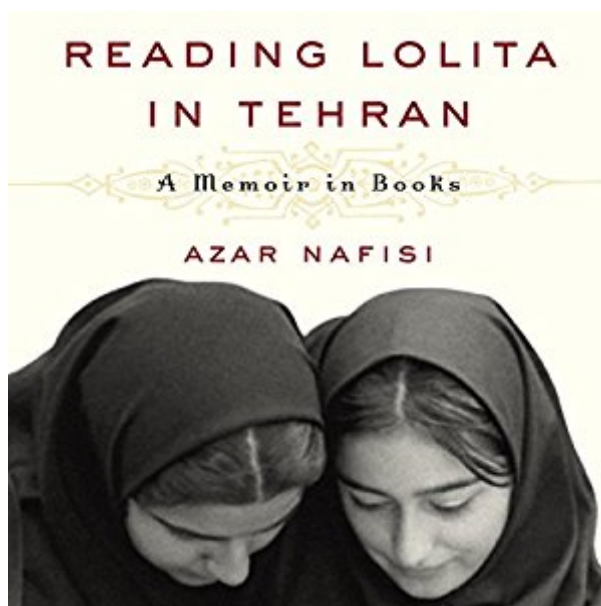


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Reading Lolita In Tehran: A Memoir In Books



Synopsis

Every Thursday morning for two years in the Islamic Republic of Iran, a bold and inspired teacher named Azar Nafisi secretly gathered seven of her most committed female students to read forbidden Western classics. As Islamic morality squads staged arbitrary raids in Tehran, fundamentalists seized hold of the universities, and a blind censor stifled artistic expression, the girls in Azar Nafisi's living room risked removing their veils and immersed themselves in the worlds of Jane Austen, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Henry James, and Vladimir Nabokov. In this extraordinary memoir, their stories become intertwined with the ones they are reading. Reading *Lolita* in Tehran is a remarkable exploration of resilience in the face of tyranny and a celebration of the liberating power of literature.

Book Information

Audible Audio Edition

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Criticism #145 in Books > Literature & Fiction > History & Criticism > Books & Reading >

General #589 in Books > Audible Audiobooks > Biographies & Memoirs > Personal Memoirs

Customer Reviews

I enjoyed reading this book so much I bought the author's next book: Republic of the Imagination. Leave it to someone who came from a society where this fruit has been forbidden to open our eyes to the value of reading western literature and the contributions it has made to making the world a better place to live.

I read this years ago in a book club, and was really impressed. We have been reading a lot of books now about badly women have been treated in the middle east chiefly through the Taliban, and this is one I brought into the writing group I run...they all loved it,.

It took me a bit to get into this book. If I hadn't listened to it on audio I probably wouldn't have made it very far. But I am so glad I did! The author talks about her memories of the Iranian Revolution mixed with her personal memories, specifically of a secret book club for her female literature students. It broke my heart many times to hear of the abuses by the government and it was also sadly reminiscent of many current revolutions in the middle east. Clearly history repeats itself and we are left wondering how we can prevent these atrocities in the future. While not answering that question, the author certainly makes a case for literature as a saving grace in her life. On the downside, it is a bit long-winded and, well, pretentious. The author could have used a better editor as we did not need such lengthy descriptions of how her lunch companions ate their salad. But this is forgivable to me because, in return for your patience, you receive a feeling of immersion in this time in Iran - the feeling of hopelessness it entails along with the beauty of the literature she loves.

2nd reading, many years apart. Enjoyed it more this time because of an increased interest and awareness of all things Iranian. One needs a rather substantial background in English literature to grasp all the references Nafisi makes to books she is introducing to her students. Her relative calmness throughout her time in Tehran before leaving permanently for the US, especially when the Ayatollah Khomeini was in power, is breathtaking. Nafisi is one tough cookie!

I didn't finish the book (by choice) so this may not be a fair review. The book seemed more about "me," the author than about the women it's supposed to be about.

Reading *Lolita in Tehran* is one of the best memoirs I've read yet. Nafisi is an excellent writer; I'm glad I picked up her book in 2014, ready to appreciate its intricacies, allusions, structure, style, as well as the intense stories of life in Iran that Nafisi and her students, friends, family, relations, and fellow Iranians had to (and still have to) put up with. Now I want to read some of the English literature she's woven into its fabric, and then re-read it again. I would recommend this book to everyone. Specifically, I'd recommend it to students of English literature. If you're a fan of Austen, Fitzgerald, Henry James, or Nabokov, then this is a great read just for Nafisi's thoughts and how she interleaves the thoughts of each author's stories into her life. There's a section at the end that gives book recommendations in much more detail (Flaubert, Kafka, you name it). Additionally, I'd recommend it to all feminists. It's a great work accounting for the struggles of being a woman in Iran in the 1980's and 1990's.

A fine book about the power of imagination to mitigate the oppression of life in a theocratic society. Also thoughtful insights into the interpretation of Gatsby, Lolita, Huckleberry Finn, and other classic literary works. It would have been wonderful to have had Dr. Nafisi as a professor during my days as an English major.

Having read years ago with horrified fascination Brave New World and 1984, I was not surprised to find eerie resonances in this masterful real life account of women trying to survive in the post Shah era in Iran. The author's bravery in trying to teach human values and ethics in such a hostile environment was augmented by her further audacity in gathering selected students from her university for potentially life threatening private seminars in her home in Tehran, where they discuss classic literature including Lolita and many other works such as The Great Gatsby as these works might relate to the authoritarian taboos imposed by the thought police who act on the orders of Ayatola Khomeini. One can hardly wait for the next page to disclose what happens and readers will be rewarded with poignant accounts of these diverse lives under shattering oppression.

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Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books
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