



And the mountains echoed

By Khaled Hosseini
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Genre & subject
Family fiction
Afghanistan, fiction

Synopsis

And the Mountains Echoed is a deeply moving novel about how we love, how we take care of one another and how the choices we make resonate through history. A multi-generational family story revolving around brothers and sisters, it explores the ways in which they love, wound, betray, honour and sacrifice for each other.

With profound wisdom, depth, insight and compassion - and moving from Kabul, to Paris, to San Francisco, to the Greek island of Tinos - Hosseini writes about the bonds that define us and shape our lives, the ways that we help our loved ones in need and how we are often surprised by the people closest to us.

Author biography

Khaled Hosseini, born in 1965 is an Afghan-born American novelist and physician. After graduating from college, he worked as a doctor in California, an occupation that he likens to "an arranged marriage" for him.

He has published three novels, most notably his 2003 debut *The Kite Runner*, all of which are at least partially set in Afghanistan and feature an Afghan as the protagonist.

Following the success of *The Kite Runner*, Khaled decided to stop practicing medicine and became a full-time writer.

Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan. His father worked as a diplomat, and when Hosseini was 11 years old, the family moved to France; four years later, they applied for asylum in the United States, where he later became a citizen. Hosseini did not return to Afghanistan until 2003 at the age of 38, where he "felt like a tourist in [his] own country"

Discussion starters

- *And the Mountains Echoed* introduces us to Saboor and his children Abdullah and Pari, and the shocking, heartbreaking event that divides them. From there, the book branches off to include multiple other characters and storylines before circling back to Abdullah and Pari. How do each of the other characters relate back to the original story? What themes is the author exploring by having these stories counterpoint one another?
- The novel begins with a tale of extraordinary sacrifice that has ramifications through generations of families. What do you think of Saboor's decision to let the adoption

take place? How are Nila and Nabi implicated in Saboor's decision? What do you think of their motives? Who do you think is the most pure or best intended of the three adults? Ultimately, do you think Pari would have had a happier life if she had stayed with her birth family?

- "Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and right-doing, / there is a field. I'll meet you there." The author chose this thirteenth-century Rumi poem as the epigraph for the book. Discuss the novel in light of this poem. What do you think he is saying about right-doing and wrongdoing in the lives of his characters, or in the world?
- The book raises many deep questions about the wavering line between right and wrong, and whether it is possible to be purely "good"—or purely "bad." What do you think after reading the novel: Are good intentions enough to create good deeds? Can positive actions come from selfish motivations? Can bad come from positive intent? How do you think this novel would define a good person?
- The overlapping relationships of the different characters are complex and reflective of real life. Discuss the connections between the different characters, how they are made, grow, and are sustained. Consider all the ways in which an event in one of the families in the book can resonate in the lives of so many other characters. Can you name some examples?
- Saboor's bedtime story to his children opens the book. To what degree does this story help justify Saboor's heart-wrenching act in the next chapter? In what ways do other characters in the novel use storytelling to help justify or interpret their own actions? Think about your own experiences. In what ways do you use stories to explain your own past?
- The old oak tree in Shadbagh plays an important role for many different characters (Parwana, Masooma, Saboor, Abdullah, and Pari) during its life. What is its significance in the story? What do its branches represent? Why do you think Saboor cuts it down? How does its stump come back as an important landmark later on?
- *And the Mountains Echoed* begins in Afghanistan, moves to Europe and Greece, and ends in California, gradually widening its perspective. What do you think the author was trying to accomplish by including so many different settings and nationalities?
- Discuss the title, *And the Mountains Echoed*, and why you think it was chosen. Can you find examples of echoes or recurrences in the plot? In the structure of the storytelling?

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