



The Signature of All Things: A Novel

By Elizabeth Gilbert

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The Signature of All Things: A Novel By Elizabeth Gilbert

A glorious, sweeping novel of desire, ambition, and the thirst for knowledge, from the # 1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *Eat, Pray, Love* and *Committed*. Look out for Elizabeth Gilbert's newest book, *Big Magic: Creative Living Beyond Fear*.

In *The Signature of All Things*, Elizabeth Gilbert returns to fiction, inserting her inimitable voice into an enthralling story of love, adventure and discovery. Spanning much of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the novel follows the fortunes of the extraordinary Whittaker family as led by the enterprising Henry Whittaker—a poor-born Englishman who makes a great fortune in the South American quinine trade, eventually becoming the richest man in Philadelphia. Born in 1800, Henry's brilliant daughter, Alma (who inherits both her father's money and his mind), ultimately becomes a botanist of considerable gifts herself. As Alma's research takes her deeper into the mysteries of evolution, she falls in love with a man named Ambrose Pike who makes incomparable paintings of orchids and who draws her in the exact opposite direction—into the realm of the spiritual, the divine, and the magical. Alma is a clear-minded scientist; Ambrose a utopian artist—but what unites this unlikely couple is a desperate need to understand the workings of this world and the mechanisms behind all life.

Exquisitely researched and told at a galloping pace, *The Signature of All Things* soars across the globe—from London to Peru to Philadelphia to Tahiti to Amsterdam, and beyond. Along the way, the story is peopled with unforgettable characters: missionaries, abolitionists, adventurers, astronomers, sea captains, geniuses, and the quite mad. But most memorable of all, it is the story of Alma Whittaker, who—born in the Age of Enlightenment, but living well into the Industrial Revolution—bears witness to that extraordinary moment in human history when all the old assumptions about science, religion, commerce, and class were exploding into dangerous new ideas. Written in the bold, questing spirit of that singular time, Gilbert's wise, deep, and spellbinding tale is certain to capture the hearts and minds of readers.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

An Amazon Best Book of the Month, October 2013: As a small girl, Elizabeth Gilbert scrawled her name in the most extraordinary book in her house: an original illustrated folio of Captain Cook's voyages. Decades later, her parents discovered her signature and gave her the book, reigniting her passion for scientific exploration in the century leading up to Darwin's theory of evolution. She became fascinated with the women—always wives or daughters of scientists—who made their own discoveries, in spite of the cultural constraints that kept them from true exploration. Her invented heroine, the insatiably curious Alma Whittaker, daughter of a scrappy botanical baron, spends most of her life confined to her family estate in Philadelphia, yearning for a life of greater passion and liberty. She channels her desires into botany, thrilling to the miniature universe of moss in the forests surrounding her house, developing a new taxonomy that becomes a theory encompassing all living things, parallel to Darwin's. When she finally turns herself loose on the world, it's to claim her place in a lineage of explorers. An earthy, elegant, deeply sensual novel of daring breadth and imagination, *The Signature of All Things* gives us the cosmos in the life of one woman, in her worlds within worlds. —*Mari Malcolm*

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review Gilbert, the author of the phenomenally successful memoir *Eat, Pray, Love* (2006), returns to fiction with her first novel in 13 years, and what a novel it is! Taking her sweet time and digressing at will into areas ranging from botany to spiritualism to illustration, she tells the rich, highly satisfying story of scholar Alma Whittaker. Born to Henry Whittaker, "the richest man in Philadelphia," who rose from his station as the son of a lowly gardener to an import tycoon, Alma has the benefit of wealth and books, spending hours learning Latin and Greek and studying the natural world. But her plain appearance and erudition seem to foretell a lonely life until she meets gifted artist Ambrose Pike. Their intense intellectual connection results in marriage, but Ambrose's deep but unorthodox spiritual beliefs prevent them from truly connecting. Alma, who has never traveled out of Philadelphia, embarks on an odyssey that takes her from Tahiti to Holland, during which she learns much about the ways of the world and her own complicated nature. Gilbert, in supreme command of her material, effortlessly invokes the questing spirit of the nineteenth century, when amateur explorers, naturalists, and enthusiasts were making major contributions to progress. Beautifully written and imbued with a reverence for science and for learning, this is a must-read. **HIGH-DEMAND BACKSTORY:** The publisher is pulling out all the stops for the high-profile author, including both print and online campaigns and an author tour; Gilbert's celebrity may also draw off-the-book-page interest. --Joanne Wilkinson

Review

"A rip-roaring tale... unlike anything Gilbert has ever written... Its prose has the elegant sheen of a nineteenth-century epic, but its concerns... are essentially modern." —*The New York Times Magazine*

"With this novel about a young, nineteenth-century Philadelphia woman who becomes a world-renowned botanist, Gilbert shows herself to be a writer at the height of her powers." —*O, The Oprah Magazine*, "Our Favorite Reads of the Year"

"The most ambitious and purely imaginative work in Gilbert's twenty-year career." —*The Wall Street Journal*

"Like Victor Hugo or Emile Zola, Gilbert captures something important about the wider world in *The*

Signature of All Things: a pivotal moment in history when progress defined us in concrete ways." —*The Washington Post*

"A masterly tale of overflowing sensual and scientific enthusiasms in the nineteenth century." —*Time*, "Top Ten Fiction Books of the Year"

"Raucously ingenious... a novel of brave and lovely ideas... I found unshackled joy on every page." —*The Chicago Tribune*

"Alma's extraordinary life unspools like a Jane Austen novel... Here Gilbert claims her rightful spot as one of the twenty-first century's best American writers." —*Outside*

"Gilbert writes so wonderfully it's impossible not to swoon... Alma's drive for personal epiphany feels absolutely contemporary." —*The Boston Globe*

"A beautifully written, grandly expansive historical novel... Gilbert's writing is so smart and richly drawn that it does what all the best books do: it sweeps you up." —*Entertainment Weekly*

"Dazzling... a big-hearted, sweeping, unforgettable novel... If you don't think science or historical fiction can be bright, funny, and engaging, this novel will quickly prove you wrong." —*The Miami Herald*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Tom Copper:

The book *The Signature of All Things: A Novel* gives you the sense of being enjoy for your spare time. You can use to make your capable a lot more increase. Book can to be your best friend when you getting anxiety or having big problem using your subject. If you can make reading through a book *The Signature of All Things: A Novel* to get your habit, you can get far more advantages, like add your own personal capable, increase your knowledge about a few or all subjects. You may know everything if you like available and read a guide *The Signature of All Things: A Novel*. Kinds of book are several. It means that, science guide or encyclopedia or other folks. So , how do you think about this reserve?

Vivian Nava:

Often the book *The Signature of All Things: A Novel* will bring you to the new experience of reading a new book. The author style to elucidate the idea is very unique. Should you try to find new book to see, this book very appropriate to you. The book *The Signature of All Things: A Novel* is much recommended to you you just read. You can also get the e-book from the official web site, so you can more easily to read the book.

Dominic Maddock:

A lot of people always spent their own free time to vacation as well as go to the outside with them family members or their friend. Were you aware? Many a lot of people spent that they free time just watching TV, or perhaps playing video games all day long. If you wish to try to find a new activity that is look different

you can read any book. It is really fun in your case. If you enjoy the book which you read you can spent all day every day to reading a e-book. The book *The Signature of All Things: A Novel* it is quite good to read. There are a lot of people who recommended this book. These folks were enjoying reading this book. In the event you did not have enough space to deliver this book you can buy the particular e-book. You can more quickly to read this book from the smart phone. The price is not too costly but this book offers high quality.

Joseph Bateman:

Is it you actually who having spare time subsequently spend it whole day by means of watching television programs or just telling lies on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This *The Signature of All Things: A Novel* can be the respond to, oh how comes? It's a book you know. You are thus out of date, spending your extra time by reading in this brand-new era is common not a nerd activity. So what these publications have than the others?

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