

And the Mountain Echoed

Khaled Hosseini

Author Background

- Birth—March 04, 1965
- Where—Kabul, Afghanistan
- Education—B.S., Santa Clara University; M.D., University of California, San Diego School of Medicine
- Currently—lives in northern California

Khaled Hosseini was born in Kabul, Afghanistan, in 1965. His father was a diplomat with the Afghan Foreign Ministry and his mother taught Farsi and History at a large high school in Kabul. In 1970, the Foreign Ministry sent his family to Tehran, where his father worked for the Afghan embassy. They lived in Tehran until 1973, at which point they returned to Kabul.

In July of 1973, on the night Hosseini's youngest brother was born, the Afghan king, Zahir Shah, was overthrown in a bloodless coup by the king's cousin, Daoud Khan. At the time, Hosseini was in fourth grade and was already drawn to poetry and prose; he read a great deal of Persian poetry as well as Farsi translations of novels ranging from *Alice in Wonderland* to Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer series.

In 1976, the Afghan Foreign Ministry once again relocated the Hosseini family, this time to Paris. They were ready to return to Kabul in 1980, but by then Afghanistan had already witnessed a bloody communist coup and the invasion of the Soviet army. The Hosseinis sought and were granted political asylum in the United States. In September of 1980, Hosseini's family moved to San Jose, California. They lived on welfare and food stamps for a short while, as they had lost all of their property in Afghanistan. His father took multiple jobs and managed to get his family off welfare. Hosseini graduated from high school in 1984 and enrolled at Santa Clara University where he earned a bachelor's degree in Biology in 1988. The following year, he entered the University of California-San Diego's School of Medicine, where he earned a Medical Degree in 1993. He completed his residency at Cedars-Sinai Hospital in Los Angeles and began practicing Internal Medicine in 1996. His first love, however, has always been writing.

In 2003, Hosseini published *The Kite Runner*, which became a runaway bestseller and film in 2007. He followed up with his second novel, *A Thousand Splendid Suns* in 2007, also a bestseller. His third novel, *And the Mountains Echoed*, was published in 2013.

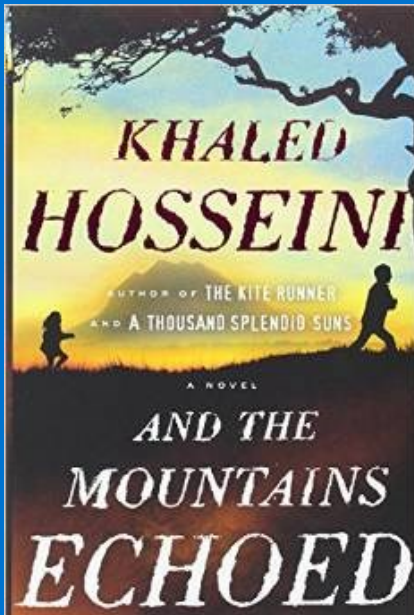
Hosseini has vivid, and fond, memories of peaceful pre-Soviet era Afghanistan, as well as of his personal experiences with Afghan Hazaras. One Hazara in particular was a thirty-year-old man named Hossein Khan, who worked for the Hosseinis when they were living in Iran. When Hosseini was in the third grade, he taught Khan to read and write. Though his relationship with Hossein Khan was brief and rather formal, Hosseini always remembered the fondness that developed between them.

In 2006, Hosseini was named a goodwill envoy to the UNHCR, The United Nations Refugee Agency.

(Adapted from the publisher.)

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Book Summary

And the Mountains Echoed

Khaled Hosseini, 2013

Penguin Group USA

416 pp.

ISBN-13: 9781594631764

Khaled Hosseini, the #1 *New York Times* bestselling author of *The Kite Runner* and *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, has written a new novel about how we love, how we take care of one another, and how the choices we make resonate through generations.

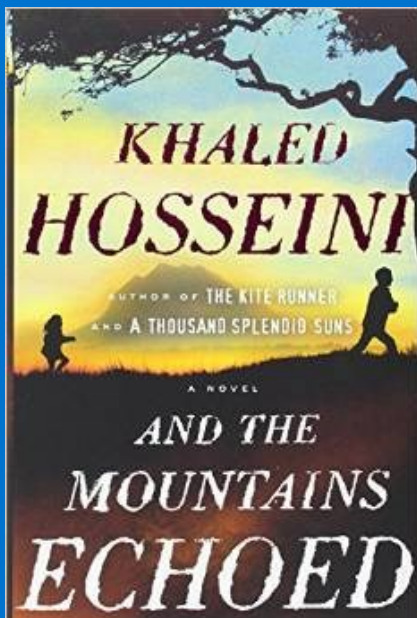
In this tale revolving around not just parents and children but brothers and sisters, cousins and caretakers, Hosseini explores the many ways in which families nurture, wound, betray, honor, and sacrifice for one another; and how often we are surprised by the actions of those closest to us, at the times that matter most.

Following its characters and the ramifications of their lives and choices and loves around the globe—from Kabul to Paris to San Francisco to the Greek island of Tinos—the story expands gradually outward, becoming more emotionally complex and powerful with each turning page.

(From the publisher.)

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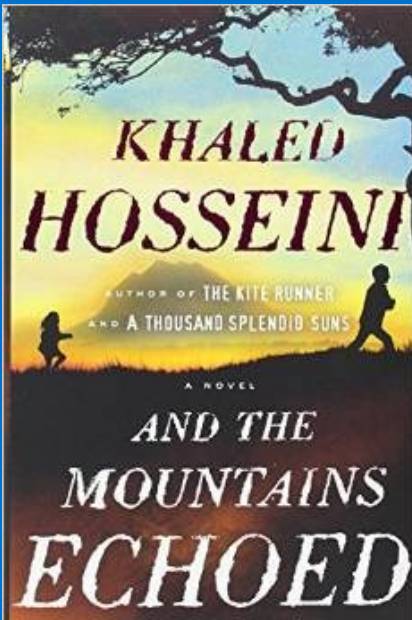


Discussion Questions

1. *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?
2. 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?
3. Think of other sacrifices that are made throughout the book. Are there certain choices that are easier than others? Is Saboor's sacrifice when he allows Pari to be adopted easier or more difficult than Parwana's sacrifice of her sister? How are they similar and how are they different? Who else makes sacrifices in the book? What do you think the author is saying about the nature of the decisions we make in our lives and the ways in which they affect others?
4. "Out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing, / 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 rightdoing and wrongdoing in the lives of his characters, or in the world?
5. 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? How would you define one?
6. Discuss the question of wrongdoing and rightdoing in the context of the different characters and their major dilemmas in the book : Saboor and his daughter Pari; Parwana and her sister, Masooma; the expats, Idris and Timur, and the injured girl, Rosh; Adel, his warlord father, and their interactions with Gholam and his father (and Abdullah's half brother), Iqbal; Thalia and her mother. Do any of them regret the things they have done? What impact does it have on them?
7. 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?
8. 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?

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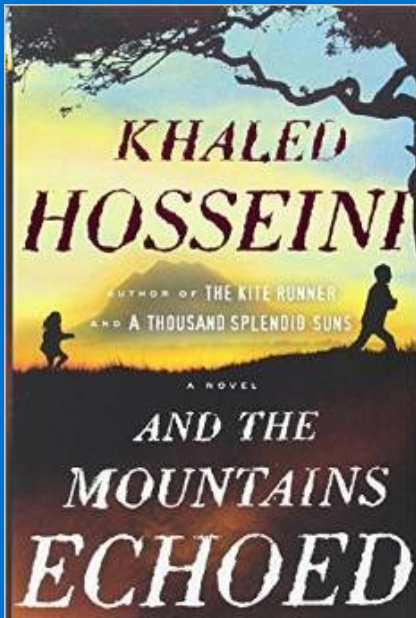


Discussion Questions (continued)

9. Two homes form twin focal points for the novel: the family home of Saboor, Abdullah, and Pari—and later Iqbal and Gholam—in Shadbagh; and the grand house initially owned by Suleiman in Kabul. Compare the homes and the roles they play in the novel. Who has claims to each house? What are those claims based on? How do the questions of ownership complicate how the characters relate to one another?
10. 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?
11. In addition to all of the important family relationships in the book, there are also many nongenetic bonds between characters, some of them just as strong. Discuss some of these specific relationships and what needs they fill. What are the differences between these family and nonfamily bonds? What do you think the author is trying to say about the presence of these relationships in our lives?
12. *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? What elements of the characters' different experiences would you say are universal? Do you think the characters themselves would see it that way?
13. 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?
(Questions issued by publisher.)

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Reviews

Hosseini's third novel (after *A Thousand Splendid Suns*) follows a close-knit but oft-separated Afghan family through love, wars, and losses more painful than death. The story opens in 1952 in the village of Shadbagh, outside of Kabul, as a laborer, Kaboor, relates a haunting parable of triumph and loss to his son, Abdullah. The novel's core, however, is the sale for adoption of the Kaboor's three-year-old daughter, Pari, to the wealthy poet Nila Wahdati and her husband, Suleiman, by Pari's step-uncle Nabi. The split is particularly difficult for Abdullah, who took care of his sister after their mother's death. Once Suleiman has a stroke, Nila leaves him to Nabi's care and takes Pari to live in Paris. Much later, during the U.S. occupation, the dying Nabi makes Markos, a Greek plastic surgeon now renting the Wahdati house, promise to find Pari and give her a letter containing the truth. The beautiful writing, full of universal truths of loss and identity, makes each section a jewel, even if the bigger picture, which eventually expands to include Pari's life in France, sometimes feels disjointed. Still, Hosseini's eye for detail and emotional geography makes this a haunting read.

Publishers Weekly

This bittersweet family saga spans six decades and transports readers from Afghanistan to France, Greece, and the United States. Hosseini weaves a gorgeous tapestry of disparate characters joined by threads of blood and fate.... Each character tells his or her version of the same story of selfishness and selflessness, acceptance and forgiveness, but most important, of love in all its complex iterations. *Verdict:* In this uplifting and deeply satisfying book, Hosseini displays an optimism not so obvious in his previous works. Readers will be clamoring for it. — Sally Bissell, *Lee Cty. Lib. Syst., Estero, FL*

Library Journal

After two stellar novels set (mostly) in Kabul, Afghanistan, Hosseini's third tacks among Afghanistan, California, France and Greece to explore the effect of the Afghan diaspora on identity.

It begins powerfully in 1952. Saboor is a dirt-poor day laborer in a village two days walk from Kabul. His first wife died giving birth to their daughter Pari, who's now 4 and has been raised lovingly by her brother, 10-year-old Abdullah; two peas in a pod, but "leftovers" in the eyes of Parwana, Saboor's second wife. Saboor's brother-in-law Nabi is a cook/chauffeur for a wealthy, childless couple in Kabul; he helps arrange the sale of Pari to the couple, breaking Abdullah's heart. The drama does nothing to prepare us for the coming leaps in time and place. Nabi's own story comes next in a posthumous tell-all letter (creaky device) to Markos, the Greek plastic surgeon who occupies the Kabul house from 2002 onwards. Nabi confesses his guilt in facilitating the sale of Pari and describes the adoptive couple: his boss Suleiman, a gay man secretly in love with him, and his wife, Nila, a half-French poet who high-tails it to France with Pari after Suleiman has a stroke. There follow the stories of mother and daughter in Paris, Markos' childhood in Greece (an irrelevance), the return to Kabul of expat cousins from California and the Afghan warlord who stole the old village. Missing is the viselike tension of the earlier novels. It's true that betrayal is a constant theme, as it was in *The Kite Runner*, but it doesn't work as a glue. And identity? Hosseini struggles to convince us that Pari becomes a well-integrated Frenchwoman.

The stories spill from Hosseini's bountiful imagination, but they compete against each other, denying the novel a catalyst; the result is a bloated, unwieldy work.

Kirkus Reviews