



Sky of Red Poppies

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Sky of Red Poppies begins with an unusual friendship between two young women coming of age in a politically divided 1960's Iran under rule of the Shah. As the story unfolds, the history and culture of their homeland takes on a life of its own.

Sky of Red Poppies Details


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From Reader Review Sky of Red Poppies for online ebook

Lilly says

I am perhaps the worst critic this book could have, being Middle Eastern, an avid literary fiction reader, and a former publishing professional. That said, I had read the book and I just reread it again this week. 5 stars again.

It is page-turning, emotionally gripping, and extremely informative about a time and place we do not typically read about (Iran, 1960s onward). While I would not categorize it as historical fiction, it does that fabulous work of good fiction, incidentally educating you along the way when all you signed up for was to read beautiful prose.

I had cinematic reactions to various passages and developments, whether it was jaw-dropping, gasps, or getting choked up. As I read, I felt completely immersed in the social circles it describes and introduces. But why trust me? Trust KPBS - it was just selected for One Book, One San Diego 2012 and I have a feeling that's just a preview of what's to come for this novel.

Zohreh Ghahremani says

I thought I did a pretty good job of it! :-)

Stephanie Anze says

"Maybe the hardened clay was not as ugly as I thought. Maybe what I resented was the color my father had painted me. The time had come to sand away some of that dreadful stain."

Roya comes from an affluent family in Iran. In literature class, at her all girls highschool, she sits next to Shireen. Due in part to the influence of their more modern teacher, Janeb, the girls begin to grow close and become good friends. As their friendship blossoms, the political atmosphere in Iran intensifies. With the secret police lurking in every corner, contrary thoughts and actions regarding the Shah must be kept in utmost secrecy. Its through Shireen that Roya first begins to grow aware of the unrest in her country but can their friendship survive the political turmoil?

This book had been on my TBR list for a while now. I do not recall how is it that I came to know of this book but I am glad to have come across it. Set in Iran, starting in the 1960's, the background of this novel is the control of the Shah and SAVAK (the Shah's secret police) over the population. The narrative opens with Roya arriving to school and seeing the infamous SAVAK cars parked in front of it. A girl is taken, never to be heard from again. Troubled by what Roya saw, she has to carry on normally for there is nothing much she can do. As Roya and Shireen grow closer, they learn that their backgrounds and thoughts are different yet they also find allies in each other. Just as the country goes through a transition, so does their friendship through the pass of time. I just love the way in which the plot developed and how the turmoil in the country reflected in their friendship and their families. With an atmosphere of peril and danger, the book was also

poetic in its execution. A coming-of-age-book, a historical telling and a story about survival and friendship, this was a good read.

Cindy says

I don't write reviews as often as I probably should, given how much I read. But every so often I really need to write a review, especially when I've gotten a book for free on my Kindle that I would gladly (in retrospect) have paid full, hard-cover price for. This is another such book.

My husband grew up in Iran in the same period as this book describes, and tells me similar stories of this time period. So the story was very familiar to me. But this angle, of two friends whose ways of coping, ways of experiencing the political changes in their country were so different, is a great backdrop for the politics. And the author has a beautiful way with words, inserting clips of lovely poetry throughout. It's a heartbreaking story, as so many other stories from this sort of lost generation of Iranians are. Thank you for writing it.

Lynnette Phillips says

Ms. Ghahremani's almost lyrical prose gently guides us through a story filled with sorrow and joy taking place in a strict society where a schoolgirl friendship blooms amid the changes of the people surrounding them, of shifting politics, the growing oppositionist activities and even land reforms.

Depiction of the strength of the culture, of family and the power of friendship is loud but unobtrusive in the telling of the story. This is a heartbreaking love story—love of the land, of freedom and of the people—a bittersweet novel that shouldn't be missed.

Roya has been sheltered from the politics and strife by a well-to-do and loving father aware of the possible consequences of defying the Shah.

Shireen has seen the cruelties and changes coming about in her country and tries to show Roya what the future could bring.

Jenab is a literature teacher illuminating words and guiding their thoughts.

Doreena says

I am not sure where to start with this poignant story. This story rips you through a veritable rainbow of emotions. It is a coming of age story about two girls in Iran. One wealthy, one not so much. They share many emotions and beliefs. Ultimately, they ends up on two very different paths. Be ready with tissues when you read this one. Well done Ms. Ghahremani.

Marie says

This is a moving story, but the writing style never really clicked with me. It felt awkward and I didn't feel I understood the characters very well. Maybe my Western viewpoint was an obstacle to really being drawn in. However, it was definitely eye-opening in terms of history and culture. I remember hearing about the Ayatollah on the news when I was growing up; this book covers the "prequel" to that time, when the last Shah was in power in Iran. The woman narrating the story grew up in a wealthy and traditional but not devout family. She has friends with varying levels of money, social status, and Muslim faith. So we get to see how different segments of the society viewed the Shah and the revolution that is brewing.

Laura Spaulding says

I came away from this book with a new insight into the culture of the Iranian people. Zohreh Ghahremani has written a beautiful book with very well rounded characters. Nothing is black and white in her novel, just as in real life. Her incorporation of Persian poetry into the story just further shows the diversity of her homeland. Thank goodness she gave up dentistry to follow her true passion, if she had not we would have all missed out on a very talented, insightful writer.

Ms. Ghahremani, or Zoe as she likes to be called, visited our book club today and is as good a speaker as she is a writer. She is a very inspiring woman, with a great positive life view. I came away very much interested in reading her newest book *The Moon's Daughter* and I am looking forward to her writing in the future. If you belong to a bookclub I highly recommend having her come visit it is quite a pleasure.

Marsha says

I appreciated the juxtaposition of the naivete/complicity of two young girlfriends and an entire country. If our book club chooses this book- I wonder if the author would like to join us for lunch discussion???

Rachelle says

This is the first of the three selections for 2012 One Book, One San Diego, a literacy campaign sponsored by San Diego Public Library and the public radio station KPBS.

I read this book with a coworker of Persian descent. She and I read the book in a day. Her first comment to me was, "It is like I wrote the book, except that I wasn't rich." This book tells the story of friendship that crosses the barriers of religion and economic class in the time leading to the Iranian Revolution of 1979.

In the launching of the One Book, One San Diego campaign, I heard Zoe Ghahremani speak about her desire to write this so that she could give her countrymen a voice. She also wanted her children to understand her life before she left Iran.

Jafar says

When I listened to the author's radio interview, she said that she wanted to write a book for her own children, and other second-generation Iranians who've never seen Iran, to share with them how life was in Iran before the revolution, and before political shenanigans colored everybody's perception of the Iranian society. So I didn't expect the book to turn out to be – if you don't want to call it a political novel – a book where politics is the elephant in the room. Everyone knows to some degree by now that there was the Shah and his evil secret police, and that there was a revolution, and the revolution betrayed people's hopes and dreams and installed a far worse regime. But surely there was more to Iran than the revolution and what led to it – and I thought that was what Ghahremani promised to tell us. The book mainly tells the story of the revolution, and that was the main disappointment for me personally. Ghahremani has left out a lot of other things that she could have recounted to retell a story that is all too painfully familiar. She just couldn't shake it off. The revolution was the single most defining event in the lives of her generation, but for someone in the outside – the intended audience of the book – trying to peer into the fabric of the Iranian society and its culture 30 years later, it doesn't deserve the prominence that it's given here.

If you don't mind reading a book where politics dictates its ups and downs and direction, that is, if you want to see how the general atmosphere was before the revolution and what led to it, this is a very good book. It's told from the perspective of girl who, even though born to wealth and privilege, is very well conscious of the injustice around her. It doesn't escape her that her classmate gets jailed and tortured and raped for her political activities, but her sister gets shipped to a college in England when she wants to be fashionable and dabble in politics. Roya's character is very well done. She's decent without being smug. She's outraged by what she sees around her, without having any particular political agenda. She refuses to fall for any political grandstanding without being cynical. The story is written well and leaves you with having hope for the goodness of human nature in spite of all the atrocities around us. My most personally touching moment was the first time that *The Little Black Fish* was mentioned. I thought, oh my god, yes, *mahi siahe-e kuchulu!* I read that book. How could I have forgotten it?

I wonder how much of this book is autobiographical in the sense of being drawn from personal experiences. (Mashad and Chicago. I was expecting to read in the epilogue that Roya had moved to San Diego!) I wonder about the choice of telling the story from the eyes of a privileged girl growing up among the wealthy and the secular. Someone growing up among the poor and the pious would have told a different story. In the end, what we can tell is limited by what we have experienced.

Jill Bonham says

This is not a book I would normally read. I came across it while looking through the Kindle lenders library and saw it was highly rated so I thought I'd read it. I really liked it because it showed to me that people are people no matter where they live, with ambitions, love of family, pains, sorrows and joys. As the story progressed it felt so real. It did not seam like a work of fiction. The characters were so alive and so well written that it seamed like an autobiography. It is a great read to open up understanding between cultures. I really loved it!

susie says

"Like a picture slowly developing in the darkroom, the injustice around me became clearer with time. Forbidden thoughts grew and multiplied in my head. How many others had disappeared before her, and who would be next?"

This is my mom's book, and when I read it, I couldn't put it down. Honestly, my mom sort of keeps her writing to herself, yet with this book I was blown away with how lyrically it was written. I also felt like I learned so much about what happened to the citizens of Iran as political tides changed there mid-century. Also, I really love my mom.

Biased or not, this book is awesome.

Karen says

Loved this book...

julia says

This tender and touching story is beautifully written. It clearly demonstrates the close and far reaching effects of political disturbance and how precious freedom is. It's very appropriate for the current events the world is experiencing.

Although there was much tragedy throughout the book, there was a certain sweetness. The author is very generous in sharing herself deeply through her writing style.
