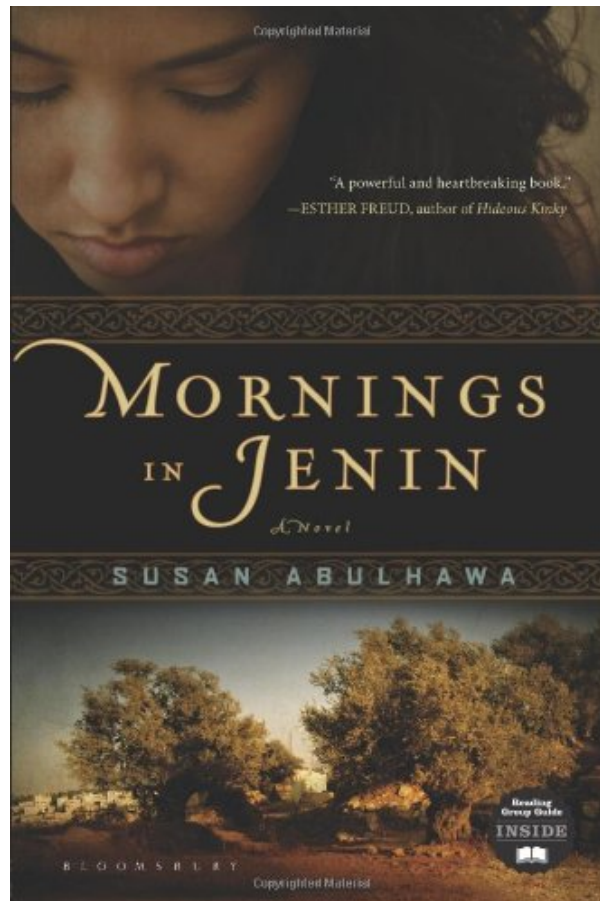
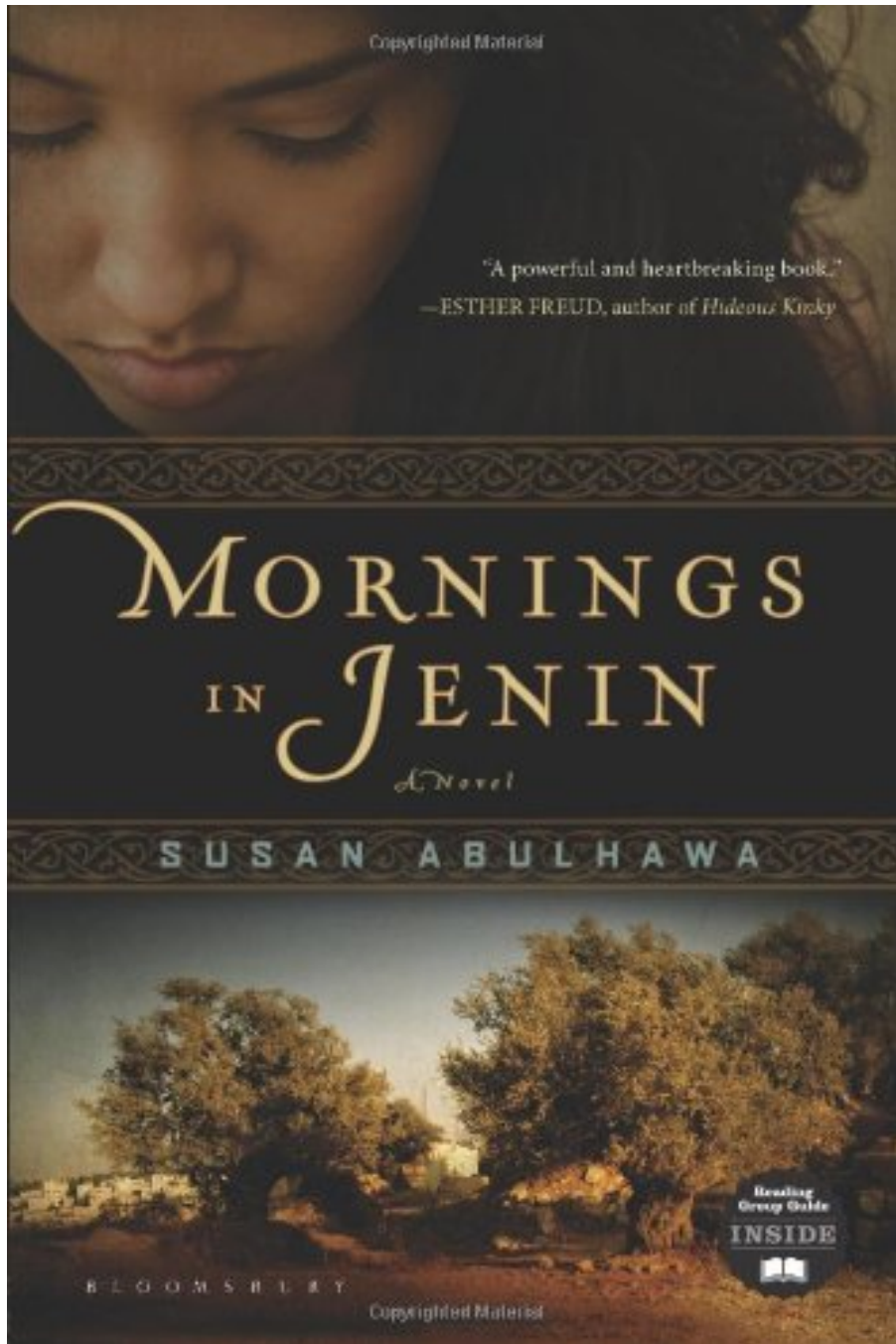


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The novel's voice is that of Amal, the granddaughter of the old village patriarch, a bright, sensitive girl who makes it out of the camps, only to return years later, to marry and bear a child. Through her eyes, with her evolving vision, we get the story of her brothers, one who is kidnapped to be raised Jewish, one who will end with bombs strapped to his middle. But of the many interwoven stories, stretching backward and forward in time, none is more important than Amal's own. Her story is one of love and loss, of childhood and marriage and parenthood, and finally the need to share her history with her daughter, to preserve the greatest love she has.

Set against one of the twentieth century's most intractable political conflicts, Mornings in Jenin is a deeply human novel - a novel of history, identity, friendship, love, terrorism, surrender, courage, and hope. Its power forces us to take a fresh look at one of the defining conflicts of our lifetimes.

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- 352 pages

Features

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Hard to take but harder to put down

By S. Nichols

What I write pales in comparison to what you will find in the writing style and story within the pages of this book. If I could adequately describe how this book made me feel, I still would not do the book justice.

Mornings in Jenin is the story of four generations of Palestinians living through the birth of Israel and the never ending war that follows. The story centers on Amal, a woman who is born in a refugee camp. Her story is one of loss, love and redemption.

I asked to review this particular book because I have always questioned the war between Israel and Palestine. I am torn between understanding the need for a permanent homeland after living through the horrors of WW2 and the way in which the country of Israel was settled. When I was younger I would ask my elders to explain the actions of the two nations but try as they might, none could truly explain both sides. The issue of the two nations within one setting is very polarizing. I would hear about the Palestine terrorist but not the people. As a result I know little about the human story of Palestinians and thought this book may offer some insight into their world.

Abulhawa's writing style is nothing short of amazing. Though this book is heartbreaking at every turn Abulhawa's words sing out. Yes, they sing out and you as a reader are caught up in her song. Never mind that at times the pain becomes unbearable, the song of her words compel you the reader to stay with her. A little past half way I wanted to give up; there was too much death and heartache, but I stuck with it as the story needed to be told. As much as it hurt to hear it, this story does need to be told. We need to hear about the aftermaths of war. Not because we need to take one side or the other, but because we should pause before we pick a side. Abulhawa shows us that war scorches the lives of those who lay in the path of triumph. No one really wins in war expect death and pain as Abulhawa so vividly tells us.

After finishing the book I sat for a moment trying to collect my thoughts. A part of me disliked having to

deal with the emotions and questions that washed over me while another part was so taken by the character and lives in Mornings in Jenin I was almost sad to have come to the end of the tale. For a few moments I was not sure if I could recommend this book or not as it is so full of loss but it dawned on me that one of the reasons I kept reading was because it opened my eyes to what real sadness and pain are. Sometimes we Americans get so caught up in our daily drama we tend to forget we are blessed, even when we are struggling. Mornings in Jenin will make you think, question and maybe cry. It is a testament to a people that before now had no voice. I highly recommend this book.

79 of 89 people found the following review helpful.

A Must Read

By Yousef Munayyer

Mornings in Jenin, by Susan Abulhawa, is the story of one Palestinian family over four generations. It can be argued, however, that it is also a story about any and every Palestinian family. The novel begins in the picturesque village of Ein Hod in the north of Palestine. The Abulheja family leads the simple life that most Palestinian farmers led before their tragic dispossession in 1948. Love was plentiful in Ein Hod. Love for life, for family, for God, and for the land. This was the essence of a farming society for generation upon generation.

The Abulhejas and their countrymen are forced out of their villages and homes only to find refuge in foreign towns and lands. They find themselves in a refugee camp in Jenin, their lives totally turned upside-down after losing everything they knew in their simple but beautiful, Palestinian village.

As they struggle in the refugee camp, in the early period after their exile, olive harvest season approaches. Haj Yehya, the family's patriarch, sneaks across the armistice line to tend to his olive groves despite the threat of death from an Israeli bullet. When he returns to the camp in Jenin where his family anxiously waits, he brings them the fruits of his labor, and the labor of generations before him, plucked from their trees in their village. Nothing could stop this old man from returning to his village, but on his next trip, he never made it back to Jenin.

That was the last time any Abulheja attempted to return, but the dreams of return only grew stronger. Amal, with a long vowel (a name meaning "hopes" in Arabic), was born in the refugee camp of Jenin to Haj Yehya's son Hasan. Her older brother, Yousef, spent his early years in Ein Hod before the Nakba. Another older brother, Ismael, was taken from his mother's arms during the exodus from Ein Hod. It would be through Amal's eyes, however, that the family's story is told.

Susan Abulhawa's masterful writing is delightful to read. She writes with an element of metaphor, undoubtedly owing its origins to the Arabic language, which brings color and feeling to every page of this novel. The characters are well-developed and one cannot help but grow attached to them. After each tragedy, be it 1948, 1967, and 1982, a new generation of the family is born, providing hope not only for the characters, but also for the reader who will inevitably experience a sense of depression in parts of the book.

Amal is born into refugee life. She grows up in the shadow of a mother that was devastated by the loss of a child. In 1967, Amal experiences 6 days of horror in a hole in the ground that will forever change her family's life. The father that read poetry to her in the early hours of the morning, the scenes that lend the book its title, is never seen again. Her mother slips into dementia, and her brother Yousef will soon leave to join the resistance.

She grows up away from Jenin, and seeks an education in the United States. Her father's wish was that she be educated and a scholarship makes this possible. In her ghorba (life away from home) Amal experiences

western life and the contradictions it poses for Palestinians like herself. She will eventually travel to a refugee camp in Lebanon to reconnect with her brother. In Lebanon, she remembers her past, her love for the land and her family, and starts a family of her own. And just as stability seems to be coming back to her life, anchored by the cornerstone of family, tragedy strikes again. The massacres at Sabra and Shatila will devastate the Abulhejas in 1982, just as 1967 devastated them in Jenin, just as 1948 devastated them in Ein Hod.

Amal raises her daughter, Sara, as a single mother. She wants her to have nothing to do with Palestine, politics, and the wars that scared Amal literally and figuratively for decades. But a twist of fate, which brings Amal's long-lost brother back into her life, sparks an interest in Sara who is now old enough to start hearing about the secrets of her mother's past.

Ultimately it will be Sara, and her generation, which will carry the hopes of Palestine and Palestinians after Amal is gone.

Mornings in Jenin is a must read. It is sure to be an eye opening experience for those who know little about Palestine and an eye-watering experience for those who do. Abulhawa's style is magnificent, descriptive and passionate. While the story is fictional, it is built on entirely plausible circumstances and entirely factual events and places.

Many have waited for a literary contribution capable of explaining the Palestinian experience to the West. The wait is over, Mornings in Jenin is it.

Yousef Munayyer is Executive Director of the Palestine Center. This book review may be used without permission but with proper attribution to the Center.

106 of 127 people found the following review helpful.

Heavy.

By Crease in the Page

I told my high-school English class about a wedding I had been to over the weekend. It was a joyful wedding, as weddings should be, but there was also deep sorrow over the family members who couldn't be there; it was a wedding of some refugee friends of mine whose family members had been killed overseas in a clash between Christians and Muslims. I told my students that I was still feeling emotional over the tears of my friends. Tarek, one of my students, raised his hand and asked whether it was a Christian or Muslim wedding. Knowing he was Palestinian, I hoped to help him see that both sides suffer in war, so I told him: "It was a Christian wedding." He cheered about their loss and high-fived another boy in the class who was also Muslim. I suppose I gave the wrong answer. I should have said, "It was a human wedding." That was in the year 2000. To this day I have wanted to understand more about how and why Tarek and others could be so angry toward Americans, Jews, and Christians. So I read this book.

I will say in the author's favor that she had a more balanced perspective than Tarek had. Although she is clearly angry and describes Jewish people as thieves, murderers, and terrorists, she also includes a few Jewish characters who are kind and compassionate. She seeks to understand why Jewish people have taken her land, and concludes that it was because they themselves had been mistreated and without a home; she attempts to have a merciful, balanced perspective. But she is still overtly angry, and she definitely led me as the reader to understand why she is so angry.

It is truly grotesque that I, an educated 34-year-old American citizen, who has even spent 6 years overseas, had never stopped to consider WHY Palestinians are angry with Israel and America. All I knew was that we

Americans were nice people who had helped the Jewish people return to their homeland. Pretty ignorant. I guess our textbooks are still teaching a one-sided story.

Thanks to Susan Abulhawa's book, I now see the other side of the story.

The author follows three generations of fictional characters through every atrocity that happened to Palestine since World War II.

"Mornings in Jenin" is not a pleasant read. I doubt that anyone in their right mind could get through this whole book without having a motive of wanting to understand more about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I mean no one will pick this up at Costco and read it cover-to-cover just for the heck of it. Murder, murder, and more murder are what this book is about. It is something we should know. But who wants to? Honestly, I think this book could be made more palatable by telling more story, more romance, more life, and less horror. I feel bad saying that, because of course the truth is what we need to hear, but this book is really like reading the worst world news headlines over and over. I am horrified to think that men, women, and children are living like that (and dying like that), but it is human nature to avoid it--they would if they could, and so do we as readers.

This is a book you should read. I will say that. I'm glad I read it, and I'm glad I'm done reading it. It has definitely given me more perspective.

Post Script written about 2 years after I read this book: I now have a friend who is Palestinian. She says she has found forgiveness through knowing Jesus. After a horribly difficult childhood and early adulthood in Palestine, she found forgiveness. She married a Jewish man, who has an equally difficult past. According to her, there really are two sides to this story. The Palestinians have legitimate grievances, and so do the Jewish people. If you read this book, realize that it is one-sided, not the whole story.

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“In this richly detailed, beautiful and resonant novel examining the Palestinian and Jewish conflicts from the mid-20th century to 2002 ... Abulhawa gives the terrible conflict a human face ... [and] makes a great effort to empathize with all sides and tells an affecting and important story that succeeds as both literature and social commentary.” ?Publishers Weekly (starred review)

“Audacious, no-holds-barred account of a Palestinian family's suffering during 60 years of Israeli occupation ... A potent debut.” ?Kirkus Reviews

“Abulhawa's debut novel is a powerful portrayal of what might be labeled the "other side" of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the viewpoint of Palestinian refugees uprooted in 1948.... An intimate look at the refugee existence by a daughter of refugees.” ?Booklist

“*Mornings in Jenin* is a powerful and passionate insight into what many Palestinians have had to endure since the state of Israel was created. Susan Abulhawa guides us through traumatic events with anger and great tenderness too, creating unforgettable images of a world in which humanity and inhumanity, selflessness and selfishness, love and hate grow so close to each other.” ?Michael Palin

“*Mornings in Jenin* is a powerful and sensitive narrative that encapsulates the Palestinian experience with searing honesty and moving compassion. Susan Abulhawa displays linguistic and imaginative skills that single her out as a literary figure with tremendous promise... In both its specific Palestinian content and its larger human dimension, this novel is at once a challenge to complacency and ignorance as well as an affirmation of all that is enduring and valuable in the undefeated human spirit.” ?Hanan Ashrawi, founder and Secretary General of the Palestinian Initiative for the Promotion of Global Dialogue and Democracy (MIFTAH), and author of *This Side of Peace: A Personal Account*

“A powerful and heartbreaking book.” ?Esther Freud

“The voice of Susan Abulhawa is honest, every word is heartfelt, the aim to honour history and acknowledge its facts. This book is a ‘tour’ waiting to take with it all kinds of readers: the already converted, the uninformed, and especially those who are fortunate enough to live secure lives.” ?Hanan al-Shaykh

“I finished Susan Abulhawa's novel last night. As I came to the end I could hardly bear to read it. But I did and I loved it ... what she's done is that great Jane Eyre thing: here is my life, here is a life, from the very beginning to its very end; here is her family and her heart, her people and her land. You travel with her on every page.” ?Carmen Callil

“I love *Mornings in Jenin* ... It really is a great work--the epic novel the Palestinian tragedy has been waiting for.” ?Robin Yassin-Kassab

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