



The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf: A Novel

By Mohja Kahf

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Syrian immigrant Khadra Shamy is growing up in a devout, tightly knit Muslim family in 1970s Indiana, at the crossroads of bad polyester and Islamic dress codes. Along with her brother Eyad and her African-American friends, Hakim and Hanifa, she bikes the Indianapolis streets exploring the fault-lines between “Muslim” and “American.”

When her picture-perfect marriage goes sour, Khadra flees to Syria and learns how to pray again. On returning to America she works in an eastern state — taking care to stay away from Indiana, where the murder of her friend Tayiba's sister by Klan violence years before still haunts her. But when her job sends her to cover a national Islamic conference in Indianapolis, she's back on familiar ground: Attending a concert by her brother's interfaith band The Clash of Civilizations, dodging questions from the “aunties” and “uncles,” and running into the recently divorced Hakim everywhere.

Beautifully written and featuring an exuberant cast of characters, *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* charts the spiritual and social landscape of Muslims in middle America, from five daily prayers to the Indy 500 car race. It is a riveting debut from an important new voice.

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The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf: A Novel By Mohja Kahf Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #201512 in eBooks
- Published on: 2009-03-17
- Released on: 2009-03-17
- Format: Kindle eBook

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

In comp lit professor Kahf's fiction debut, Khadra Shamy recalls growing up in an immigrant Syrian family in 1970s Indianapolis. Khadra's devout parents raise Khadra and her older brother, Eyad, to be observant of Islamic customs. The inevitable culture clashes ensue, from taunts of "raghead" and "go back where you came from" to the varying interpretations of Islamic code among the community's other Muslims. The mutability of ordinary cultural crossroads—along with the shock of violent ones, such as the rape and murder of one of Khadra's friends—force Khadra to continually question what it means to be "Muslim" or "American." After a short and disastrous marriage to an overbearing husband (he forbids her to ride a bike; she has an abortion), Khadra travels to Syria—now mired in political and religious strife—and returns to the United States in the late '80s to continue searching for her own way in the world. Khadra is a compelling protagonist, and the supporting cast is varied and believable, but Kahf's authorial incursions—critiques of religion and society—are heavy-handed. However, Khadra's ever-evolving view of herself and her religion resonate and provide a valuable portrayal of an oft-misunderstood faith. (*Oct. 10*)

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Review

"A sensitive, passionate and occasionally lyrical book."--Dr. A Yemisi Jimoh -- *Dr. A Yemisi Jimoh*

"A refreshingly human look at growing up Muslim in America.... clean American prose that shows brilliance."--Daniel Abdal-Hayy Moore -- *Daniel Abdal-Hayy Moore*

"Mohja Kahf is a clear-eyed, nery, and passionate writer.... This is a bright, vivid, and important book."--Molly Giles -- *Molly Giles*

About the Author

Born in Damascus, Syria, Mohja Kahf came to the U.S. as a child. Kahf is an associate professor of comparative literature at Rutgers. Her first book of literary scholarship is *Western Representations of the Muslim Woman: From Termagant to Odalisque* (University of Texas Press, 1999). She is also the author of a book of poetry, *E-mails from Sheherazad* (University Press of Florida 2003). Kahf is a member of the national group RAWI (Radius of Arab American Writers).

Users Review

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