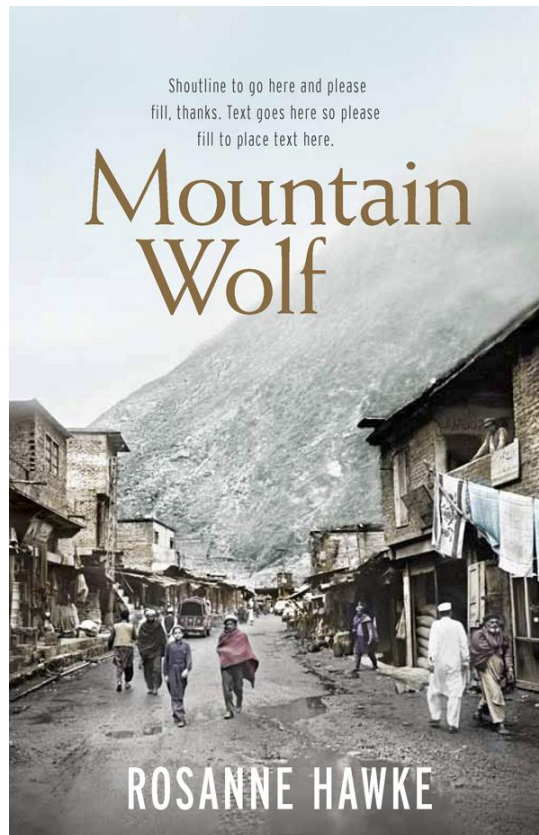


Mountain Wolf

TEACHERS' NOTES



Author: Rosanne Hawke

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Teachers' Notes by Robyn Sheahan-Bright

- **INTRODUCTION**
- **SYNOPSIS**
- **STUDY NOTES ON THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS: SOSE/HSIE; Health & Personal Development; Literacy & Language; Creative Arts**
- **QUESTIONS FOR READING AND DISCUSSION**
- **CONCLUSION**
- **AUTHOR INSPIRATION**
- **ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR**
- **BIBLIOGRAPHY OF RELATED TEXTS AND SOURCES**
- **ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES**

INTRODUCTION

‘Be careful,’ he continued. ‘Some people cannot understand beauty, and what they don’t understand they destroy.’(p 145)

Abdur-Razaq Nadeem Khan, known as Razaq, loses everything when his entire family is killed in an earthquake, and finds himself one of many people struggling to overcome grief and extreme shortages in order to survive. His beauty is both protection and curse; his fighting spirit earns him both admiration and punishment. But he soon realises that there are even worse things than scrounging for food and water.

And he soon learns that he must fight like a mountain wolf if he is to survive in this brutal new world.

SYNOPSIS

Fourteen-year old Razaq, who has lived a quietly happy life working as the son of a poor farmer in the mountains of Pakistan, has always been obedient and hard-working. But when he finds himself alone in a world full of threats, he discovers a need for new resilience. His father Nadeem’s last words had been to go to his uncle Javaid Khan, but first Razaq must first face several challenges. He feels obliged to look after neighbour Mrs Daud who has also lost everyone in her family, including Feeba the daughter who was betrothed to Razaq. He confronts thieves and then begins to assist Angrez teachers Karl and Rebekah in the makeshift school they’ve established. He is approached while playing a makeshift soccer game, by a man named Ikram, about making money in the city. Ikram then visits Mrs Daud (whom he presumes is Razaq’s mother) and offers her 300 rupees for the boy, who is then taken to the city and sold to a restaurant owner named Kazim who is a ‘dala’. ‘He finds boys for men who want them.’ (p 44) He escapes when he meets Zakim a boy on the streets and joins a gang of kids surviving in rubbish dumps. But Razaq’s beauty fetches a high price, when Kazim finds him again, and sells him to wealthy Mr Malik, who has him trained as a masseuse. He is then sold to Mrs Mumtaz to work in her ‘kothi khana’ where he learns to dance and to give men ‘whatever they want’. He discovers from Bilal, a castrated servant,

that he must hide his feelings and camouflage his real age. 'And now Mrs Mumtaz wanted to keep him a boy forever, whichever way she could.' (pp 165-6) He meets Tahira, and his love for her makes him determined to protect them both.

Meanwhile his uncle Javaid (who was at work in the Fazal Clothing Emporium in Rawalpindi when the earthquake struck), returns to the mountains where he learns the true scale of the tragedy and begins a frustrating search for Razaq. He gains assistance from children's rights organisations, but it is the people whom Razaq has met and befriended who ultimately contribute to his rescue and a new beginning for them all.

Razaq's story is Rosanne Hawke's fictionalised account of the experiences of thousands of young men and women in Pakistan and in countries throughout the world. This emotional journey is both a searing indictment of child slavery and a celebration of the power of love and hope to support those in dire circumstances.

STUDY NOTES ON THEMES & CURRICULUM TOPICS

Themes suggested by the novel which might be explored with class groups include:

- **Innocence & Experience**
- **Freedom & Captivity**
- **Resilience & Frailty**
- **Friendship/Kindness & Cruelty**
- **Courage & Fear**

Activity: Razaq's journey and the people he encounters on it, traverses the **themes** listed above. The novel employs **the metaphor of a mountain wolf** to denote Razaq's strength and the challenges he faces during his journey. Have students discuss these five overlapping themes in terms of his journey, this metaphor, and with reference to quotes such as the following:

'Saleem half-laughed, his face close to Razaq's. 'You are like a mountain wolf, so strong and proud.' (p 37)

‘Now he did feel like a wolf. A wolf in a cage would yearn for the mountains, the freedom to run and hunt. It would snarl and fight the bars at first, but eventually the futility would kill it as surely as a bullet would. The freedom of the mountains was so much a part of Razaq that he was frightened of what he would become without it.’ (p 135)

‘He was the shadow a wounded wolf made as it slunk through the jungle, an ill treated dog with no spirit even to wag its tail as it sat sad eyed with its nose on its paws.’ (p 183)

‘Razaq thought about that. Before the dream of climbing the mountain, he had felt like a captive wolf, frustrated and hopeless. Maybe a little of his spirit had returned after all.’ (p 196)

‘It was like tracking a wolf: he couldn’t show fear or the wolf would sense it, but it didn’t mean he wasn’t afraid. His father had told him that was what courage truly was. ‘Which man does not feel fear?’ he had said once. ‘But the courageous man is not bound by it. He does what he has to regardless.’(p 201)

- **Love & Hope**

Activity: Razaq’s capacity for hope, and his love and care for others is the underlying theme which binds all the other themes together. Discuss this with reference to the following quotes:

‘Love. Could love cover the dirt and shame he carried daily in his mind and body?’ (p 194)

‘His Uncle Javaid had told him once that people were like coloured windows: when the sun was out, they shone easily; but when the darkness set in, their true beauty was only revealed if there was light from within. Zakim had said Razaq had a light within. Did he still have that?’ (p 187)

“‘I want to keep them safe,’ he said.

Razaq was silent with respect.

‘But there is someone who doesn’t want that.’

'Who?'

'The bear.'

Razaq stared at him, crinkling his eyes.

'Nasir Ali,' Zakim explained. 'He works the other side of the dump. He wants my section too.'

'He will not treat the children well?'

'No.' 'Then he must be stopped.'" (p 71)

"'I know I will never find my real sister, but Moti is her, so is Hira. And any others that I find.' He stared at Razaq as if daring him to challenge him.

'And Raj?'

'I found him here in the scrap yard, wrapped in a shawl. He must have been thrown out for dead, but he was still alive.'" (p 82)

'His mother had told him to take notice of dreams, for it was the way God spoke. Razaq sat up, his eyes wide open. He sat still on the edge of the bed for a long time and then he knew what he had to do.' (p 191)

Curriculum Topics which relate to these themes are pertinent to areas such as:

- **SOSE/HSIE – Studying Society and Societal Issues** eg **Child Slavery and Trafficking; Women's Rights; City versus Rural Values; Pakistani Culture and Economy**
- **Health & Personal Development**
- **Literacy & Language**
- **Creative Arts**

SOSE/HSIE

In this curriculum area there are **five topics** you might explore with your students:

1. Child Slavery and Trafficking

Activity: Child slavery and trafficking is a crime against human rights which has international proportions. Discuss quotes which reveal the scale and nature of this crime:

‘Javaid sat at the computer and keyed in the words ‘slave trade’. He was appalled at what he found. Hundreds of thousands of children were sold each year, and it was even happening in Pakistan. Many were sold into domestic positions or carpet or brick factories. Some were even forced into prostitution. The given cause for this one? Segregation of the sexes. He swore under his breath. This was a Muslim country. Any decent man wouldn’t hurt a child surely?’ (p 76)

‘What more do you want? Most boys have none of this. You should be thanking me for saving you from the streets. Do you know what they do to you out there?’ He leaned closer to Razaq. ‘They gouge your eyes out. Those green eyes would make a rupee or two. Or they take your kidney to sell and forget to sew you up again. Do you want that?’ Kazim pulled Razaq’s head up.’ (p 42)

Activity: Research the topic by reading documents and visiting websites such as:

- **Human Trafficking** <http://humantrafficking.org/>
- **Child Labour in the Carpet Industry** <http://www.anti-slaverysociety.addr.com/carpets.htm>
- **Nike Shoes and Child Labour in Pakistan** <http://www1.american.edu/ted/nike.htm>
- **Kaack, Tim ‘Child Slave Labour in Pakistan’**
http://ihscslnews.org/view_article.php?id=334

Question: In what countries does child slavery or trafficking occur? How widespread is it? What are governments doing to stamp it out?

Activity: Research the outcomes of trafficking which include: physical and psychological damage, health problems and diseases [See **Health & Personal Development** below], poverty, social disgrace, suicide and death. Related forms of maltreatment depicted in this novel which might also be researched include: drug abuse (Razaq is offered hashish or opium and is told that the girls are given it to make them more pliant when they are new to prostitution) and physical and mental abuse (eg Mrs Mumtaz has Razaq beaten, and has also had Bilal castrated).

Question: Razaq’s rape (p 115) and subsequent prostitution is the common fate experienced by the boys in this novel, and even his uncle later confesses to having been assaulted. Many

accounts of abuse focus on women, but this novel graphically describes how boys are also abused. Research the scale of this problem as well.

Activity: In the novel the question of children being exploited by working in carpet factories is raised: 'This boy escaped from a carpet factory. He was sold into service to pay off a debt. He is afraid for his parents, of what the factory owner will do to them, but he saw his chance and ran. He cannot go home or his parents will be forced to return him.' (p 118) Read for example, about Iqbal Masih a former Pakistani carpet factory worker, and child activist in: D'Adamo, Francesco *Iqbal* (Atheneum, 2004). And Kuklin, Susan *Iqbal Masih and the Crusaders Against Child Slavery* (Holt, 1998). Read too, the fictionalised story about child labour in carpet factories: Shea, Pegi Deitz *The Carpet Boy's Gift* Ill by Leane Morin (Tilbury Books, 2003). See also Notes on using this book in the classroom: 'Teaching About Child Labour' <http://www.reachandteach.com/content/article.php/20050831122910561/3>

Activity: Read other novels about child exploitation and survival, for example, *Sold* (2007) by Patricia McCormack and the Parvana series by Deborah Ellis (See **Bibliography**).

2. Women's Rights

Razaq has grown up caught between two opposing views of women's choices: his father's view that women should not be educated, are in need of protection, and should be betrothed to a person of their family's choice; and his uncle Javaid's view that women deserve education and choices. He is therefore horrified to discover when he is sold to Mrs Mumtaz, a third view which regards women (and young boys) as little more than commodities. His new life in the brothel opens his eyes to the double standards observed in this society, where girls like Tahira are not given any choices, and whose prostitution will leave her with no options in life.

Activity: Read and discuss the following quotes in relation to these views of women:

'If women are not daughters, mothers, sisters or wives, they are gashtian, whores.'(p 16)

'Now Amina didn't have to slave with animals like her mother had, and Sakina could go to school. Education for girls was accepted in the city. Maybe when he had enough

money, he could start a school for girls in the mountains. But would anyone use it? He knew his brother's view on educating girls: 'It will only cause trouble. They will think they know more than men and get argumentative.' (p 32)

'All I can hope for is to become a tawaif, a high-class prostitute, with only one man looking after me. It is a kind of shadi.' She made a sad sound. 'The only way out of this life now would be to marry, but who will marry a girl like me?' (p 138)

'How was it that a man could be whipped for committing adultery, a woman stoned even, but a rich, important man could ruin a boy's life and still walk free? Like Mr Malik.' (p 190)

Question: Tahira is badly abused in captivity, but was her former fate as a girl betrothed to a man of her family's choice also a form of subjection? Discuss.

3. City Versus Rural Values

Question: Razaq regularly dreams of, and remembers the blissful life he lived in the mountains tending to the animals and enjoying his freedom in the crisp, clear air. His mountain upbringing clearly gives him the simple values to support his survival, for he is not used to wanting more than he has. Is growing up in a rural background necessarily a better thing? How has it sustained Razaq? Discuss with reference to the following quotes:

'Always he had said to stay in the mountains, so Razaq found it confusing that his father had told him to find his uncle.' (p 17)

'They're still feudal up there, six hundred years behind the rest of us.' (p 26)

'Not for the first time he felt the old stirrings of doubt. Maybe he shouldn't have gone to the city. He remembered one of the worst shouting matches with Nadeem. Was he right that Javaid shirked his responsibility, that he wasn't a true mountain man?' (p 52)

'Some days it was as if he truly was in the mountains: he could see his mother's eyes telling him he was special, her only son, the one who would carry on his father's name.'

He would have looked after his parents in their old age, his sisters too if they were widowed; grown apricot trees on the slopes.’(p 190)

Question: Razaq’s naivety might also represent a threat. He has no idea of the ambitions or the desires of people he meets. Discuss.

Question: How has Javaid’s decision to leave the mountains benefited he and his family? What has he lost in moving to the city?

4. Pakistani Culture and Economy

Activity: Visit websites on Pakistan which will give students some insights into Razaq’s culture. Choose one aspect of Pakistani culture and research it. Deliver a talk to your class about what you discover.

Question: What aspects of Pakistani culture and life did this novel reveal to you?

Activity: ‘His father, like all tribal men, had put no hope in the government. The khans didn’t want militants in their tribal area; they governed their lands themselves with jirgas, local councils. Would the government help people who didn’t recognise the government’s power? Razaq thought not.’ (p 13) Research the government and power structure in the country.

Activity: Razaq is surprised to find that his new friend Tahira is a Christian and even more surprised that the Injil (her holy book) has been translated into Urdu. His Muslim religion does not allow ordinary people to read the Quran as it is only available in Arabic. ‘Only the maulvi could read it.’(p 157) To find out more about religions in Pakistan visit: ‘Culture of Pakistan’ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Culture_of_Pakistan

Question: Both Tahira and Abdur- Razaq use the word ‘Angrez’ to describe foreigners. The word derives from Hindi , from French Anglais and refers to an English or white person. <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Angrez>. One man regards Angrez women like Rebekah as ‘whores’ (p 16). Are outsiders routinely feared or regarded with suspicion in Pakistan? Research and discuss.

Question: 'Javaid's thoughts were grim. So this was how the government got the recycling done.' (p 159) How much of the mistreatment of children depicted in this book might also be attributed to a corrupt government and its lack of services and protection for women and children? For example the police are regularly paid bribes by Mrs Mumtaz to prevent them reporting her brothel's operations.

Question: How vulnerable to earthquakes is Pakistan? Read about the effect of natural disasters on the economy and society.

Activity: Razaq comes from a very poor background and has had his education cut short in order to help his father on their farm. 'He hadn't been to the madrasah since he was twelve, and even then his attendance was sporadic. He checked the animals, milked the goats, and only then went to the madrasah if he had time.'(p 11) His situation as a child labourer is typical of children in countries like Pakistan where there is economic inequity. Research and discuss the challenges faced in this economy.

Question: When he arrives in the city he is shocked to find that children and adults live on the streets and exist on rubbish. How can problems like human trafficking be addressed when levels of poverty and need in such countries are so high?

HEALTH & PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

The novel suggests a range of personal development and health issues which might be discussed with students.

Question: Tahira is clearly physically injured when she is first used as a prostitute. How might her later health be impacted by what she has endured?

Question: 'No, it won't change what happens to you, but it could make you think differently about how you feel. They are the ones who have given us these feelings of dirt and shame. We have mushkil, difficult feelings, now, but we are the same inside.'(p 185) Both Razaq and Tahira are damaged by the memories of their rapes. How difficult would it be to psychologically recover from the trauma of such abuse?

Question: This novel refers obliquely to the fact that such children contract sexual diseases such as HIV and AIDS as a result of their sex slavery. Research and discuss.

Question: Bilal has been 'cut' by Mrs Mumtaz and made into a eunuch. How common is such treatment?

LITERACY & LANGUAGE

This work can be used as a model for a range of **creative writing techniques and exercises**:

- Study **structure** in this novel where a series of scenes are described which alternate between Razaq's experiences and his uncle's attempts to find him. This alternative view of the action maintains tension and suspense. **Exercise:** Discuss the role of suspense in this novel, and how it is sustained.
- The use of the **third person** allows for some distance between the reader and the characters particularly in the more graphic and painful scenes. **Exercise:** Write a section of the novel in first person as Razaq, and see how that might change the impact of what is conveyed. Then write it from someone else's point of view eg Tahira's.
- **Language devices employed in this novel includes metaphors, similes and symbolism** (such as the references to the mountain wolf discussed above). Many of the devices used often relate to Razaq's old life: eg 'How long would he be cooped up like a chicken in a butcher's cage waiting for the axe?' (p 178) **Exercise:** Write a sentence describing Razaq's situation, using a metaphor to describe it.
- **Characterisation** is central to this novel, in which the focus is on Razaq's ability to rise above these dreadful circumstances. [See **Themes** discussed above.] Each of the other characters also evince these same thematic conflicts in their behaviour. **Exercise:** Do a character study of another important character in the book, showing how they too grapple with the themes outlined above. eg Tahira, Bilal, Zakim or Javaid. **Exercise:** There are some very evil characters as well as some very kind and good-hearted characters in this novel. There are also characters forced to do bad things in order to survive. Make your own list of evil and good characters and then

write an analysis of where one of these characters reveals another side to their personality in a particular scene.

- **Humour** helps these children survive even in dire circumstances. For example: ‘ ‘This is the Rag Mahal,’ the tallest girl said.’ (p 68) **Question:** Were there any other parts of the novel which were humorous to you?

CREATIVE ARTS

- Choose and dramatise a scene from the novel.
- Create an improvisation expressing the emotions conveyed in this scene.
- Listen to Pakistani music or watch a video of the type of dancing Razaq and his fellow inmates perform.
- Create a poster or a leaflet calling for a stop to child slavery and trafficking.
- Create either a Book Trailer [See Notes at ‘Book Trailers’ *The Learning Place Ipswich District* *Teacher* *Librarian* *Network* <http://learningplace.com.au/deliver/content.asp?pid=41987>] or design a Cover and write a Blurb for this book, to entice a reader to buy or borrow it.

QUESTIONS FOR READING AND DISCUSSION

1. Conduct a class study about Rosanne Hawke’s works. Are there similar themes in each?
2. This was written by an Australian writer who has spent some time in these countries as an aid worker. How important is such hands-on knowledge in creating a fiction based on true stories like this?
3. What is the main thing which sustains Razaq while he’s living in the brothel?
4. Which character had the most impact on Razaq’s survival in your opinion?
5. Discuss this novel and the characters in terms of the idea of a ‘rite of passage’ or coming of age, which is a strong idea in many young adult fiction novels. How do the characters change as the novel progresses?

CONCLUSION

‘I am from the mountains, and just as those mountains cannot be moved, I will never forget you.’ He paused, gazing at her eyes, then quoted a proverb his mother told him. ‘There is always a way from heart to heart.’ (p 211)

Razaq has a long journey ahead of him and dreams of sharing it with Tahira. But this novel has shown the power of hope is sustenance for anyone on any journey, no matter how hard it might be.

AUTHOR INSPIRATION

Author motivation: The first idea for *Mountain Wolf* came when I was in Pakistan on an Asialink Fellowship researching another novel. I came across research on child trafficking in Pakistan and how children were sent to Europe and the United Arab Emirates. I also discovered that so many children orphaned by the 2005 earthquake were preyed upon by traffickers. I travelled up the Karakorum Highway, saw the earthquake damage, and visited a police fort on the border of Kala Dhaka, Black Mountain. Our friend had worked with World Vision to bring aid to the tribes in Kala Dhaka during the aftermath of the earthquake and he told me what it was like there and what the people were like. I pictured a boy, the only survivor in his family from the earthquake, and so Razaq’s story began. I wrote one page to begin with as I was writing another novel, but Razaq stayed in my head until it was time to write his story.

Background information: Although I lived in Pakistan for many years it was while I was more recently in Pakistan on the Asialink Fellowship that I found a book called *Taboo*, about the red light district in Lahore. I was amazed, as in earlier years such issues in society like this were denied. I researched child trafficking and prostitution in Pakistan on the web; I contacted some people working with these issues in World Vision, Pakistan. I wanted to get the facts right. I was in contact with a friend who had worked with the tribes in Kala Dhaka. He read the first draft and suggested changes. Issues like trafficking and prostitution are embarrassing for any country, let alone one like Pakistan built on a faith, but as Indian

journalist Mr M J Akbar states, you can't blame Islam for the sins of Muslims, nor Christianity for the sins of Christians.

Problems encountered: I wished I could have returned to Pakistan to see the scrap heaps, the rehabilitation centres for children, and the 'street' of brothels. But I found great images and videos on the web, plus I revisited our photographs from Pakistan and remembered many places to put in the story. After I'd written the first draft, I heard of World Vision's video on YouTube called 'Terminal Life' [See **Bibliography**], of children living in bus stations. I found it echoed my story, so the extensive research paid off. I also wanted the rescue to be lifelike. This was perhaps the most difficult part of the story to do as it was the hardest thing to find out about since only two percent of children ever escape. People I asked via email in Pakistan didn't always know how the rescues were conducted. A protection centre in Pakistan said via email I was very welcome to visit. I wished I could have.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

Rosanne Hawke is an award-winning Australian author. She has written twenty books, among them *Taj and the Great Camel Trek* which won the Children's Book Prize in the 2012 SA Festival Awards, *Marrying Ameerah*, a Notable Book in the Children's Book Council of Australia Awards 2011, *Mustara*, which was shortlisted in the New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards in 2007, and *Soraya the Storyteller*, which was shortlisted in the Children's Book Council of Australia Awards in 2005 and in the South Australian Festival Awards in 2006. She was awarded an Asialink Fellowship to write in Pakistan in 2006 and the Carclew Fellowship in 2008. Rosanne was an aid worker in Pakistan and the United Arab Emirates for ten years and now teaches Creative Writing at Tabor Adelaide. See <http://www.rosannehawke.com>

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR OF THE NOTES

Dr Robyn Sheahan-Bright operates justified text writing and publishing consultancy services, and publishes regularly on children's literature, Australian fiction, and publishing history. She chaired the inaugural judging panel for the Prime Minister's Literary Awards for Children and Young Adults 2010 and 2011, and was the recipient of the 2011 Dame Annabelle Rankin Award for Services to Children's Literature in Queensland.