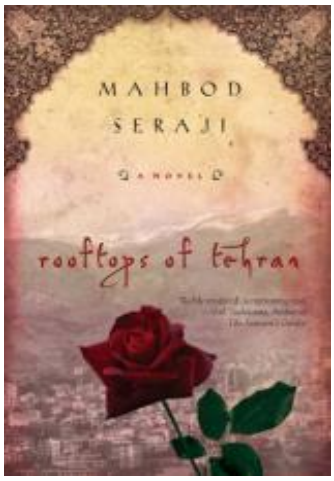
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Rooftops of Tehran

by Mahbod Seraji



About the Book

In a middle-class neighborhood of Iran?s sprawling capital city, 17-year old Pasha Shahed spends the summer of 1973 on his rooftop with his best friend Ahmed, joking around one minute and asking burning questions about life the next. He also hides a secret love for his beautiful neighbor Zari, who has been betrothed since birth to another man. But the bliss of Pasha and Zari?s stolen time together is shattered when Pasha unwittingly acts as a beacon for the Shah?s secret police. The violent consequences awaken him to the reality of living under a powerful despot, and lead Zari to make a shocking choice?

In this poignant, funny, eye-opening and emotionally vivid novel, Mahbod Seraji lays bare the beauty and brutality of the centuries-old Persian culture, while reaffirming the human experiences we all share.

Please click here to find out how you can schedule a chat between Mahbod and your reading group.

****Rooftops of Tehran* was selected as an Indie Next List Notable Book for June 2009.****

Discussion Guide

1. What?s your general reaction to the novel? Did the author make the characters come alive for you? Did you care about them? Were you fully engaged? Did you laugh and cry?

2. Does Pasha?s love for Zari remind you of the first time you fell in love? How is it similar? How is it different?

3. Ahmed, Faheemeh, Iraj, Doctor, Zari, and Pasha are young people in the Iran of the 1970s. How universal are the challenges they face? How common are their thoughts and feelings, discussions and interactions, reactions to authority, methods of going after what they want? Compare the young adults in the novel to ones you know in the U.S. today.

4. Do you agree with Doctor that time is the most precious human commodity?

5. What do you think about the open, unguarded nature of the male relationships in this novel, especially between Pasha and Ahmed? How would such a close male friendship in the U.S. be likely to differ?

6. Discuss the relationship between Pasha and his father. How is it similar to, or different from, the father?teenage son relationships you know?

7. Discuss the lives of the women in the novel. What surprises you about them and what doesn?t?

8. The concept of That is discussed a number of times. What does this concept mean to you? Is there a Western equivalent?

9. What do you think motivates Zari?s bold and tragic action during the parade? Do you see her choice as honorable or delusional, or something in between? How might a Western woman in a similar predicament react?

10. What aspects of Persian culture most intrigue you? Did the novel change or challenge any of your notions about Iran and Iranians? What did you learn?

11. The narrator discusses the unique way in which people in Iran react to grief, and the author dramatizes many scenes of mourning. What surprised you about those scenes? How do the characters mourn differently from the way people do in the U.S.?

12. Discuss how characters in the novel perceive the U.S., both accurately and inaccurately. What factors might be limiting or distorting their understanding? What distortions might be shaping your own understanding of Iran and Iranians?

13. What do you think happens to Pasha after the book ends? To the other characters?

Author Bio

Mahbod Seraji was born in Iran, and came to the United States in the 1970s. He currently lives in the San Francisco bay area. Visit his websites at mahbodseraji.com and rooftopsoftehran.com to learn more.

Critical Praise

"**Rooftops of Tehran** combines a coming of age love story with a compelling tale of struggle against dictatorship. You

learn a lot about Iranian culture while coming to understand characters with universal appeal."

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