

And the Mountains Echoed by Khaled Hosseini

As the teardrops that I cried for the last forty pages of this book dry themselves, I sit here thinking about how this beautiful book unfolded before me. Again, I am impressed by the author's ability to create such a rich story that transcends time and then he brings it all back together in an effortless fashion.

This novel begins and ends with the story of a brother and a sister whose love for one another is palpable throughout the book. Because of these two characters we are introduced to other amazing characters through the time they are apart. There is so much hope, love and understanding within them all and I think that the symbolism of these characters is that relationships, gender, social status and birth do not define us, but we are defined by the love rooted within us and the bonds we feel with other humans. Several of the "love" relationships that the author creates are not necessarily bound by blood. They transcend blood and are bound by empathy and good nature.

The relationship between Abdullah and Pari is familial but is broken by their own family for good intentions and in desperate measures. Uncle Nabi and their father think they are doing what is best for their family: "The finger cut, to save the hand (page 48)." This proverb seems harsh but can be seen as the necessary evil to survival.

The relationship between Nabi's twin sisters is echoed throughout the book, most notably Nabi and Mr. Wahdati's relationship, Thalia's relationship with Markos' mama, and in younger Pari's relationship with her father. It was as though the author was trying to convey that blood isn't always thicker than water. That love can exist between two people based on shared emotions and experiences. Sometimes our blood relatives are not our most trusted or caring people in our lives.

I feel that the storyline of paralleling the Afghan wars and the tragedies in the characters' lives was so emotional and mirrored the eras and changes happening within the country and within these families. War affects us all in small ways and in big ways. Sometimes they are obvious and sometimes unnoticed. The war within these families is emotional, the struggle is financial and it all takes its toll on the characters.

This book follows in the footsteps of its two predecessors. Hosseini does a gorgeous job of depicting the scenery and of depicting the weight of love we feel for the people in our lives. His ability to peel back all of the layers of these characters and describe the human experience is a beautiful ability to describe us all as caring beings. We have our faults but underneath we are all doing our best to be good people. Maybe we are all caregivers in our own way.

My favorite quote from this book: "They tell me I must wade into waters, where I will soon drown. Before I march in, I leave this on the shore for you. I pray you find it, sister, so you will know what was in my heart as I went under."

What did you think of the story Baba tells in the beginning of the book? Is it the foreshadowing of what is to come?

Was the sale of Pari to the Wahdati's beneficial? Who did it benefit most? Who did it hurt most? Was it a financial or emotional gain?

What do you feel was the significance of the caregiver relationships throughout the novel?

How did the deaths of Masooma by Parwana and the death of Mr. Wahdati by Nabi affect you? Did you feel they were necessary? Was it fair of Masooma and Wahdati to ask their caregivers to do what they did? Was it a gracious act of love?

What did you think when Nila told Nabi: "It was you, Nabi. It was always you. Didn't you know (page 113)"? Were you surprised by the box of drawings? How did you feel about Nabi's reaction to finding the box?

In Nabi's letter to Markos, he says: "Please tell her [Pari], tell her that I cannot know the myriad consequences of what I set into motion. Tell her I took solace only in hope (page 131)." Is this his apology or his justification? How would he feel if he was able to meet her at the end?

Abdullah always made excuses as to why the younger Pari couldn't do things with her friends, go to parties or go off to college, why do you think he restricted her? Was it religious or selfish?

At the end, Abdullah leaves a package for Pari to open, which the younger Pari delivers to her, what did you think he had left her?

Pari says: "I don't know what this feather means, the story of it, but I know it means he was thinking of me. For all these years. He remembered me (page 401)." Do you remember the meaning of the feathers?

What is the meaning of the title "And the Mountains Echoed"?