



A Thousand Splendid Suns

By Khaled Hosseini

Reviewed by Donna Bush

If you liked The Kite Runner, you will also like this book. I have often read about the suppression of women in Middle Eastern countries but until I read this book I did not realize what a horrible life it would be to be a woman in Afghanistan during this time period or perhaps still today. Many were treated no better than cattle by their husbands. It reminds me of how Afro-Americans were treated by slave owners in the South. As I read I kept thinking about the amazing strength these women possessed to be able to go on after so much tragedy befell them. Though the book will tear at your heart, the ending offers hope.

The following is a summary of the plot from *Booklist* magazine: This novel views the plight of Afghanistan during the last half-century through the eyes of two women. Mariam is the illegitimate daughter of a maid and a businessman, who is given away in marriage at the age of 15 to Rasheed, a man three times her age; their union is not a loving one. The second woman in the novel is Laila, who is born to educated, liberal parents in Kabul the night the communists take over Afghanistan. Adored by her father but neglected in favor of her older brothers by her mother. Laila finds her true love early on in Tariq, a thoughtful, chivalrous boy who lost a leg in an explosion. But when tensions between the Communists and the *mujahideen* make the city unsafe, Tariq and his family flee to Pakistan. A devastating tragedy brings Laila to the house of Rasheed and Mariam, where she is forced to make a horrific choice to secure her future. Rasheed is both cruel and violent. At the heart of the novel is the bond between Mariam and Laila, two very different women brought together by dire circumstances. Unimaginably tragic, Hosseini's magnificent second novel is a sad and beautiful testament to both Afghani suffering and strength.