



Beyond Borders - Gelya's Path from Kyzylkum* to Award-Winning Author

LARA GELYA

A Life Shaped by Gladiolus Hues and Literary Legends

Author Lara Gelya, a literary voyager whose narratives reflect a kaleidoscope of life experiences, surrounded by the vivid hues reminiscent of the gladiolus blooms that colored her childhood memories.

In the colourful tapestry of the literary world, certain authors bring unique hues that stem from their extraordinary life experiences. Lara Gelya, an award-winning author, carries a narrative as vibrant as the myriad shades of the gladiolus flowers she fondly recalls from her childhood in Ukraine. Her journey spans continents, professions, and languages, weaving a tale that resonates with resilience, curiosity, and an unwavering love for storytelling.

Born amidst the landscapes of Ukraine, Lara's life traversed the

expanse of the Kyzylkum Desert in Uzbekistan before finding a home in the United States. Her narrative, a testament to perseverance and reinvention, echoes the spirit of exploration ingrained in her thorough years spent amid geological expeditions and diverse cultural landscapes.

The beauty of Lara's literary odyssey lies not only in her award-winning book, "Camel from Kyzylkum," but in the rich tapestry of influences that shaped her as both a person and a writer. In her conversation with The Reader's House, Lara delves into

her early love affair with books, paying homage to Russian literary giants like Pasternak and Chekhov, alongside American luminaries such as Hemingway and Poe.

Her journey into the English language mirrors a symphony, where the melody gradually unfolds over a decade, allowing her to discern the nuanced cadences that echo through different narratives. Gelya's penchant for historical fiction and classics, coupled with her appreciation for memoirs and personal development books, sheds light on the diverse reservoir of inspiration that fuels her creativity.

Amidst the interview's pages, Lara invites readers into cherished memories of her childhood, where the hues of gladiolus blossoms and the impactful narratives of early readings left indelible imprints on her soul. Her narrative encapsula-

tes not just a literary journey, but a tapestry woven with sensitivity, trustworthiness, and an unyielding commitment to integrity—traits rooted in her character from the very beginning.

As Gelya candidly shares her challenges in penning her memoir in a language acquired later in life, she exemplifies the essence of perseverance and dedication that defines her work. Her admiration for fictional characters, particularly Claire Randall from "Outlander," offers a glimpse into her appreciation for resilient, independent spirits who refuse to be confined by societal norms.

In Lara Gelya's narrative, readers will discover more than an author—they will encounter a storyteller whose life experiences serve as both ink and parchment, etching tales of resilience, transformation, and a deep love for the written

word. Join us as we delve into the intricate world of Lara Gelya, a literary voyager whose narratives mirror the kaleidoscope of human experiences.

Born in Ukraine and going to school there, Lara Gelya went on for the next 20 years to the Kyzylkum Desert of the Republic of Uzbekistan, working at geological sites and expeditions of the Mining Industry. At that time Ukraine and Uzbekistan were parts of one country—the Soviet Union.

In 1989 Lara left the Soviet Union, lived in Austria and Italy before she, at last, found her way to the United States in 1990. Starting her life from ground zero again, and trying on so many hats, she was able to make a lengthy professional career that led to her eventual retirement on the shores of sunny Florida.

In September of 2022 Lara became an award-winning author as her book, *Camel from Kyzylkum*, was awarded with the Literary Titan Gold Book Award.

When she isn't writing or making her videos and pictures, Lara spends most of her time reading, gardening, cooking, traveling the world, wandering through nature, or catching her favorite shows.

What kind of reader were you as a child?

I have loved books from my very early years. Started by reading books by Korney Chukovsky, Samuil Marshak, Agniya Barto,

Award-winning author Lara Gelya's interview unveils her vibrant life journey from Ukraine to the United States, influenced by a love for literature, resilience, and a rich tapestry of experiences.

Olga Perovskaya, later Lev Kassil, Anton Chekhov, and many others.

Who are your favorite writers? Are there any who aren't as widely known as they should be, whom you'd recommend in particular?

Boris Pasternak, Konstantin Paustovsky, Ivan Turgenev, Anton Chekhov, Aleksandr Pushkin, to name a few, are among my favorites in Russian literature; Vladimir Nabokov, Russian-American novelist, poet, translator, whom I discovered after I came to the USA. Among American writers, my favorites are Jack London, Ernest Hemingway, Edgar Poe, Maya Angelou, and many more. Currently, I'm reading "A Land Remembered", a novel by Patrick D. Smith, the most outstanding Florida historical novel. I'm not sure if it is widely known, but I can definitely recommend it to readers who love historical novels.

What moves you most in a work of literature?

Language is always the living soul of a narrative, it is like a piece of music specific to the writer's voice. When I came to the USA in 1990, I did not know any English. It took me about 10 years before I really started to hear and feel the music of the language in different books and distinguish my likes and dislikes when reading books written in English.

What genres do you especially enjoy reading?

My favorites are historical fiction and classics. I also like memoirs, short stories, inspirational books, and non-fiction books about personal development.

What books and authors have impacted your writing career?

Writers are influenced by what they see, hear, and read. Most writers were and are avid readers. As a result, the works of other writers influence a writer. As I wrote a memoir of my life journey I just wanted to tell the World my untold story inside of me.

What is a childhood memory that makes you smile?

I was born in Ukraine in the city of Vinnitsa, which is southwest of Kiev, the capital of Ukraine. In my earlier years, I had a girlfriend, named Natasha. Natasha lived with her parents and a little sister across the street from us. Natasha and I played together. Her father was a teacher at the university and in his free time he liked to grow gladiolus flowers in his little yard. Every time I was visiting them during the summer days, he proudly showed me his little garden, explaining all the interesting characteristics of different types of gladiolus plants. Even now I can close my eyes and picture his little garden with a rainbow of gorgeous colors, ranging from white, yellow, pink and lavender, to rose, burgundy, purple, and even black. My love to have flowers around my house comes from that time of my childhood.

Do you remember the first story you ever read and the impact it had on you?

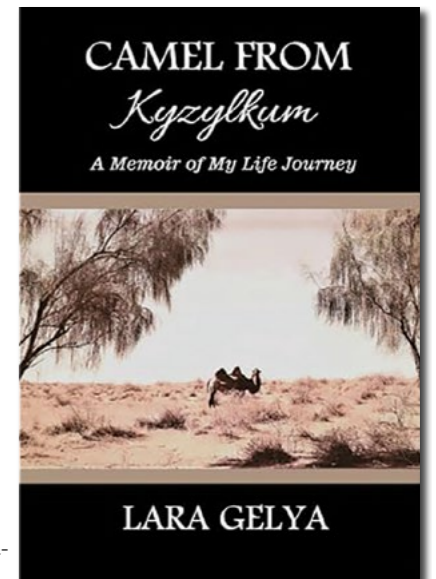
The greatest impact on me in my earlier years was from the novel "Wild Dog Dingo or the Tale of the First Love" written by Ruvim Frayerman. This book and the film shot in 1962 (in the Soviet Union), are still among my favorites.

As you grew older, what are the most important traits from your childhood that you held onto?

I think my personality is characterized by a focus on internal feelings rather than on external sources of stimulation. I'm a very sensitive person. Trustworthiness, honesty, integrity, and loyalty always were and still are very important traits for me.

What attributes make one a great writer?

Attention to detail. Great writers are observers, always taking men-



tal notes and noting subtle changes around them.

What challenges did you face while writing your first memoir?

English is my second language. I started to learn it when I was 40 years old and I am still learning it every day. I think everyone can imagine that it was not easy for me to write a book in English.

If you had the power to bring any fictional character from any book or movie or TV series to life, who would it be and why?

Claire Randall/Fraser from *Outlander*, played by Caitriona Mary Balfe, an Irish actress, producer, and former fashion model. Claire is independent, headstrong, and cool under pressure. She doesn't take orders well, and she doesn't keep quiet. And I love how Jamie calls her with a term of endearment: Sassenach. It means a foreigner. And more specifically, it's a less-than-kind Gaelic word for an English person. But Claire has no idea that it's a derogatory term, she knows Jamie's plainly not trying to insult her. He's just pointing out that she's strange. After we watched "Outlander", my husband calls me Sassenach too.

*Kyzylkum is a large desert region in Central Asia, spanning across Kazakhstan, Uzbekistan, and Turkmenistan. The name "Kyzylkum" translates to "Red Sand" in Turkic languages, describing the reddish tint of the sand found in this desert. It's one of the largest deserts in the region, characterized by its arid landscape and nomadic settlements.