

Seraiah Alexander
ENGL-112B
Warner

***Bombay Blues* by Tanuja Desai Hidier**



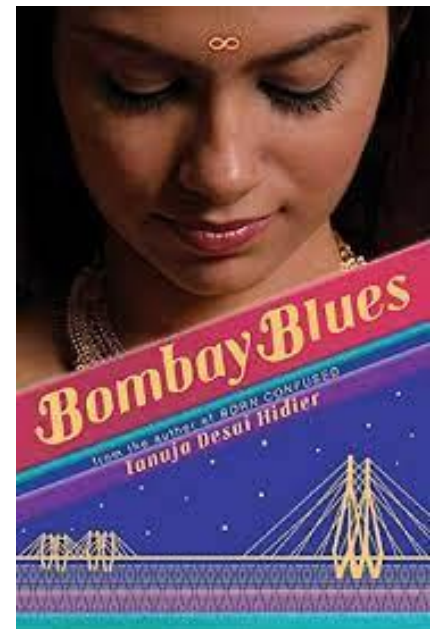
About the Author

Tanuja Desai Hidier is an award-winning author, videomaker, and singer-songwriter. As an Indian-American author, she has composed several South Asian Young Adult novels and is considered to be one of the first authors to do so. Hidier is best known for her 2002 book titled *Born Confused*. In 2015, Hidier won the South Asia Book award for her novel *Bombay Blues*. Her books have been included in high school curriculums worldwide.

<http://thisistanuja.com/>

Summary

Studying as a college student in New York City, Dimple Lala makes her way to India to attend the wedding of a family member along with her long-term boyfriend Karsh. Little does Dimple know that this trip will throw her deeply into the unexpected nature of love, loss, and self-discovery. With a conflicted family and a distancing boyfriend, Dimple takes a leap to explore Bombay on her own. In a land so foreign, yet so familiar, Dimple finds that change is inevitable and around every corner. Being so far away from home makes Dimple realize that home is not simply a place one lives, but rather an everchanging concept that grows along with her.



www.amazon.com

Significant Quotes

“Too late. The roundabout hijra was plunging her palm into my cracked pane. I waited for the bossy begging to begin, but she simply laid her hand upon my own, gazing into my eyes... Zara, whose photos I'd taken as she turned from man to woman - an act of creation, re-creation, reincarnation, that had intimated to me how much of one's identity is in one's own hands. Was this her Bombay avatar?” (31)

Analysis:

While Dimple's family expresses fear and confusion towards the transgender woman who is begging on the streets, Dimple recognizes the humanity in her. As they briefly connect, Dimple is taken back to her time in New York City and an individual named Zara who frequented the clubs there. While she reflects upon Zara's process of transitioning from outwardly “male” to her true form as a woman, Dimple reflects on how one can change their identity so that one can be their authentic selves. Dimple states that she is “intimidated” that one's identity is in their own hands. As Dimple navigates through Bombay, she recognizes her identity and the power that she has to break free from what is expected from her so that she can be her genuine self.

“I gave Karsh my arm, helped him rise with me. Our knees buckled simultaneously, and we caught each other, tipped against the railing a moment. I looked at him. We were ancient. I was seeing the boy I'd loved at seventeen eighteen, nineteen for a hundred and one years....I had a feeling I always would— and neither his company nor his absence would alleviate this. A nostalgia steeped even this present moment with him, an anticipation even for what had already passed” (462-463)

Analysis:

After spending years with her boyfriend Karsh, Dimple finally accepts that what they had has come to an end. Although she still loves him and is hurt over losing him, she recognizes that what happened happened, and there is no way to change it. Dimple finds acceptance in the hurt she has over losing someone who has been in her life for so long. This is a change that she did not expect when she left for India but recognizes that she cannot control who remains in her life. Dimple cherishes the moments that she has with Karsh and gracefully recognizes that this beautiful thing in her life must come to an end eventually. Rather than allowing this break-up to completely crush her and ruin her trip, Dimple seeks out her own independence and finds solitude in embracing the things that she can, and cannot control.

“Roundabout Nandini, that sweet-toothed Indo-Iris, throwing face back, plane spotting. Rising higher, and that panorama of tarp rooftops... No, there’s no place like home. But that’s because home was surely not a place. Still. I was getting there” (539).

Analysis:

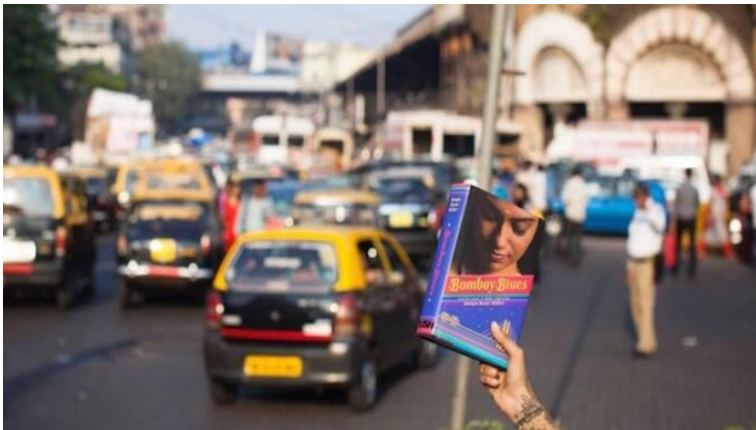
As Dimple departs from India, she looks out the plane window at everything she is leaving behind. Her trip to Bombay allows her to realize that change is inevitable and is something she can grow from instead of letting it destroy her. Throughout the novel, Dimple questions her identity in many ways. Although she is still navigating through her journey of self-discovery, she accepts the change and sadness she endured with open arms. Dimple compares herself to the Statue of Liberty, “a brown-skinned girl gone blue like me” but she recognizes that despite the blueness that she feels, she is still carrying a torch and enduring what life has to offer. Finally, Dimple does not have to be homesick for a home that never existed. She concludes that home is not a place but rather an experience, a feeling. Although she is not where she wanted to be from the start of the novel, Dimple has grown significantly and recognizes that she’s slowly but surely getting to the place she wants to be.

In the classroom

Bombay Blues carries many themes about identity, change, and growth that can be applicable for teaching in a classroom setting.

Some prompts and discussions include:

- Write about your personal identity. Where do you come from and who are you becoming?
- Discuss your cultural background and how it impacts your lifestyle and identity. What significance does your culture have on your personality, lifestyle, and choices?
- How do you navigate through major changes in your life? Is change something that you welcome with open arms, or something you find difficult to deal with?



india.com

Text Complexity

Quantitative Complexity: Lexile 810L - 1000L

Dale-Chall 7.2 for grades 9-10

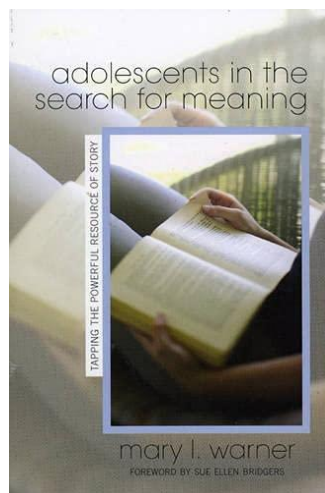
Qualitative Complexity: The recommended grade levels that are based on the text complexity generators appear to be accurate with the text of the novel. Although it is not the most difficult read, there are many words that are not in the English language that may disrupt the flow of reading for a strict English reader. The novel also contains many mature themes such as sex, death, and mature language which may not be suitable for younger students.

Text Significance for Teens

This novel is great for young adult readers as it follows many of the Exeter qualities that make up YA literature. *Bombay Blues* carries complex language and sentence structure that is not too difficult to understand which allows readers to feel challenged while reading this book. The themes in this novel allow for emotional and intellectual growth due to the journey that Dimple experiences. Additionally, the protagonist is a young adult herself, and also plays a strong female role outside of the typical cannon.

Which Categories In *Adolescents In the Search for Meaning*?

- Chapter 4: Books about Real-Life Experiences
- Chapter 5: Books about Death and Loss
- Chapter 6: Books about Identity, Discrimination, and Struggles with Decisions



[amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)