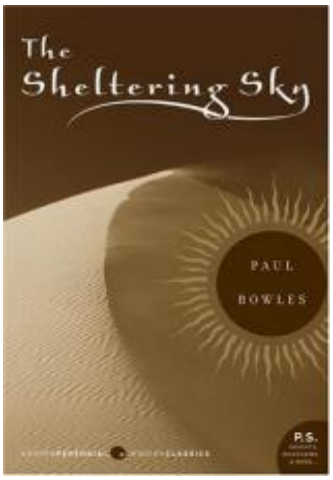
The Sheltering Sky

by Paul Bowles



About the Book

The Sheltering Sky is a landmark of twentieth-century literature. In this intensely fascinating story, Paul Bowles examines the ways in which Americans' incomprehension of alien cultures leads to the ultimate destruction of those cultures.

A story about three American travelers adrift in the cities and deserts of North Africa after World War II, **The Sheltering Sky** explores the limits of humanity when it touches the unfathomable emptiness and impassive cruelty of the desert.

Discussion Guide

1. At the start of **The Sheltering Sky**, we learn that Port Moresby defines himself as a traveler, not a tourist. According to Port, what is the distinction? How does his attitude toward foreign travel reflect other aspects of Port's character?

2. What keeps Kit and Port Moresby together as husband and wife? What role does their friend, Tunner, play in their attachment to one another, and how do their mutual episodes of infidelity affect the course of their marriage?

3. Who are Eric and Mrs. Lyle? Do any aspects of their personalities seem inconsistent with their behavior? How would you describe their interactions with Port, Kit, and Tunner?

4. How does Port react when he learns that the blind dancer in Aïn Krorfa cannot be recruited for a romantic liaison? What explains her significance to him? Discuss Port's ideas about love in the context of his chronic state of being cold.

5. "Ever since I discovered my passport was gone, I've felt only half-alive. It's a very depressing thing in a place like this to have no proof of who you are ... " What does proof of identity mean in the Sahara? How do Port and Kit find and lose

their identities in **The Sheltering Sky**?

6. What happens to Port and Kit on the bus en route to El Ga'a? What eventually leads them to stop in Sbâ? How does Port's medical condition impact Kit, and what measures does she take to save him from its effects?

7. Describe Captain Broussard's reaction to Kit and Port's plight in Sbâ. To what extent are foreigners perceived as threatening in the Sahara? Why might foreign citizenship endanger travelers in this region?

8. In the throes of his hallucinations, Port confesses to Kit his fear of being alone, even as she consoles him by telling him that she is with him. How is loneliness a feature of the landscape of **The Sheltering Sky**? In what sense are Port and Kit alone even when they are together?

9. The night that Port's life ends, Kit and Tunner reunite. What is the significance of this coincidence? When Kit discovers Port's death, why does she refuse to acknowledge it to anyone? What does her behavior suggest about her emotional state?

10. How does Kit's situation change when she encounters Belqassim? What does her life with him enable her to do, and what does it prevent her from doing? Were you surprised by her ability to adapt to such bleak living conditions?

11. What becomes of Kit at the end of **The Sheltering Sky**? How is her absence connected to Miss Ferry's remarks about nothing getting lost for good in the desert?

12. "[The desert] was too powerful an entity not to lend itself to personification." How does this theory play out in **The Sheltering Sky**? What does the desert represent over the course of this novel, and how does that representation change depending on the perspective of each individual character?

Author Bio

Paul Bowles was born in 1910 and studied music with composer Aaron Copland before moving to Tangier, Morocco, with his wife, Jane. He remained in Morocco, and it served as the inspiration for **The Sheltering Sky**, which was published in 1949. It was followed by **The Delicate Prey**,**Let It Come Down**, **The Spider's House** and **Without Stopping**, a memoir that describes his legendary associations with members of the Beat Generation. Bowles's prolific career included many musical compositions, collections of short fiction, and books of travel and poetry and translations.

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