Nicholas Lemann was born, raised and educated in New Orleans. He began his journalism career as a 17-year-old writer for an alternative weekly newspaper there, the *Vieux Carre Courier*. He graduated magna cum laude from Harvard College in 1976, where he concentrated in American History and Literature and was President of the *Harvard Crimson*. After graduation he worked at *The Washington Monthly*, as an associate editor and then managing editor; at *Texas Monthly*, as an associate editor and then executive editor; at *The Washington Post*, as a member of the national staff; at *The Atlantic Monthly*, as national correspondent; and at *The New Yorker*, as staff writer and then Washington Correspondent. On September 1, 2003, he became dean of the Graduate School of Journalism at Columbia University, at the end of a process of re-examination of the school's mission conducted by a national task force convened by the university's President, Lee C. Bollinger.

Lemann has published five books, most recently *Redemption: The Last Battle of the Civil War* (2006); *The Big Test: The Secret History of the American Meritocracy* (1999), which helped lead to a major reform of the SAT; and *The Promised Land: The Great Black Migration and How It Changed America* (1991), which won several book prizes. He has written widely for such publications as *The New York Times*, *The New York Review of Books*, *The New Republic*, *Slate*, and *American Heritage*; worked in documentary television with Blackside, Inc., *Frontline*, the Discovery Channel, and the BBC; and lectured at many universities. Lemann continues to write for *The New Yorker*, and serves on the boards of directors of the Authors Guild, the Center for the Humanities at the City University of New York Graduate Center, and the Society of American Historians, and is a member of the New York Institute for the Humanities. He lives in Pelham, New York with his wife, Judith Shulevitz, a critic and author, and four children.