez*)—a lightweight shift, or undergarment

chéri (*shay-ree*)—an endearment, such as “dear one”

dauphin (*doh-fehn*)—the prince who is in line to become the next king

dauphine (*doh-feen*)—the wife of a dauphin
 de (*deh*)—of
 duc, duchesse (*dook, duh-shess*)—duke, duchess
 Fontainebleau (*fohn-tahn-bloh*)—one of the king's
 royal palaces
 gouttes d'Angleterre (*goot dahn-gluh-tahr*)—English
 drops, a common medicine of the 1700s
 la, le (*lah, luh*)—the (feminine, masculine)
 lever (*leh-vay*)—the king's morning rising ritual
 Madame (*mah-dahm*)—Mrs. or madam
 Mademoiselle (*mahd-mwah-zel*)—Miss
 Maman (*mah-mahn*)—Mother
 manteau (*mahn-toh*)—coat
 Ménagerie (*may-nah-zher-ee*)—a collection of wild
 or exotic animals, as in a small zoo
 merci beaucoup (*mehr-see bo-coo*)—thank you very
 much
 Mon Dieu! (*mohn dyuh*)—my God!, or good
 heavens!
 Monsieur (*muh-syer*)—Mr. or sir
 Noailles (*noh-eyeh*)—a region of France
 non (*nohn*)—no

Orangerie (*oh-rahn-zher-ee*)—orange grove
 oui (*wee*)—yes
 Rileaux (*ree-loh*)—the name of Cécile's village
 sabots (*sah-boh*)—wooden clogs
 s'il vous plaît (*see voo play*)—please
 St. Cyr (*san seer*)—the boarding school for girls of
 noble families founded by Madame de Maintenon
 toilette (*twah-let*)—washing up, brushing one's hair,
 and dressing to prepare for the day
 très bien (*tray byen*)—very good
 Versailles (*vehr-sigh*)—the French town where King
 Louis XIV's main palace was located; also the
 name of the palace

Glossary

Words other than Turkish words are so identified in the definitions below. Turkish has its own sound system and also borrows from Arabic, Persian, and French, so these pronunciations and some spellings are only approximate.

acemi (*ah-gehm-ee*)—beginners, novices, or interns

aigrette (*ay-greht*)—French word for a jeweled pin used to hold a turban or headscarf closed

akça (*ahk-chah*)—unit of Turkish money

Allahüakbar (*ah-lah-oo-ahk-bahr*)—"God is great."

baklava (*bahk-lah-vah*)—flaky pastry with nuts

Boletus edulis (*boh-leet-us ed-yoo-luhs*)—Latin name for an edible mushroom, such as porcino or cèpe

Bostanjis (*boss-ton-jeez*)—guardians and gardeners of the palace grounds

Bu şehri Stambul ki bimislü bahadır (*boo shehr-ee stum-buhl keeh bee-mihs-leeh bah-huh-düre*)—"This city of İstanbul is matchless, priceless."

caravansarai (*kah-rah-vahn-sah-rai*)—Persian word for an inn with a courtyard

caïque (*kah-yeek*)—French for a type of rowboat

Cedid Zer-I (*ceh-dihd zehr-eh*)—gold coin bearing the Sultan's name

cennet (*gehn-neht*)—paradise

eunuch (*yoo-nuk*)—English word for a male servant within the harem

feradje (*feh-rah-jeh*)—mantle

gavour (*gah-voor*)—foreigner, non-Muslim

halvah (*hehl-vah*)—dessert made with sesame tahini

halvet (*huhl-veht*)—private outdoor party or outing

hamam (*hah-mahm*)—public bathhouse

harem (*hahr-ehm*)—the women's quarters of a palace

haremlık (*hahr-ehm-lihk*)—the women's quarters in a household

Haseki Sultana (*huh-say-kee suhl-tah-nah*)—the first wife of the Padishah, or Sultan

Haznedar (*hahz-nee-dahr*)—treasurer

hotoz (*hoh-tohz*)—head decoration

hürriyet (*huh-ree-yet*)—freedom

Hunkar Sofasi (*hoon-kahr soh-fah-see*)—Hall of the Sultan

imam (*ih-mum*)—religious teacher

Janissaries (*jah-nee-sah-reez*)—English word for a

Leyla: The Black Tulip

- special corps of Ottoman troops or soldiers
- kaftan** (*kahf-tahn*)—long robe worn by both men and women, usually over loose pants
- Kâhya** (*kah-yah*)—Chief Housekeeper of the harem
- kilim** (*kahl-hihm*)—handwoven carpet
- kismet** (*kihzh-meht*)—fate or destiny
- Koran** (*kohr-uhn*)—English word for the Muslim holy book
- Lailahi Illallah** (*lah-ih-lah-ih i-ah-lah*)—"There is no God but God."
- medrese** (*mehd-reh-seh*)—school, mostly religious
- minaret** (*mih-nahr-eh*)—tall, narrow tower on a mosque from which daily calls to prayer are sung
- Mkhedruli** (*mihk-heh-droo-lee*)—Georgian script or alphabet
- mosque** (*mahsk*)—English word for a Muslim house of worship
- müezzin** (*muh-eh-zihn*)—one who sings out the call to prayer
- namaz** (*numb-oz*)—the act of facing the holy city of Mecca and praying
- nargileh** (*nahr-gihl-eh*)—water pipe

- oda** (*oh-dah*)—room or department in the harem
- odalisque** (*od-dah-leesk*)—French word for a personal servant
- Ottoman** (*aht-teh-muhn*)—English term derived from "Osman," the name of the Turkish dynasty that became a great empire starting in the 1600s
- Padishah** (*pah-dee-shah*)—ruler or emperor, also called "Sultan"
- Pasha** (*pah-shah*)—the highest title of a military or civil official
- rakı** (*rah-kuh*)—an anise-flavored drink
- şalvar** (*shahl-vahr*)—loose pants worn beneath a kaftan or robe
- scimitar** (*cee-mee-tahr*)—English word for a sword with a curved blade
- selamlık** (*seh-lam-look*)—the men's personal quarters within the harem
- Sultan** (*suhl-tahn*)—Arabic word for ruler, emperor, or king; also called "Padishah"
- tandır** (*tahn-ihr*)—an oven in the ground
- tellâl** (*tehl-lall*)—street announcers
- tesbih** (*tehs-beeh*)—prayer beads

Leyla: The Black Tulip

turah (*too-rah*)—the Sultan's signature
turqueries (*tuhr-kehr-eez*)—French word for the fad of using Turkish design in decorating and clothing
ud (*ood*)—stringed instrument resembling a lute
Valide Sultana (*vah-leihd-eh suh-tah-nah*)—mother of the Sultan
Vizier (*veh-zeer*)—high executive officer or minister
yashmak (*yosh-muhk*)—headscarf, also used as a veil

Pronunciation of names and places:

Abkhazia (*ahb-kah-zee-ah*)—a region on the eastern end of the Black Sea
Ahmet (*ah-meht*)—name of a sultan of the Ottoman Empire
Allah (*ah-lah*)—God
Aslan (*ahs-lahn*)—Leyla's father, means "lion"
Atatürk, Kemal (*ah-tah-tuhrk, keh-mahl*)—a Turkish hero who established the Republic of Turkey in the 1920s and became the first president
Batum (*bah-toom*)—city on the Black Sea
Belkis (*behl-kuss*)—Leyla's friend in Topkapı Palace; means "Queen of Sheba"

Cafer Efendi (*jah-fehr eh-fehn-dee*)—name of the slave trader, means "a small stream"
Cairo (*kai-roh*)—capital city of Egypt
Caucasus (*kaw-kahs-uhs*)—largely mountainous area to the north and east of the Black Sea
Cengiz (*gehn-gihz*)—Leyla's brother, means "descendant of Genghis Khan"
Circassia (*seer-kah-see-ah*)—inland region northeast of the Black Sea
Damascus (*dah-mas-kahs*)—capital city of Syria
Fatma (*faht-mah*)—one of the daughters of Sultan Ahmet III
Georgia (*gyohr-gyjah*)—country on the Black Sea
İbrahim Pasha (*ih-brah-hihm pahsh-ah*)—the Grand Vizier of Sultan Ahmet III, during the Tulip Era
İstanbul (*is-stuhn-bul*)—largest city in Turkey and the center of the Ottoman Empire; previously "Constantinople" and "Byzantium"
İzmir (*ihs-meer*)—city in western Turkey, once known as "Smyrna"
Leyla (*lay-lah*)—name meaning "the night and the light that brightens it"

Leyla: The Black Tulip

Levni (*lehv-nee*)—one of Turkey's greatest painters

Mejnun (*madge-noon*)—fictional son of Sultan

Ahmet III; the hero of the romance *Leyla and*

Mejnun; means "madly in love"

Nedim (*neh-dihm*)—great 18th-century Turkish poet

Sadabad (*sah-dah-bahd*)—a colony of palaces built

along Istanbul's harbor, later destroyed by fire

Salonica (*sah-lawn-ee-kah*)—city in Greece also

known as "Thessaloniki"

Semiramis (*seh-mee-rah-mihs*)—name given to Leyla's

friend Lena, also an ancient queen of Babylon

Sümbül Ağa (*sam-buhl ah-ah*)—Master Hyacinth,

the chief eunuch in the palace

Taj Mahal (*tahj mah-hahl*)—a palace in India

Topkapı (*toph-kah-puh*)—the Sultan's greatest

palace in Istanbul, means "cannon gate"

Trabzon (*trahb-zohn*)—ancient city on the Black Sea

once famous for its towers

Vakhtang VI (*vahk-tahng*)—Georgian king,

approximately 1703–1724

Versailles (*vehr-sigh*)—name of the palace of French

King Louis XIV

Author's Note

When I was in school in Istanbul, my friends and I put on a play called *Lâle Devri*, or "The Tulip Era." We dressed in the gorgeous costumes of the sultanas and tiptoed through a garden of paper tulips reciting lines from Nedim, Turkey's loveliest poet.

I was drawn to history that revealed women's lives. The Tulip Era, as the reign of Sultan Ahmet III was known, was a time in which Turkey opened up to new ideas and women had more freedom. Filled with peace, culture, beauty, poetry, and love of nature, it is my favorite time in Turkish history.

I spent my first eighteen years in Turkey before settling in the U.S. When I returned to Istanbul, I visited the Topkapı Palace harem, which had become a museum. The ladies were long gone, but it was as if the walls whispered stories that needed to be told. It was so real to me that I began to research and write about life in the harem.

I dreamed about a girl who was folding her bedding in a harem dormitory, and she eventually became

Glossary

Amharic has its own sound system, which is hard to reproduce in English, so these pronunciations are approximate.

- ababba** (*ah-buh-bah*)—father, also often used for grandfather or grandpa
amba (*ahm-bah*)—flat-topped mountain
Amhara (*ahm-hahr-ah*)—ethnic group of most of the Ethiopian emperors
ayezosh (*eye-zohsh*)—"Have courage"
azmari (*ahz-mah-ree*)—traveling musician
berebaso (*beh-reh-bah-so*)—Oromoo word for sandals
buda (*boo-dah*)—one believed to have evil, magical, powers
dik-dik (*deek-deek*)—smallest of the antelopes
doro (*doh-roh*)—chicken
emama (*eh-mah-mah*)—mother, also often used for grandmother or grandma
gahbi (*gah-bee*)—a thick cotton cloak
gebeta (*guh-buh-tuh*)—a game, also called "mancala"
Ge'ez (*gee-eez*)—ancient language of Ethiopia, still used in the Ethiopian Orthodox church

- injera** (*ihn-jeh-rah*)—pancake-like bread
kosso (*koh-soh*)—a kind of tree, parts of which are used to make a medication for stomach ailments
lalibelotch (*lah-lih-behl-ohch*)—dawn singers
masinko (*mah-sin-koh*)—musical instrument
Maskal (*muhs-kuhl*)—festival day near the end of our month of September
Maskaram (*mahs-kah-rahm*)—a month corresponding approximately to our September 12 to October 11
megebegeb (*meh-guhb-guhb*)—respectful wrap of the shamma
melkam addis amet (*mehl-kahm ah-dees ah-meht*)—"Good New Year"
negusa negst (*neh-goo-sah neh-gihst*)—"King of Kings"
Oromoo (*oh-roh-moo*)—large ethnic group of Ethiopia
shamma (*shah-mah*)—thin cotton shawl, also called "netala" (*neh-teh-lah*)
Tigray (*tih-gray*)—ethnic group traditionally living in the northern part of Ethiopia
wanza (*wahn-zah*)—a kind of tree
wat (*wiht*)—spicy stew
zar (*zahr*)—a spirit

Saba: Under the Hyena's Foot

Pronunciation of names and places:

- Ali Alula** (*ah-lee ah-loo-lah*)—powerful Gondar general
- Berutawit** (*beh-root-ah-wiht*)—literally “a girl from Beirut”
- Debre Birhan Selassie** (*dehb-rah bihr-hahn sehl-ah-see*)—“Mount of the Light of the Trinity,” a church near Gondar
- Debre Sahai** (*dehb-rah ts-hi*)—“Mount of the Sun,” a church near Gondar
- Dembya** (*dehmb-yah*)—a large lake in northwestern Ethiopia now named Lake Tana
- Eslam Bet** (*ehs-lahm beh-et*)—House of Islam
- Fasiladas** (*fah-sih-lah-dehs*)—emperor who founded Gondar
- Fasil Gemb** (*fah-sihl gehmb*)—castle built for Fasiladas
- Giorgis** (*jee-ohr-gis*)—George, a saint often found in ancient Ethiopian paintings
- Gondar** (*gohn-dahr*)—one of the ancient capitals of Ethiopia, located in northwestern Ethiopia
- Kassa** (*kah-sah*)—man eventually crowned Emperor Tewodros II, literally “compensation”
- Makeda** (*mah-keh-dah*)—name of the girl who, in

- Ethiopian tradition, became Queen of Saba (Sheba)
- Mariam** (*mah-ree-ahm*)—Mary, mother of Jesus
- Mekelle** (*meh-kel-eh*)—town in northern Ethiopia
- Menen** (*meh-nehn*)—empress and wife of Yohannes III, and mother of Ali Alula
- Mesfin** (*mehs-fihn*)—Saba's brother, literally “prince”
- Mikael** (*mee-kye-ehl*)—Michael, a powerful 1700s general in Gondar
- Negatwa** (*neh-gah-twah*)—Saba's servant and friend, literally “the coming of dawn”
- Saba** (*sah-bah*)—Sheba, an ancient kingdom in what is now Yemen and northern Ethiopia
- Suviel** (*soo-vee-ehl*)—name of a legendary war horse
- Tekle** (*tehk-leh*)—former emperor and Saba's ancestor
- Wallata Giorgis** (*wah-lah-tah jee-ohr-gis*)—baptismal name of former empress who built the empress castle
- Wehni** (*weh-nee*)—amba where royalty was imprisoned
- Yared** (*yah-rehd*)—Jarad, an Ethiopian saint
- Jesus Cristo** (*yeh-zoos krees-tohs*)—Jesus Christ
- Yohannes** (*yoh-hahn-ness*)—John
- Yosef** (*yoh-sehf*)—Joseph, father of Jesus

Glossary of Yup'ik Words

Yup'ik has its own sound system, which is hard to reproduce in English, so these pronunciations are only approximate.

- agu (AH-goo)—“Don’t!”
akutaq (AH-koo-tahk)—a mixture of berries and fat
angvaa (AHNG-vah)—“How big!”
arenqiapaa (ah-REN-kee-pah)—“How terrible!”
assiiipaa (ah-SEE-pah)—“How awful.”
assirpagta (ah-sihr-PAHG-tah)—“How good it is.”
Cauyarvik (chah-YAHR-vik)—the darkest part of winter; it means “the time for drumming,” because many festivals with dancing and drumming take place at that time
ena (nah)—a women’s house
kass’angyarr (kass-AHN-gyahr)—an old white person
kass’aq (GUSS-uk)—a white person; derived from the Russian word “cossack”
keniyuvagcit (kehn-ee-YOO-vahg-sit)—“How well you cook!”
qasgiq (KASS-gik)—the men’s house
qaspeq (GUSS-puk)—a parka cover made of cloth

uluq (OO-loo-ak)—a woman’s curved knife

Yup’ik (YOOP-ik)—a native Eskimo people of south-western Alaska

Pronunciation of Yup’ik characters’ names:

Aparuk (AH-puh-ruk)—Minuk and Panruk’s uncle

Atsaq (AT-sak)—a village woman, Cakayak’s mother

Cakayak (KAK-ee-yak)—a village girl, a friend of Minuk’s

Iraluq (EAR-uh-luk)—Minuk’s older brother

Kakgar (KAK-gahr)—Minuk’s aunt and Panruk’s mother

Kanlak (KAN-lak)—a village man

Kasruq (KASS-ruk)—a village boy who is an orphan

Maklak (MAK-lak)—Minuk’s younger brother

Mellgar (MEHL-gahr)—a village boy

Minuk (MIN-uk)—a twelve-year-old Yup’ik girl

Naya (NAY-yuh)—Minuk and Panruk’s aunt

Nunagak (NOON-ah-gak)—Minuk and Panruk’s aunt

Nusailak (NOO-sahl-ak)—the oldest man in the village

Panruk (PAN-ruk)—Minuk’s cousin and best friend

Qanrilag (KAN-rih-lak)—Panruk's husband

Taulan (TAU-lahn)—Minuk's cousin

Teksik (TEK-sick)—a village woman

Uliggaq (OO-lih-gak)—a village girl, a friend of Minuk's

Pronunciation of place names:

Avaucharak (ah-VOW-chahr-ek)—an historic village along the Kuskokwim River

Kalskag (KAHL-skag)—a town along the Kuskokwim River

Kolmakov (KOHL-mah-kov)—an historic village along the Kuskokwim River

Kulkaromute (kool-KAHR-oh-myoot)—an historic village along the Kuskokwim River

Kuskokwim (KUS-ko-kwim)—a river in western Alaska

Nulato (noo-LAH-toe)—a town along the Yukon River

Author's Note

As a child who liked history, I sometimes found Alaska to be a very frustrating place to grow up, because everything was so new. The oldest house in our town was only forty years old.

Of course, the Indians and Eskimos had been in Alaska for thousands of years, but there was no written record, and anthropologists had to speculate about what their lives had been like before the Europeans came. And those early people left little behind them of that old life but artifacts, whereas I wanted to tour stone castles, walk on the Great Wall of China, and stand in the circle at Stonehenge.

But the good thing about growing up in Alaska was that it was possible to talk to people who had been there *almost* at the time of the first contact with Europeans. Along the Yukon River, where I spent much of my life, the first Russians came in 1845, and many of the old people remembered what their parents had to say about that first contact.

Kathleen: The Celtic Knot

Glossary

Words in *italic* are Irish (Gaelic), and the pronunciations are only approximate. Other words are either anglicizations of Irish words or are ordinary English words, in many cases used with a special meaning in Ireland or specifically in Dublin.

- a chailíní* (ah KOLL-eeen-ee)—girls (to address a group of girls; otherwise, *cailíní*, the plural of *cailín*, or girl)
a Chaitlín (ah KATH-leen)—Caitlín is Gaelic for Kathleen; it becomes *a Chaitlín* when she is addressed directly
 adjudicator—a judge
alannah (ah-LAHN-nah)—my child (term of endearment, from Gaelic *leanbh*, meaning “child”)
aon, dó, trí, ceathair, cúig, sé, seacht (ayn, dtho, three, KAH-hahr, KOO-ig, shay, shakth)—the Gaelic numbers one through seven
asthore (ah-STHOHR)—my darling, my love (from Gaelic *stór*, meaning “treasure”)
 biscuits—cookies
 bold—naughty
 bowsie—bad fellow, cad (a word specific to Dublin)

- brandy flip*—eggnog flavored with brandy and sugar
brat (pronounced, roughly, “broth,” though the Irish *T* sound is partway between the English *T* and *TH* sounds)—a flag or a large flat piece of fabric worn as a shawl or cape; in Irish dancing, a short, simple shawl, with a decorative or symbolic function only, that is attached to the shoulders of a dress
brosna (BRUSS-nah)—kindling to make a fire
Ceist ag éinne? (kesht ehg AY-nyah)—Any questions?
Celtic (KEL-tik)—referring to the language and culture of the early people of Ireland
chun glóire Dé agus onóra na hÉireann (hun GLOH-ir-reh jay OGG-iss on-ORE-ah nah HAY-rin)—to the glory of God and the honor of Ireland
colcannon (koll-KAHN-on)—potatoes and cabbage mashed with milk and butter
 colleen—girl
 copy—a school exercise book (short for “copybook”)
 crawthumping—behaving in an excessively pious manner
 Dev—Eamon de Valera, who was the government leader at the time of this story

Kathleen: The Celtic Knot

- fag**—cigarette
- feis** (*fesh*)—competitive festival, with competitions in all the performance arts: dancing, singing, playing musical instruments, drama, and verse-speaking
- feiseanna** (*FESH-ehn-nah*)—plural of feis
- fizz bag**—a paper bag of sherbet powder, usually accompanied by a jelly lollipop as a scoop or a licorice tube through which to suck the powder
- fringe**—hair bangs
- gom**—idiot
- (in the) ha'penny place**—far behind, in a position of no importance
- Jubilee nurse**—public health nurse
- let on**—pretend (for example: "*Let on you have a limp*" means "Pretend you have a limp"; "*Don't let on you see him*" means "Pretend you don't see him.")
- lino**—linoleum
- Maith thú!** (*MAH-hoo*)—Well done!
- mar dhea** (*mahr-YAH*)—untranslatable, but corresponds roughly to a nod and a wink; an expression used to show that the rest of the sentence is not to be believed

- moidhered** (*MOY-derd*)—bothered, irritated, intensely annoyed
- my eye**—nonsense, pretense
- nappy**—diaper (short for *napkin*)
- ninepence**—three-quarters of a shilling
- poms**—close-fitting, lightweight leather dancing slippers, a mispronunciation of "pumps"
- porridge**—cooked oatmeal
- press**—cupboard
- rawmaysh** (*raw-MAYSH*)—nonsense (noun), talk nonsense (verb) (from Gaelic *raiméis*)
- rip**—a mean or spiteful woman
- rise**—to take a rise out of or get a rise out of a person is to annoy or tease them
- shilling**—one-twentieth of a pound, or twelve pennies; one-and-six(pence) means one and a half shillings, one-and-nine(pence) means one and three-quarter shillings, and so on
- (holy) show**—a terrible mess, disgrace, embarrassment
- shower**—crowd or group of people, always used negatively or disapprovingly (for example, "I wouldn't trust that shower.")

slat (pronounced, roughly, "sloth," though the Irish letter *T* is partway between the English *T* and *TH* sounds)—literally, "yardstick," but particularly a stick used as an instrument of punishment, especially in school
sos (*suss*)—breaktime in school, recess
spaugs (*spawgs*)—feet, especially big, awkward feet
strap—badly behaved, sullen girl
swish—very classy and sophisticated
take off—imitate (by way of making fun)
tenement—in Dublin, a large eighteenth-century house once owned by a wealthy family but now run-down and divided into numerous small apartments occupied by poor families, often with parents and several children sleeping together in one room, where they also had to wash, cook, and eat
tuppence—two pence, or two pennies
wireless—radio
wreck of the Hesperus—the *Hesperus* (*HEHS-pehr-uh*s) was a ship that sank and was the subject of a poem by Longfellow; the title of the poem came to be used as a phrase to mean "a mess," particularly with regard to a person's clothes and personal appearance

Author's Note

The characters in this story are poor people, living in Dublin at a time when Ireland was just emerging as an independent country. Like any new state, Ireland at the time was deeply interested in itself. The people were concerned with what it meant to be Irish, and they spent a lot of energy trying to work that out and find ways of expressing it in their everyday lives. That's really what this story is about.

My parents grew up at around the same time as Kathleen, and lots of the details in this book come from incidents they told me about their childhood, or things I noticed them do and say. Kathleen could almost have been at school with my mother or might have brushed past my grandmother on the bus—and I'm pretty sure I saw Polly crossing the street only last week!

By the time I was growing up, in the 1960s, Ireland had changed. Most people were better off, and we had things like cars and refrigerators. We'd even got our own Irish television channel. But on the inside, people

Glossary

All words are Bengali words, except where noted.

- alna** (*ahl-nah*)—a cupboard
baba (*bah-bah*)—"daddy"
baoul (*bah-ool*)—a minstrel or wandering storyteller
bapu (*bah-poo*)—a Hindi title meaning "father"
bindi (*bihn-dee*)—a symbol painted on the forehead of a Hindu woman for good luck
coolie (*koo-lee*)—Hindi word for a hired laborer
dadu (*dah-doo*)—an endearment for "grandfather"
dhoti (*doh-tee*)—a wrapped pants-like garment for men
didi (*dee-dee*)—sister; can be used as an endearment
ektara (*ek-tah-rah*)—a musical instrument with a single string
gaye halud (*gah-yay hah-lood*)—a bathing ritual with the spice turmeric
hatho (*hah-toh*)—move
hoshia (*hoh-shee-ahr*)—Careful!
jaam (*jahm*)—a tree with small sweet fruits
jenana (*jay-nah-nah*)—woman, female

- ji** (*jee*)—a term of respect; can also mean "yes"
kadam (*kah-dahm*)—a kind of flower
kajal (*kah-jahl*)—makeup used to line the eyes with black
Koh-i-noor (*koh-ee-noor*)—the Arabic name of a large diamond the British called the "Hope Diamond"
kurma (*koor-mah*)—a kind of stew
kurta (*koor-tah*)—a tunic
lathi (*lah-thee*)—a stick or baton, like a nightstick
lorry (*loh-ree*)—a British term meaning "truck"
luchi (*loo-chee*)—a kind of flat fried bread
mahatma (*mah-haht-mah*)—a Hindi title of respect meaning "great soul"
mataram (*mah-tah-ruhm*)—a Sanskrit word meaning "mother"
mem sahib (*mem sah-heeb*)—a title of respect for a woman, such as "ma'am"
nawab (*nah-wahb*)—a Muslim king
neem (*neem*)—a tree with medicinal properties
paise (*py-say*)—Indian coins
pandit (*pan-dit*)—a teacher, or learned man
pipal (*pee-pahl*)—a kind of tree

Neela: Victory Song

- puja* (*poo-jah*)—a prayer ceremony
rasagollas (*rah-sah-go-lass*)—a sweet dessert
rupee (*roo-pee*)—Indian currency
ruti (*roo-tee*)—a flat bread
saab (*sahb*)—a title of respect for a man, such as “sir”
sahib (*sah-heeb*)—a title of respect for a man, such as “sir”; more formal than “saab”
sandesh (*sahn-desh*)—a kind of dessert
sari (*sah-ree*)—a woman’s wrapped dress
shehnai (*shay-nee*)—a musical instrument, like an oboe
shona (*shoh-nah*)—an endearment meaning “golden child”
singaras (*sin-gah-ahs*)—a stuffed savory pastry
suar ka baccha (*su-ahr kah bah-chah*)—a Hindi insult meaning “children of swine”
swadeshi (*swah-day-shee*)—a freedom fighter, one who rejected British ways, products, and rule
vande mataram (*vahn-day mah-tah-ruhm*)—“hail, mother”
zamindar (*zah-mihn-dahr*)—a landowner

Author’s Note

When I was writing Neela’s story, I read about India’s freedom movement and talked to people who lived through it—including my mother. In fact, I couldn’t have imagined the characters and the world of *Victory Song* without her help. She is blessed with a great memory and gave me many wonderful details. She told me of growing up in a village and of going to a women’s college in Calcutta in the late 1930s. She patiently answered all my questions—from what a village wedding would have been like to what kinds of underwear girls wore! She described life in Calcutta, a center of India’s independence movement, in vivid detail.

I had long been fascinated with two of the great leaders of the day, Mohandas Gandhi and Subhash Bose, men whose goals were the same but whose paths were so different: Gandhi believed in nonviolence to overcome Britain, while Bose sought victory by any means necessary—including violence. These men and the British rulers are the only historical figures in the story. All the other characters came from my imagination.