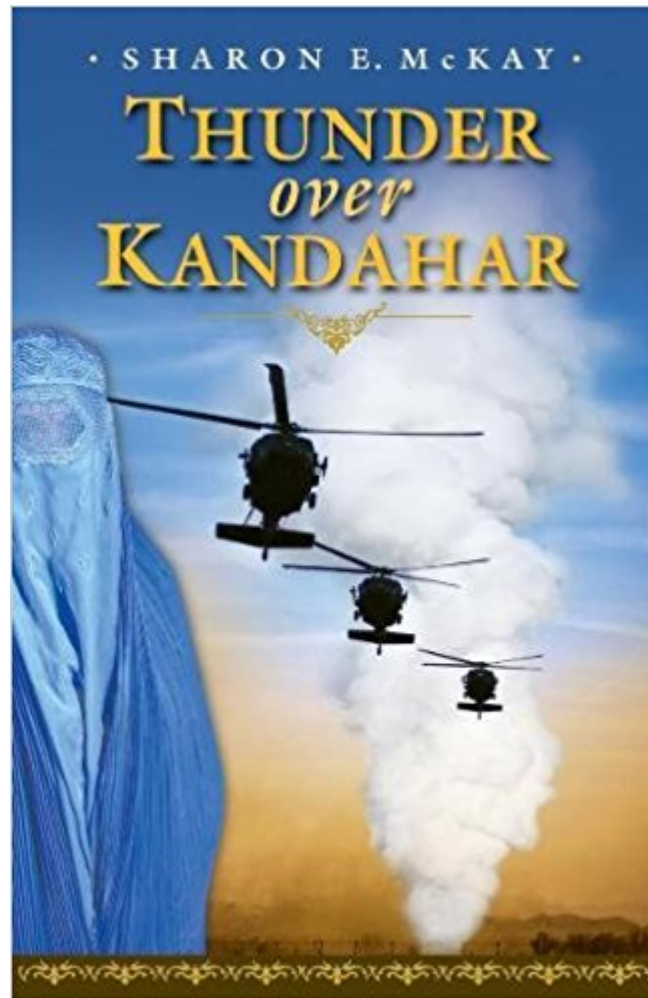




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# Thunder Over Kandahar



## Synopsis

A powerful novel of enduring friendship set amid the terror and chaos of present-day Afghanistan. Best friends Tamanna and Yasmine cannot believe their good fortune when a school is set up in their Afghan village; however, their dreams for the future are shattered when the Taliban burns down the school and threatens the teacher and students with death. As Tamanna faces an arranged marriage to an older man, and the Taliban targets Yasmine's western-educated family, the girls realize they must flee. Traveling through the heart of Taliban territory, the two unaccompanied young women find themselves in mortal danger. After suffering grave injuries; Tamanna from a fall and Yasmine from a suicide bombing; the girls are left without the one thing that has helped them survive; each other. The book features stunning photographs by award-winning photojournalist Rafal Gerszak (The New York Times, BBC World News) that bring readers an immediate sense of the faces and landscape of Afghanistan. Filled with tension and drama, *Thunder Over Kandahar* paints a vivid portrait of the perils of contemporary Afghanistan.

## Book Information

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Age Range: 12 - 14 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

## Customer Reviews

Gr 7-10 "When her British and American-educated parents' return to Afghanistan is cut

short by a terrible attack, 14-year-old Yasmine is sent to Kandahar for safety. Instead, the driver abandons her and her friend Tamanna along the way, and they must travel on their own through Taliban-controlled mountains. Sometimes the story focuses on Yasmine, and sometimes on Tamanna, a bright but uneducated village girl with a limp inflicted by a drunken uncle whose gambling debts are to be paid by her marriage. Toward the end of their journey, the two encounter Tamanna's twin brother, stolen years earlier and now a suicide bomber. Tamanna is shot, and Yasmine is left alone in Afghanistan, with no memory even of her own identity. Eventually she ends up in Pakistan. Though the survival story ends with the appearance of her grandfather and the return of some memories, the author provides a postscript imagining her characters' more positive futures. In spite of unrelenting violence, along with grinding poverty, restrictive customs, and the horrors of war, what shines through this sad narrative is the love Afghans have for their country. The Canadian author of *War Brothers* (Puffin, 2008) traveled to Afghanistan and provides numerous credits for this gripping tale. —Kathleen Isaacs, Children's Literature Specialist, Pasadena, MD. (c) Copyright 2010. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Suicide bombers, land mines, and other horrors of contemporary war drive the action in this fictionalized account of two young teenagers in Afghanistan, torn from their families and then from each other as they try to flee the Taliban. Yasmine, 14, was born and raised in England by her academic Afghan parents, who are attacked after returning to —“help get their country back. —• She becomes best friends with Tamanna, who is thrilled to be allowed to go to school, even as she dreads an arranged marriage with an older man. Like sisters, the girls help keep each other safe, and together they resist wearing the burka and face hostility for going out in public without a male protector. Then their world explodes, literally. There may be just too much going on here for many readers. But the girls’ alternating viewpoints capture the heartbreaking trauma, and concerned young people will be caught up in the issues, including the roles of foreigners and the UN, as well as the oppression of women. Grades 7-12. --Hazel Rochman --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Do you enjoy novels that stretch you? That take you out of your known environment and your own comfortable life? That introduce you to characters from a culture very different from your own? *Thunder over Kandahar* will carry you off to areas of the Middle East where Westerners are in danger. You will view the country from the eyes of characters who, although they have a great

appreciation for the Western lifestyle, still love and respect their homeland and its culture, and are willing to sacrifice time, money, and safety to assist its people. This novel is very well written, interesting from start to finish. This is a good one to raise that EQ.

Book was in perfect condition. Thank you.

A wonderful insight into a culture we have a hard time understanding. An easy read. Even though it is a work of fiction it shows an understanding of the culture based on the author's time living there.

Such a story of courage and bravery. It is hard to imagine.

This is a CD reading book for the United Methodist Women reading program. I really like this book and it makes me think.

I received the book in ample time and the book was in excellent condition. I was very pleased with the service. Thanks for being so prompt.

I choose this book because it is included in the United Methodist Women's Reading Program. The cost was less than if I had bought it from our Service Center.

Tamanna is very unhappy about her parent's decision to return to Afghanistan. Having been raised in England her whole life, teenaged Tamanna finds the idea of leaving Britain daunting. Her parents still have so much love in their hearts for the beautiful mountains of Afghanistan, though, and they feel that it's up to people like them: educated, liberal, native Afghans, to reclaim their country and help rebuild it. On the whole, this is a fairly unsympathetic look at the culture of Afghanistan.

Tamanna's complete ignorance of local customs provides the perfect excuse to give readers plenty of exposition. Living in a city, the family suffers the claustrophobic effects of coping with Taliban edicts, enforced by brute squads of local bullies. Tamanna is initially dismayed that she must cover her hair at all times. Soon though, she misses her old veil, when the new restrictive burka, allowing only a narrow strip for her eyes to peep through, is demanded. Before she knows it, her pretty blue burka with silver thread is also considered "too immodest" and she is forced to trade with an old beggar woman for a plain yet filthy burka. When her mother is beaten within an inch of her life for singing in the street (women are supposed to be silent) and no doctor will see her, the family

decides to retreat to the Afghani countryside. It's extremely lonely there for Tamanna, and her father hires a local village girl, Yasmine, to be her companion. Yasmine leads a difficult life, with a brute of a father. Tamanna teaches her to read. The girls are excited that a new school is being built, and here the fast-pace and melodramatic events truly start to pick up. No sooner do they meet with some friendly American soldiers who are setting up the school, but they are intercepted by a Taliban raid... led by no other than Yasmine's long-lost twin brother. Dramalicious enough for you? It gets better. Yasmine wants to escape her arranged marriage to a man old enough to be her grandfather and in all the confusion and fighting, the girls try to make an escape. Friendly French forces are delighted to meet a "local" who speaks perfect English and carries a British passport. They put the girls in a cab, and the sexist cabdriver decides not to take them to their location. Instead, the girls are faced with an incredible journey through the mountains, on foot. They are once again reunited with Yasmine's brother, who confesses that he was made to serve as a "dancing boy" - sort of a male prostitute - by the Taliban but he's working his way back to respectability with the military missions they're giving him now, including a possible suicide mission. All of this backstory with the brother was a bit of a throw-away, and honestly deserved some more thought or attention. Tamanna hits her head and has amnesia. She is taken in by a nice family and changes her name. In the meantime, Yasmine uses Tamanna's passport to escape to England to be reunited with her "parents." Obviously, there is a lot here that stretches credulity with the twists and turns of this soap-opera plotline. I found it interesting that Tamanna, the only character seriously arguing that it would be a good idea to leave Afghanistan, is the only one who ends up staying. While the break-neck pace this book may draw in reluctant readers, on the whole, the flat characterization and lack of warmth or good sense from many of the adults in the novel make this a tough read to get through. For a more sensitively drawn portrait of a girl struggling with an arranged marriage in Pakistan I'd recommend *Shabanu* by Suzanne Fisher Staples, as well as the sequel, *Haveli*. For another recent take on modern-day Afghanistan, I'd recommend *Words In The Dust* by Trent Reedy.

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