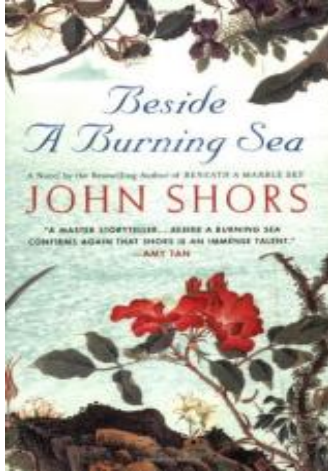


# Beside a Burning Sea

by John Shors

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## About the Book

From the author of **Beneath a Marble Sky** comes an inspiring new novel of a man and a woman from different worlds whose love is put to the ultimate test as they struggle to survive an extraordinary set of circumstances.

One moment, the World War II hospital ship *Benevolence* is patrolling the South Pacific on a mission of mercy—to save wounded American soldiers. The next, *Benevolence* is split in two by a torpedo, killing almost everyone on board. A small band of survivors, including an injured Japanese soldier and a young American nurse whom he saves from drowning, makes it to the deserted shore of a nearby island.

Akira has suffered five years of bloodshed and horror fighting for the Japanese empire. Now, surrounded by enemies he is supposed to hate, he instead finds solace in their company—and rediscovers his love of poetry. While sharing the mystery and beauty of this passion with Annie, the captivating but tormented woman he rescued, Akira grapples with the pain of his past while helping Annie uncover the promise of her future. Meanwhile, the remaining castaways endure a world not of their making—a world as barbaric as it is beautiful, as hateful as it is loving.

With the blend of epic storytelling and emotional intensity that distinguishes him as a unique talent, John Shors reveals a powerful story of redemption focusing on unlikely lovers, heroes and villains, and war-torn countries—all, in their own ways, fighting to survive.

## Discussion Guide

1. Discuss the significance of the title **Beside a Burning Sea**. Additionally, the original title was **The Poet Makers**. Which title do you prefer? Why?

2. Did **Beside a Burning Sea** provide you with a better understanding of World War II? If so, how?
3. Would you consider **Beside a Burning Sea** an antiwar novel?
4. Who was your favorite character and why?
5. Are you interested in learning more about haikus?
6. Is this a novel that would lend itself well to the silver screen? If so, who would you imagine playing the various characters?
7. Are you more interested in reading a novel set somewhere you haven't been, or would you prefer a locale that you're familiar with?
8. What do you think was the biggest challenge that John Shors faced when writing **Beside a Burning Sea**?
9. Did you connect more with Annie or Isabelle? Why?
10. Of the three main relationships in the novel (Annie and Akira, Isabelle and Joshua, Ratu and Jake), which did you most enjoy? For what reasons?
11. How effective was the character Roger as a villain?
12. What was your favorite scene within **Beside a Burning Sea**?

## Author Bio

After graduating from Colorado College, John Shors lived for several years in Kyoto, Japan, where he taught English. On a shoestring budget, he later trekked across Asia, visiting 10 countries and climbing the Himalayas. After returning to the United States, he became a newspaper reporter in his hometown, Des Moines, Iowa, winning several statewide awards in journalism. John then moved to Boulder, Colorado, and helped launch GroundFloor Media, now one of the state's largest public relations firms.

John has been lucky enough to spend much of his life abroad, traveling in Asia, the South Pacific, Europe, Africa and North America. Now a full-time novelist, John spends his days writing and going on family outings with his wife, Allison, and their two young children, Sophie and Jack.

John's first six novels --- BENEATH A MARBLE SKY, BESIDE A BURNING SEA, DRAGON HOUSE, THE WISHING TREES, CROSS CURRENTS and TEMPLE OF A THOUSAND FACES --- have won multiple awards and have been translated into 26 languages.

In an effort to provide readers with an unparalleled travel experience, John also leads participants on literary tours to the

settings in his novels.

## Critical Praise

"A master storyteller?Shors weaves psychological intrigue by looking at his characters' competing desires: love, revenge, and meaning. Both lyrical and deeply imaginative, **Beside a Burning Sea** confirms again that Shors is an immense talent."

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### **Beside a Burning Sea**

by John Shors

**Publication Date:** September 2, 2008

**Genres:** Fiction, Historical Fiction

**Paperback:** 448 pages

**Publisher:** NAL Trade

**ISBN-10:** 0451224922

**ISBN-13:** 9780451224927