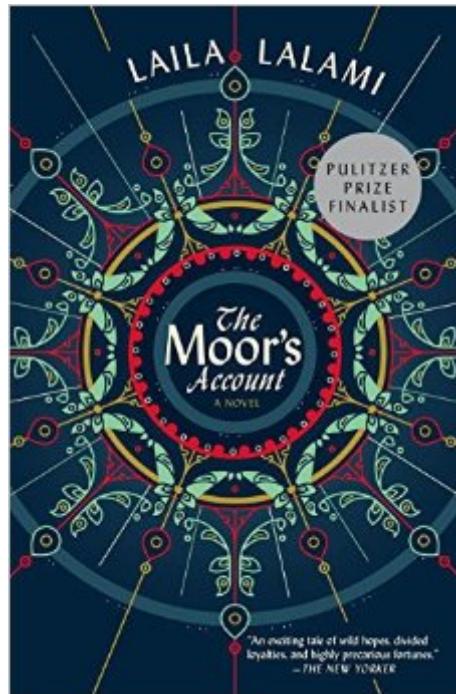


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The Moor's Account



Synopsis

PULITZER PRIZE FINALIST**NOMINATED FOR THE MAN BOOKER PRIZE****WINNER OF THE AMERICAN BOOK AWARD**A New York Times Notable BookA Wall Street Journal Top 10 Book of the YearAn NPR Great Read of 2014A Kirkus Best Fiction Book of the Year In these pages, Laila Lalami brings us the imagined memoirs of the first black explorer of America: Mustafa al-Zamori, called Estebanico. The slave of a Spanish conquistador, Estebanico sails for the Americas with his master, Dorantes, as part of a danger-laden expedition to Florida. Within a year, Estebanico is one of only four crew members to survive. As he journeys across America with his Spanish companions, the Old World roles of slave and master fall away, and Estebanico remakes himself as an equal, a healer, and a remarkable storyteller. His tale illuminates the ways in which our narratives can transmigrate into historyâ "and how storytelling can offer a chance at redemption and survival.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 starsÂ See all reviewsÂ (212 customer reviews)

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Customer Reviews

I was skeptical but I couldn't pass up a fictional account of a famous historical trek, the journey through the Gulf Coast taken by several Spanish soldiers after the disaster that struck Narvaez's journey through Florida. As Spain was exploring its new territories, a new expedition sought out riches in Florida. Led somewhat ineptly by Narvaez, the soldiers find themselves unprepared for Florida natives and terrain, and eventually lose many to sickness and natives made hostile by aggressive Spanish "inquisition", especially seeking gold. One of the members of the expedition is a "Moor", a native of Morocco who sold himself into slavery to feed his family and was a servant to

one of the hildagos on the expedition. The book is a fictionalized account from his perspective. Lalami does an incredible job writing as a man who has lost his status, and his hope. Before a devastating drought he was a merchant, but lost everything. To save his family he becomes a slave and eventually travels to Florida with one of the leaders of the expedition. However, after a calamity which leaves only three Spaniards and himself alive, the narrator adapts to his surroundings in the Gulf Coast and to the people and languages much more effectively than the Spanish, who cannot believe they are held in contempt by the natives. Mustafa and the Spaniards live and continue to move south and west in the hopes of meeting other Spaniards or discovering Spanish settlements. They have few skills, so often are asked to do women's work by the tribes with whom they live. Mustafa displays an ability to heal using herbs and other medical knowledge, and the four gain a following. Eventually, after almost eight years in the wilderness they encounter a Spanish settlement.

"Everything had already been loved and everything has already been told. If we only listened to the stories." Estebanico, the North African slave who narrates "The Moor's Account" In its most apparent aspect, Laila Lalami's "The Moor's Account" tells the story of the four survivors of Panfilo Narvaez' disastrous exploration of La Florida about a decade following Hernan Cortez' conquest of the Aztecs. In and of itself, this fictionalized retelling is full of action, a little love, and a lot of survival. Its focus is on Estebanico, a North African slave who warrants exactly one line of notice in the popularized *relacion* written by Alvar Nunez Cabeza de Vaca originally published in 1542. Lalami, though, chooses a wonderful lead for her novel, utilizing the accepted history of the events as a foundation upon which to build her piece historical fiction. The novel is actually about much more than the somewhat fantastical trials and tribulations of three Spanish conquistadors and one lone slave. Lalami is clearly a fan of the art of storytelling. Her passion seeps through the pages of her novel, and through the well-written voice of Mustafa ibn Muhammad who's given the name Esteban when he sells himself into slavery. "When I fell into slavery, I was forced to give up not just my freedom, but also the name that my mother and father had chosen for me. A name is precious; it carries inside it a language, a history, a set of traditions, a particular way of looking at the world." Mustafa Lalami writes a strong voice in her character of Estebanico. She sets the right tone with his frank narration, brief dialogue, and insights from his internal monologue and simple plot elements.

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