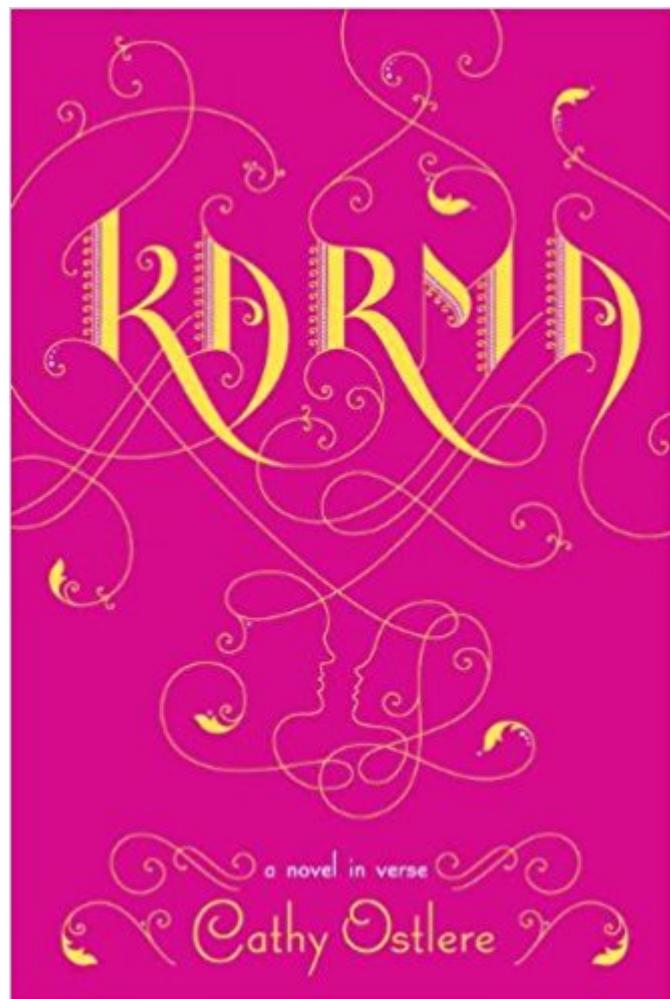


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# Karma



## **Synopsis**

It is 1984, and fifteen-year-old Maya is on her way to India with her father. She carries with her the ashes of her mother, who has recently committed suicide, and arrives in Delhi on the eve of Prime Minister Indira Gandhi's assassination - one of the bloodiest riots in the country's history. Then Maya is separated from her father and must rely upon the help of a mysterious, kindhearted boy, Sandeep, to safely reunite them. But as her love for Sandeep begins to blossom, Maya will have to face the truth about her painful adolescence . . . if she's ever to imagine her future. In this gorgeous, haunting portrait of love, loss, and growing up, Cathy Ostlere - in masterful strokes of verse - has created a simply unforgettable read.

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: HL400L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 528 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 16 customer reviews

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## **Customer Reviews**

This epic novel, written in free verse poems in a diary format, straddles two countries and the clash of Indian cultures in the tale of 15-year-old Maya. Raised in Canada, Maya is the product of a marriage between her Hindu mother and Sikh father, a union that upset both families. Her 1984 trip to India with her father, after her mother's suicide, thrusts her life into further chaos when her father disappears during riots that follow Indira Gandhi's assassination. In her first YA novel, Ostlere (Lost: A Memoir) makes Maya's subsequent muteness believable in the wake of the many traumas she endures. Burdened with guilt over her parents' fate, as well as that of a Sikh man burned alive in

front of her, she asks, "Is my silence unfounded too?/ No. I do not deserve to be found./ Or loved." A family in a desert town takes Maya in, and 17-year-old Sandeep (who contributes kinetic, lovestruck journal entries) takes special interest in her. In contrast to the hatred, mistrust, and violence, the friendship--and then love--between Maya and Sandeep offers hope, rebirth, and renewal. Ages 12-up. (Mar.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

**\*Starred Review\*** After her Hindu mother's suicide, 15-year-old Maya and her Sikh father travel from Canada to India for a traditional burial. The year is 1984, and on the night of their arrival in New Delhi, Prime Minister Indira Gandhi is assassinated by her Sikh guards. When the city erupts in chaos, both Maya and her father find themselves in great danger. Through a sequence of horrifying events, father and daughter are separated, and Maya is left alone in a violent foreign country where she must rely on the help of strangers to reach safety. In her YA debut, acclaimed adult author Ostlere offers a riveting, historically accurate coming-of-age tale of gutsy survival, self-sacrifice, and love. Set during a six-week period, the novel in verse makes the most of its lyrical form with lines of dialogue that bounce back and forth in columns across the page and singularly beautiful metaphors and similes that convey potent detail and emotion. With artful compassion, Ostlere reveals the infinitely complex clash of cultures within both India and Maya's family, and although the allusions to karma could have seemed awkward in less talented hands, here they lead into well-framed larger questions that will stay with readers. A fascinating, epic page-turner.

Grades 9-12. --Frances Bradburn

A seriously amazing book on a topic I knew nothing about. Please don't shy away from it because it's free verse. The fragments, the clipped emotions and descriptions, somehow explain things better than a couple pages of flowing prose. It gives you that sense of urgency and fear that the characters are experiencing. The rush of emotions they are unused to. It doesn't hide behind anything. I do feel the main character acts/speaks a little older than her age at times, she was raised differently than I and then goes through this horrid experience, so I can look past such a thing. I hope the lack of reviews does not mirror how this book is sold, because it deserves to be read and shared with others. Pick it up. You won't be disappointed.

This book truly captures India and its beauty and the story was just extraordinary! So realistic and I got quite emotional. I will highly recommend this book for all readers!

We read this book for our South Asian reading group as part of a collection of books themed around the 1984 Sikh genocide in India. I'm not one for verse or freewriting, but this book by Ms Ositlere was very much inspiring, captivating and extremely emotional. I actually enjoyed the read and think even those who don not quite enjoy verse or poetry will enjoy it just as much! If you're interested in what happened to this minority group of Sikhs in 1984 I would definitely add this book to the list, along with the other books we read (Night of the Widows by Eli Mann, All Indian Justice Committee by Grace Kaur, A Feast for Lambs by Jesse Thind, When a Tree Shook Deli by HS Phoolka). What I find astonishing is that after having done some research I don't think the Indian government has officially apologized for what they did to the Sikhs in 1984.

Night of the Widows  
All Indian Justice Committee (Volume 3)  
When a Tree Shook Delhi: The 1984 Carnage and its Aftermath  
A Feast for Lambs

I bought this book for my niece but I ended up reading it myself too. We both loved it. It is written in prose. Very beautiful. Its a fairly quick read but intriguing and provides knowledge of recent Sikh history.

This book was very good and easy to read but very sad and depressing and kinda long but still very good and you'll want to know how it ends.

It kind of took you all over the place and just couldn't quite get into it. For me it wasn't my cup of tea.

The subject is a little heavy, but it reads very well in diary form. Page after page of wanting to know what was to come next, I could not put it down. I read it in less than 2 days!

Maya has lived in Canada with her Indian parents all her life. Now, her and her father are making their way back to India with her mother's ashes. When they arrive in India though, the assassination of Indira Ghandi has things in an uproar. They end up having to go their separate ways just to survive. Sandeep saw Maya, and knew that he would love her. Though she wasn't speaking, he would be her voice and hopefully bring her back where she belongs. What a heartbreakin novel. I always hate people killing people for no reason other than they are part of a group that the killers don't like. The people were killed in a barbaric way, and the country ignored that it was happening. Unfortunately I know this happens all the time. Maya was an interesting character, even if her thoughts were absent throughout the middle of this story. In the middle Sandeep fills in with his

observations of the elusive girl. I found this to be an interesting way to tell the story. Sandeep seemed to have a lot more to say and wonder about than Maya did at that point in time. It seemed as though Maya was too filled with grief to think different thoughts. She probably just had the same horrifying images playing again and again through her mind; while this is understandable, it doesn't make for very exciting reading. Sandeep was a very kind person. He helped Maya and never left her, even when he knew the outcome would not be in his favor. I really liked the verse and the diary style writing for this novel. It made it feel intimate and urgent. At times I felt the story focused on the light side of things too much, but I think it helped leave the reader not completely depressed. The last few chapters were even better than I had thought they would be, which is always nice. Love seems to be a big theme in this novel, despite all the war and chaos. This was a fantastic historical fiction that will make your heart ache but will leave you satisfied. First Line: "How to begin." Favorite Line: "Bapu says her death is due architecture. [...] Because the gold was tarnished with blood. Because of hate. Prejudice. Intolerance."

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