

Rudyard Kipling

Kim

Read by **Madhav Sharma**

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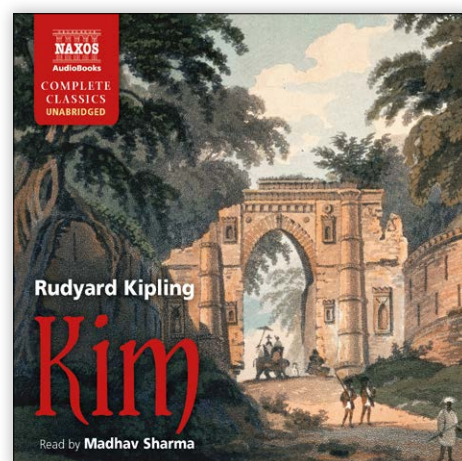
One of the first great works of the 20th century, *Kim* tells the story of Kimball O'Hara, an orphan on the streets of Lahore. Wild, inventive and delighted with the secrecy of the messages he carries across the night-time rooftops, he befriends an elderly Tibetan lama and joins him on a quest for a sacred river.

But in the India of the 1880s there are other matters to deal with, and Kim finds himself enrolled as a member of the British secret service in the 'Great Game' – the power struggle between the British and Russian Empires.

An adventure story packed with incident, *Kim* is also about identity and belonging, lost fathers and new opportunities, and is a breathtaking portrait of India in all its vivid contrasts.



Madhav Sharma made his professional acting debut with the Shakespeareana International Company, touring places such as India, Singapore, Malaysia, Sarawak, North Borneo and Hong Kong. He works extensively on stage, screen and radio in the UK where he now resides. He has previously read *The Jungle Books* and *Rikki-Tikki-Tavi* for Naxos AudioBooks.



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1	1-1	Chapter 1
2	1-2	As he drummed his heels...
3	1-3	In open mouthed wonder...
4	1-4	Kim had fallen asleep.
5	1-5	'And when dost thou go?'
6	1-6	The huge mouse coloured...
7	1-7	'I thought thou hadst been a guide...'
8	1-8	The lama held out the begging bowl...
9	1-9	Twice or thrice yearly...
10	1-10	About the same hour...
11	1-11	Chapter 2
12	1-12	'I say,' began the money lender...
13	2-1	The lamps were paling in the dawn...
14	2-2	The lama fell back...
15	2-3	Kim stole out and away...
16	2-4	Then it came out...
17	2-5	Chapter 3
18	2-6	Where the hard worked soil...
19	2-7	It was an old, withered man...
20	2-8	Here the old soldier hobbled up...
21	2-9	'What manner of life hast thou led...'
22	2-10	'Hai! Hai!' said the soldier...
23	3-1	Chapter 4
24	3-2	They met a troop...



7:47	25	3-3	By this time the sun was driving...	7:24
7:04	26	3-4	The hillman drew back to the cart...	8:24
6:44	27	3-5	'Have I not said an hundred times...'	8:23
7:12	28	3-6	Kim stifled a laugh in the quilt.	5:51
7:10	29	3-7	A dark, sallowish District Superintendent...	5:03
6:41	30	3-8	Chapter 5	5:20
6:00	31	3-9	A soldier thrust a stave...	6:44
7:12	32	3-10	'Now,' said Kim, picking his teeth...	5:54
6:17	33	3-11	The Chaplain took no heed...	6:17
5:01	34	3-12	'Sahibs praying to a bull!'	6:16
5:30	35	4-1	He turned towards the lama...	5:52
3:37	36	4-2	They listened to each other's breathing...	5:43
6:58	37	4-3	'Well,' said Father Victor in English...	5:57
8:19	38	4-4	Chapter 6	6:40
8:00	39	4-5	It was the drummer boy...	8:18
6:01	40	4-6	Though he would not say so...	7:33
6:57	41	4-7	The day dragged to its weary end.	8:11
6:20	42	4-8	Here was deadly insult on deadlier injury...	8:11
7:23	43	4-9	'I'm glad ye see a reason in it.'	6:52
7:41	44	4-10	Chapter 7	6:04
7:58	45	4-11	He showed nothing of his mind...	6:25
8:30	46	5-1	When they came to the crowded Lucknow...	7:50
5:51	47	5-2	'Go to Jehannum and abide there...'	8:27
7:08	48	5-3	None the less he remembered...	8:21



49	5-4	Next morning, on the same course...
50	5-5	Chapter 8
51	5-6	Up went a gout of heavy smoke.
52	5-7	'Have I been such a hindrance till now?'
53	5-8	He paddled along swiftly...
54	5-9	Mahbub smiled with heavenly resignation.
55	5-10	There was that in the tone...
56	6-1	Chapter 9
57	6-2	The trumpet-box was pouring out...
58	6-3	To save his life...
59	6-4	The child dried his tears at once....
60	6-5	Carried away by enthusiasm...
61	6-6	Four days later a seat was booked...
62	6-7	'That is reward of merit...'
63	6-8	'Then one day the young elephant saw...'
64	6-9	Chapter 10
65	6-10	The report in its unmistakable...
66	6-11	They marched...
67	7-1	No money and no preferment...
68	7-2	The room, with its dirty cushions...
69	7-3	Huneefa's crisis passed...
70	7-4	Kim snapped his fingers mechanically...
71	7-5	Chapter 11
72	7-6	Kim halted at the carved outer door...
73	7-7	The lama smiled.
74	7-8	He drew from under the table...
75	7-9	Kim watched the last dusty sunshine fade...
76	7-10	The pallor of hunger suited Kim...
77	7-11	They all piled into it...
78	8-1	'I came from the South...'
79	8-2	'This comes next,' said Kim...
80	8-3	Chapter 12
81	8-4	Kim hurried to his carriage...



6:45	82	8-5	When the shadows shortened...	7:39
6:15	83	8-6	But news travels fast in India...	7:21
7:53	84	8-7	Kim bristled like an expectant terrier.	7:56
7:25	85	8-8	For the first time in his life...	7:27
7:58	86	8-9	They are well received by Hilas and Bunar.	6:27
7:59	87	8-10	'Well is the Game called great!'	7:46
7:58	88	8-11	There were cakes, there were sweetmeats...	5:39
8:25	89	9-1	Chapter 13	7:24
8:05	90	9-2	'We saw thee come over the black Breasts of Eua'	6:53
7:24	91	9-3	At last they entered a world within a world...	7:46
7:54	92	9-4	He skipped nimbly...	7:35
6:31	93	9-5	The two men stood bareheaded...	6:54
6:04	94	9-6	It was too late.	7:31
7:34	95	9-7	He drew from his breast a bottle...	7:46
5:06	96	9-8	'The old man still sleeps...'	7:04
7:34	97	9-9	Chapter 14	8:08
4:49	98	9-10	'The others have gone....'	7:46
7:36	99	10-1	Kim looked his astonishment....	6:12
8:23	100	10-2	From time to time...	8:07
7:50	101	10-3	Kim was genuinely distressed...	7:33
5:35	102	10-4	Kim turned to the woman...	7:14
7:23	103	10-5	The lama had squatted limply...	6:06
8:02	104	10-6	Chapter 15	5:45
7:39	105	10-7	On the edge of the Doon...	7:53
5:50	106	10-8	Kim thought of the oilskin packet...	6:23
4:52	107	11-1	So, when with scufflings and scrapings...	6:57
6:37	108	11-2	She brewed drinks...	8:08
6:53	109	11-3	'Send him here, mother...'	8:06
5:54	110	11-4	A native proverb – unquotable – showed...	6:08
7:58	111	11-5	There stood an empty bullock-cart...	8:12
7:04	112	11-6	'What matter? When I must have him...'	6:52
6:26	113	11-7	He peered at the cross-legged figure...	4:36
7:37	114	11-8	By this I knew that I was free.	7:10

Rudyard Kipling

(1865–1936)

Kim

Written as the 19th century turned into the 20th, by an author profoundly associated with the still-expanding British Empire, and set in a country that he had left years ago, Rudyard Kipling's most successful novel, *Kim*, could easily have been a trite Imperialist romp or a wistfully nostalgic elegy.

It could also have been merely an adventure story, given Kipling's huge popularity with *The Jungle Book*, published some five years before. After all, its principal character is a young boy – inventive, energetic and unfettered by any convention – who becomes a spy. But *Kim* is something rare and special, almost inexplicably magical in its descriptions of people and places. For all its adventure, it is also a story of an inner journey; although it was written by the popular laureate of Empire, it soars above the narrow racism of that type; and although it is filled with a love of an India of the past, it teems with vitality.

Rudyard Kipling was born in what is now Mumbai in 1865 and lived a childhood of such idyllic ease and delight that the memory – indeed the language, customs and smells – never left him. His pleasure in his Indian boyhood was placed in sharp relief when, at the age of six, as was the custom for British people living in

India, he was sent back to England to go to school in Southsea. The next six years of his life were a dreadful shock, and not just because of the contrast. He was treated with cruelty and neglect, and was bullied and scared. His great escape was at Christmas-time, which he would spend with his aunt who was married to the painter Edward Burne-Jones. The combination of having to disguise the truth about the misery of his school life, and the bustling, busy, happy house he went to each year, seem to have sparked his ability for invention, and after moving to the United Services College in Devon he eventually became the editor of the school magazine and began writing poetry.

Kipling returned with his parents to his beloved India in 1881, and worked there as a journalist until 1889 before – after a typically itinerant year – returning to England. But throughout this time he was also writing poetry and short stories, the two forms that would make him one of the most famous people on the planet over the next 20 years. He created phrases that are still used in everyday speech and poems that remain much loved. He invented new fables and fairy-stories, new voices in poetry, new tones and styles of short story, and was awarded the Nobel Prize for literature in 1907. He also

became perceived as the voice of the Empire his family had served, and which he profoundly supported. But Kipling's relationship with that Empire, and its attendant evils, is far more layered and complex than some contemporary reductionism will allow; and this complexity is beautifully realised in *Kim*, as is his genius for character and atmosphere.

Kim is the orphan son of an Irish soldier, brought up in the streets of Lahore. He makes his living carrying secret messages for modest lovers or cautious criminals, thrilling to the intrigue, the darkness and the adventure of it. He is charming and attractive, well-known and well-liked; he is the 'little friend of all the world'. And he is curious about the world, finding it full of wonder, feeling that, for example, there is something enchanting about the contents of the local museum. He befriends – at first out of mere curiosity and a desire for change – the elderly Tibetan, Teshoo Lama, who is on a quest for a legendary river that will see him attain his goal of freeing himself from the Wheel of Life. Kim decides to become his *chela*, his disciple. But while the lama sets out to lose himself in spirituality, a very concrete world of war and spies and double-dealing is taking place all over the same India. This is the 'Great Game', the battle between the British and Russian Empires for control in Asia.

One of Kim's occasional associates, Mahbub Ali, is a native spy for the British, and Kim is given a message to deliver. But despite his skin colour, language and upbringing, Kim still carries evidence that he is British rather than Indian: his birth certificate and his father's regimental insignia are always with him. When these are recognised, he is forcibly removed from the lama and taken to a British school in Lucknow. Despite the boy's protestations the lama sees this as an essential part of Kim's upbringing, even paying the fees himself. Through the school Kim meets another paternal figure – Colonel Creighton – who recognises his rare combination of skills and background and sends him to what is effectively a holiday camp for spies, military training being far too formal and strait-laced for the improvisational Kim.

Kim's sharpness and strength of mind mean his boyhood delights are transformed into a reality, and he discovers that the Great Game is dangerous, merciless and callous, that spies are expendable and can be blotted out of the story if convenient to those who employ them. He rejoins the Lama and they trek to the Himalayas, where the lama himself becomes embroiled in the harsh tactics of the war between the Russians and the British.

Kim is an adventure story. But its greatness lies in the rich and vivid descriptions, the rounded and yet still eccentric nature of the characters, and in the balance of conflicting desires and personalities. Moreover, the whole nature of the identity of the British in the region is continually explored. Just as Kipling's own parents described themselves as Anglo-Indian, Kim is neither Indian nor British, and throughout the novel he asks himself 'What is Kim?'. As Kipling himself, wrenched away from his homeland and

his nursemaid to brutal foster-parents, was perhaps uncertain of his place in the world, so is Kim. Kim's deep questions have a particular resonance for Kipling, loyal to the Empire but loving those bound unwillingly to it. Does he owe allegiance to the British overlords, or does he belong to the land that he has lived in all his life? Should he follow his beloved lama, or the knowing Colonel Creighton? Should he be chasing Russian spies or spiritual enlightenment? Is he a spy or a disciple?

Although it is true that Kipling never allows anyone to question the legitimacy of the British presence in India, and implies that somehow they have a right to rule it, there are plenty of characters who show the colonisers in an unsympathetic light. If, however, the book is politically limited and makes not the slightest mention of the move toward Indian self-determination, it nevertheless treats all the characters with a combination of tenderness and brio, whether horse-traders or colonels, lamas or spies, courtesans or religious leaders. It is sensitive to the moods of custom, language, attitude and place in a fashion that goes beyond description and enters a realm of complete realisation, through dialogue, hints, gesture, tone and detail. India, it seems, is brought wholly to life – its scenery, its people, its mystical atmosphere and presence – the country is a character as rounded and questioning as Kim himself.

It was as if Kipling was saying his own farewell. He never went back to India, and *Kim* was his last work about the land that had so inspired him. He had married Caroline (Carrie) Balestier in 1892, and although by the time of *Kim* his marriage had lost much of its original lustre, they had had three children. Two died early, one of pneumonia at the age of seven and his only son in action during the First World War. But Kipling was a man of seemingly endless – perhaps restless – energy and enthusiasm, travelling everywhere, lending support to causes he valued, and writing almost constantly: children's stories, journalism, fables, novels, short stories and poetry, all in a much-underrated variety of styles, as well as regimental histories, speeches and, finally, a rather limited autobiography, published in 1937, the year after his death.

Kipling has to some extent been the victim of revisionist history, which has overwhelmed the artistry and integrity of his work with the context in which it was written. The re-examination itself is not only right, it is essential – works must be reassessed by each new generation of readers – and there is no doubt that Kipling carried all the conventional beliefs about Empire into his art. But he is greater than that. He is far more sympathetic and imaginative than a bullish Imperialist – he is complex, ironic, funny, sympathetic, with a gift for imagining another's voice. And although *Kim* is by no means an autobiography, it carries with it all this complexity, and in it, Rudyard Kipling manages a sort of revision of himself. The result is a masterpiece of observation and invention.

Notes by Roy McMillan

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