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## Best of Times, Worst of Times: Contemporary American Short Stories from the New Gilded Age

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Late twentieth and early twenty-first century America has been labeled as “The New Gilded Age,” a phrase that embodies the glitz and glamour of one of the wealthiest countries in the world but also suggests the greed, corruption, and inequalities teeming just below the surface. Identifying some of the sparkling moments of humanity interwoven between the moments of crisis, *Best of Times, Worst of Times* features short stories by such renowned writers as Junot Diaz, George Saunders, Jhumpa Lahiri, Tobias Wolff, and many others, whose distinctive authorial voices lend urgency and a sense of heightened awareness to the modern moment. Commenting on and making sense of what is going on in America today, fractured as it is by two ongoing wars, the aftermath of 9/11, Hurricane Katrina, and the worst economic collapse since the Great Depression, these stories speak to some of the most germane issues confronting America today, from race relations, immigration, and social class to gender issues, Iraq, and imperialism. These expertly culled, emotionally powerful stories provide the perfect mirror with which to examine the real state of the union.



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### Editorial Review

#### Review

"Topical yet timeless, this collection speaks tellingly and provocatively to issues prevalent in today's world and to readers struggling to make sense of these volatile times. The expansive stories are compelling and necessary, powerful and empathetic; they reveal in equal measure the daunting possibilities, stunning successes, and abysmal failures along side the ordinary, the contradictory, and the hopeful, all at play within the imaginative realm of visionary and expert short story writers who understand the complexities of contemporary life. They have produced a much-needed, wide-ranging, valuable, and unique collection."- Thadious M. Davis, University of Pennsylvania

"*Best of Times, Worst of Times* is particularly powerful in the range of social and political issues it addresses through fiction; it's a collection designed to provoke critical reading, discussion and writing. The editors provide a broad representation of current fiction from familiar names as well as up-to-the-minute offerings from new American writers; in the process, they illustrate the extraordinary range of stylistic practices that shape contemporary fiction."-Amy Tucker, author of *The Illustration of the Master: Henry James and the Magazine Revolution*

"Stories by today's most captivating writers - Jhumpa Lahiri, Susan Straight, ZZ Packer, Aimee Bender and more - focus a personal lens on race relations, gender issues, Hurricane Katrina and our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan."  
-Ms. Magazine

#### About the Author

**Wendy Martin** is Vice-Provost and George and Ronya Kozmetsky Professor of Transdisciplinary Studies and Professor of American Literature and American Studies at Claremont Graduate University. She is the author and editor of numerous books, including *The Cambridge Introduction to Emily Dickinson* (2007), *We Are The Stories We Tell* (1990), *More Stories We Tell* (2004), and *The Art of the Short Story* (2006).

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