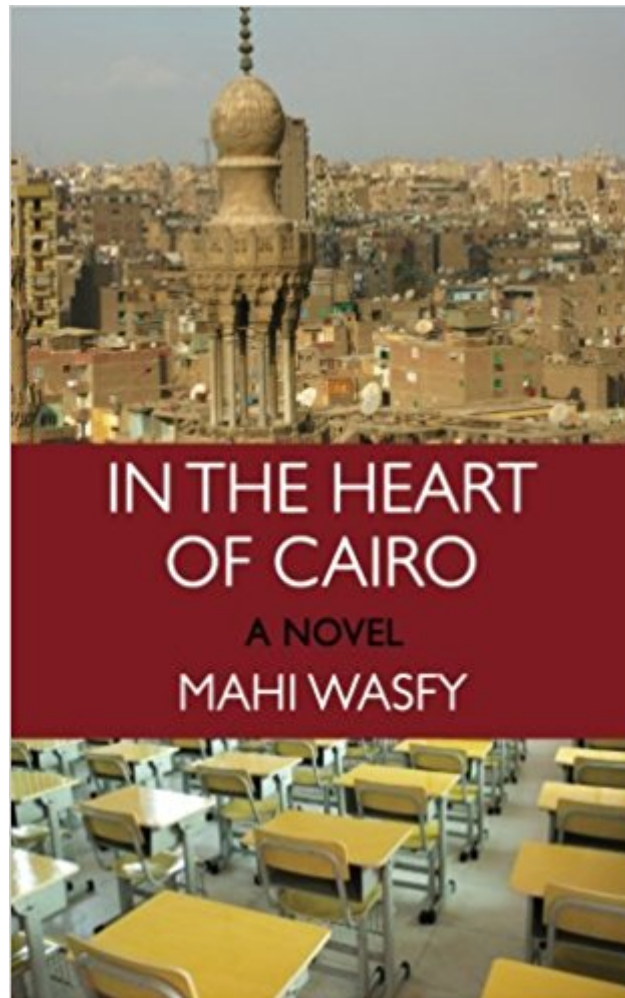




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In The Heart Of Cairo



Synopsis

In the Heart of Cairo, reveals how Western and Arabic influences clash when the values of the American School in Cairo, a new teacher, and students of the senior class are examined. When anti-bias educator, Mrs. Magda, becomes the new Theory of Knowledge teacher at the American School in Cairo, she is shocked to discover the ugly truth behind the school's prestigious reputation. Despite the challenges and hostility she faces, Mrs. Magda is committed to achieving her career goal of transforming the environment at the school and making it truly bicultural. Although the school's administration hired her to achieve just that, they realize her aspirations might be a bit too ambitious for their liking. Meanwhile Maha, a senior at the school, just wants to have a drama-free and fun senior year but gets exactly the opposite. She finds herself caught up in a divine storm where everything in her life goes wrong. Shattered dreams, melodramas, fallouts and love triangles are just a few of the issues she has to battle. Maha doesn't know if she can handle the pressure and risks losing herself in her efforts not to be the class misfit.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Completed on: 05/09/2016 Review Rating: 5 stars!Reviewed By Melinda Hills for Readers'

FavoriteThe mark of a good book is that it gives you something to think about. That is certainly the case with In the Heart of Cairo by Mahi Wasfy. Over the span of roughly six months, the values of the American School in Cairo, a new teacher, and students of the senior class are examined as Western and Arabic influences clash. Mrs. Magda has been hired to bring the school in line with diversity and bi-cultural expectations that the administration impedes at every turn. This is mirrored

by the emotions of Maha, a traditional Egyptian student who feels as though her culture is continually marginalized by the growing trend of Westernization that places more value on things and popularity than family and traditional beliefs. Both Mrs. Magda and Maha struggle with trying to fit in and be happy while remaining true to their core values in spite of what is happening all around them. The beauty of *In the Heart of Cairo* is that it speaks to the inner truth of each person, regardless of national background or religious affiliation. It celebrates the value of every life and the expression of that value through love, family ties, and the desire to be a valuable part of a community instead of being better than the one in which you live. Mahi Wasfy does a wonderful job of distinguishing between fundamental beliefs and extremism, and shows that extremism exists in different forms - forcing traditional ideas on other people as well as adopting some other life goal that makes you turn your back on the very things that truly make a life worth living. *In the Heart of Cairo* is not only an insightful cultural study, it is a solid example of the importance of examining one's own life and finding peace and value in it. Completed on: 05/11/2016 Review Rating: 5 stars! Reviewed By Deborah Lloyd for Readers' Favorite

Understanding the concept of anti-bias education is one of the most important lessons for the reader of the novel, *In the Heart of Cairo* by Mahi Wasfy. Mrs. Magda, a newly-hired and veiled Muslim teacher at the American School in Cairo, is one of the main characters in this intriguing adventure. She learns to advocate for her own rights, as well as those of other staff members and the students. The story also revolves around a group of Egyptian students who are conflicted about honoring their own culture versus becoming westernized. Maha is one of the adolescents who has committed to living her family's strong beliefs regarding proper behaviors such as not dating boys. She becomes ostracized from many other friends. There are many interesting examples woven throughout the story for readers to become familiar with the traditions of this country. It is always a special treat to learn about other cultures by reading a compelling and engaging story - Mahi Wasfy accomplishes this in the fictional work, *In the Heart of Cairo*. The author is an excellent writer, and the story flows smoothly from one scene to another. From Mrs. Magda and Maher's home, to the classroom, to an adolescent party, the reader is given an insider's view of the many tensions and stresses of a changing culture. The clashes between the "old" traditional ways and the "new" modern ways, fraught with the pressure of becoming westernized, are clearly detailed. The ending of the book is certainly encouraging. A delightful read in many diverse ways! Completed on: 05/11/2016 Review Rating: 4 stars. Reviewed By Rabia Tanveer for Readers' Favorite

In The Heart Of Cairo by Mahi Wasfy is a story from multiple perspectives. The story follows two women, one older and one a teenager. Maha is a senior at the school, almost finished with her basic education. All she wants is for her final year to be over,

problem free and quickly. However, it is not what she had hoped for. Things are not going well, there is a love triangle, a fall out with friends, seriously bad luck, and it seems like she cannot handle the pressure on her right now. She does not want to be a misfit, but it looks as if she is fitting right in with them. Mrs. Magda is the Theory of Knowledge teacher at the American School. She is new there, but she has big plans for her career and this new position is going to help her with them. She wants to make this school in Cairo bi-cultural, but challenges and hostility are preventing her from making it happen. Can she achieve her dreams and help her students find their center, or will the hostility of her colleagues be a challenge she cannot overcome? This novel pretty much sums up the school systems in every Muslim state. Yes, things are better in many schools and regions, but some places can never be changed. The author subtly tells us what we need to know and what we have to discover on our own. There is a lot of drama, courage, and revelations. It all fitted well into these two characters' stories

Mahi Wasfy is an Early Childhood Educator. She earned her Masters in Science in Early Childhood Education Studies at Walden University, The Richard W. Riley College of Education and Leadership in Minnesota, USA. *In the Heart of Cairo* is her first fiction novel. In it she addresses the issues related to bias, diversity and equity prevalent in International schools and multicultural environments. She currently enjoys being a 'granny'/e-moderator in The School in the Cloud project, where she encourages children living in India to maximize their learning potential.

In the Heart of Cairo is a thought provoking read that grapples with questions pertaining to bi-cultural education, Arabic values and traditions, and western influences in Egypt. Mahi Wasfy weaves together the stories of two women, one an Arab teacher in an American school who works hard to implement a more bi-cultural education for her students, and the other a high school senior who walks a fine line between her Arabic beliefs, and being westernized, or "cool," like her classmates. As an Egyptian and an educator, the author is knowledgeable about bi-cultural education and it comes across throughout her book. The story line is fictional however, it discusses very real topics that are present in Egyptian schools today. At the heart of this book lies the belief that we all need and want the same things—community, belonging, and respect for our beliefs no matter what culture we belong to. I highly recommend *In the Heart of Cairo* to those international educators who are teaching, have taught, or would like to teach in Cairene schools.

Very relevant topic, well written, easy read.

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