



## The Elephant's Journey

By Jose Saramago

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**The Elephant's Journey** By Jose Saramago

**A delightful, witty tale of friendship and adventure from prize-winning novelist José Saramago**

In 1551, King João III of Portugal gave Archduke Maximilian an unusual wedding present: an elephant named Solomon. In José Saramago's remarkable and imaginative retelling, Solomon and his keeper, Subhro, begin in dismal conditions, forgotten in a corner of the palace grounds. When it occurs to the king and queen that an elephant would be an appropriate wedding gift, everyone rushes to get them ready: Subhro is given two new suits of clothes and Solomon a long overdue scrub. Accompanied by the Archduke, his new wife, and the royal guard, these unlikely heroes traverse a continent riven by the Reformation and civil wars, witnessed along the way by scholars, historians, and wide-eyed ordinary people as they make their way through the storied cities of northern Italy; they brave the Alps and the terrifying Isarco and Brenner Passes; across the Mediterranean Sea and up the Inn River; and at last, toward their grand entry into the imperial city.

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## **The Elephant's Journey By Jose Saramago Bibliography**

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### Editorial Review

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\*Starred Review\* The internationally respected Portuguese winner of the 1998 Nobel Prize for Literature died on June 18, 2010; this novel is being published posthumously. A novel with a greatly heroic main character certainly is not uncommon; however, when an elephant is playing that role, the novel can be considered unique, especially because it is based on an actual event. In 1551, King Joao of Portugal makes a startling diplomatic move by giving Archduke Maximilian of Austria the elephant housed on Portuguese royal grounds. The problem is that the elephant needs to be transported from Lisbon to Vienna. Because the era is pre-jumbo jet and Vienna is not a seaport, Solomon the elephant must walk! Solomon's trek across Europe, across mountains and rivers, accompanied by his Hindu keeper and a host of other retainers and attendants, is followed in this extremely amusing, historically resonant, fablelike, and technically challenging narrative. The astonishment that Solomon arouses en route is summed up in one person's reaction: "Well, it isn't every day that an elephant appears in our lives." Solomon shows quiet heroism yet is never anthropomorphized: "Despite his poor sight, he shot them a stern glance, making it clear that he was not some fairground animal, but an honest worker who had been deprived of his job by unfortunate circumstances too complicated to go into, and had, so to speak, been forced to accept public charity." --Brad Hooper

#### Review

"It would be hard to more highly recommend a novel to be downed in a single draft...Simply, this books flows, and keeps on flowing."

--*The New York Times*

"His most optimistic, playful, humorous and magical book, a grace note written near the end of his life...*The Elephant's Journey* is a tale rich in irony and empathy, regularly interrupted by witty reflections on human nature and arch commentary on the powerful who insult human dignity."

--*Los Angeles Times*

"Saramago...spun this whimsical yet compulsively readable tale...it's a perfect example of why [he] will be remembered as a master of surreal, enchanting prose."

--*GQ*

"A picaresque romp that gleefully skewers the benighted souls clinging to outmoded worldviews while breathtaking new realities unfold right in front of them."

--*Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*

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