



The Stone Goddess

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Award-winning author Minfong Ho tells the story of Nakri's struggles during the Communist takeover of Cambodia in the 1980s.

Twelve-year-old Nakri's beloved home in Cambodia is shattered when the nation's capital is overrun by government rebels. Her family is forced to flee, and she and her siblings end up in a children's labor camp, separated from everything they've ever known. At long last, Cambodia is liberated and Nakri's family sets out for America, a place to begin again. There, Nakri learns that she can leave Cambodia behind, but the memories will be a part of her forever.

The Stone Goddess Details

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From Reader Review *The Stone Goddess* for online ebook

Sophie Zapoli says

While the full brutal horrors of the Khmer Rouge weren't fully exposed to give younger readers an intro slight glimpse of what the people of Cambodia suffered without destroying their innocence, this still had a lasting impact that will remain with me for many years after I finished the last page, a message of resounding hope through even the darkest years in our history. Its' account triumphs through its' sheer beauty like the dancing apsaras through the churning sea that became the focal point of this book.

The story of Nakri and her family is symbolic of thousands of Cambodians, whose suffering didn't end with the leaving of their horrific past in Cambodia but who also had to face a whole new struggle while still dealing with the trauma no child should have to have witnessed in a new lifestyle-the lucky ones who by a miracle managed to survive the unconquerable yet still had to deal with the grief of those who didn't escape. This book takes us to an exotic world with a horrific past, highlighting many people's ignorance of others' suffering that come into their country looking for a better future while we only seem concerned about what has happened in our own lives.

Through Minfong Ho, Cambodia and its' vibrant people live on once again. The apsaras have kept dancing into a lighter world.

Rebecca says

I have read many war and refugee stories. Few hold the delicate balance of *The Stone Goddess*. When dealing with crimes against humanity, authors face a challenge to bring enough detail to demonstrate the horrors of the crimes without having these events become the actual story. Too often authors rely on the gore and violence of war to create a relationship with the reader. This reliance depersonalizes the narrative and leaves the story a mere skeleton of what it could have been. This is NOT the case with Minfong Ho. Through the gentle dance of the apsara goddess Minfong Ho brings to life a stirring story of sisterly love and loss.

Ho gives the reader enough details to understand the backdrop of the story (1975-1979 "social engineering of the Khmer Rouge under Pol Pot) without letting the surrounding settings consume the story. In place of a dependence on gore and violence (which she could have easily relied on to tell the story) Minfong focuses on Nakri. The author has created a character that feels both real and likable. Her affection for her older sister broke my heart. The moments of tenderness shared by the sisters while enduring forced labor were written with such finesse.

When Nakri begins school, I was taken aback by Minfong's ability to describe with such clarity the impossibilities that so many of our refugee students face. I left the book with an immediate desire to call up all my students for an emergency summer book club. I wanted them to see their stories reflected with the sensitivity that Ho brings to Nakri's experience. The character of Nakri sounded like so many of my students, when they describe the disoriented feelings of being new to country, language, culture and school. Nakri felt like one of my students. I left the story thinking, "Minfong HO really gets this." Yet, she was not cliché nor did she fall back on stereotypes. She allowed Nakri to tell the story from her voice that just happens to be all too familiar.

What touched me the most was the loving gestures and admiration the family members had for one another. Moreover, I found the metaphor of the apsara goddesses apt. The notion that life, art and beauty can be born

from chaos and destruction gives me hope. I have seen first hand how narratives, painting, dance and music help one to make sense of suffering (or at least bring a level of balance).

I hope I can get enough money to order a classroom set. I would love to experience this story with my students and see their reactions. Until then, I fear I will be having a few unsettling dreams with Nakri and Teeda dancing in them.

Justin Padilla says

The Stone Goddess is about a Cambodian girl named Nakri who is taken away from her mother, father, grandmother, and grandfather. But her older brother and sister, Boran and Teeda were taken with her to go work in the rice feild for their new government. This book takes place in Cambodia, Asia and the setting is dry, with a lot of fice fields. Nakri's main internal conflict is that she has to deal with being seperated from her family and home, especially her sister (hint, hint). Nakri's main external conflict is that she has to live in the extreme conditions of a work slave in the rice fields, with little food, water, and hope.

During reading this book, I made a Text-to-Text connection. Nakri working as a slave reminded me of Amari in Copper Sun by Sharon Draper. Amari also has been taken away from her family to work as a slave. In both texts, the characters both had to deal with being seperated from their families, and working in fields.

I would defenalty give this book six stars if I could. It kept me on the edge of my couch and made my heart stop, and my jaw drop! Even though Nakri was in pain both inside and out through the whole story, it was amazing. I would recommened this book to someone who loves to read and about suspense mixed in with sadness.

Mikko Peralta says

It was a touching story of a little girl in Khmer Rouge Cambodia and how, as the story unfolded, she lost a number of her family members.

The book somehow reminds me of S. Javellana's Without Seeing the Dawn which documents the Japanese occupation of the Philippines.

It is just because there was nothing much happening on the first 90 to 100 pages of the book, which made me doubt a 5 so I'm giving it a 4.

Well written.

Melanie says

My daughter choose to read this for a school project on understanding developing countries and we both enjoyed it and were educated by it. There is a beautiful story in this book about the love of sisters and families (it's not all sad)and I loved reading about the author's life at the back. How do genocides occur like the one the Cambodian Khmer Rouge committed (or Sudan or Rwanda)without a lot of notice by the world?

It made me think of the Cambodian refugee who came to school knowing no English when I was in second grade. I wish we all had more understanding of what he and his family probably went through.

KidsFiction Teton County Library says

TCL call number: J Ho

no rating

I was captivated by this book -- I couldn't stop reading it until I finished it. It is a story told by the main character, Nakri (first person narrative), about her life in Cambodia, growing up during the terrifying reign of the Communist Khmer rouge, and her family's eventual migration to the United States. This book gives a very realistic glimpse into the life of a family immigrating to the U.S.

Nakri's story tells of the "long dark years of living in terror under the Khmer Rouge, the struggle to escape, and then to adapt to a new life" in the U.S., where everything is different: clothes, weather, language, food, etc. Throughout the turmoil in her life, Nakri retains links to her Cambodian heritage and lost family members by dancing, as she did with her beloved sister before her world was shattered.

Mary Ann says

The Stone Goddess also follows a child sent to labor camps by the Khmer Rouge, but this story follows Nakri, a 12-year old living in the capital city of Phnom Penh. Nakri's family fled the city when the soldiers invade, going to live with her grandparents in a small village. But they were still not safe. She was forced to go to a labor camp with her older sister and brother. Nakri's sister was trained in classical Cambodian dance, and this beautiful, almost spiritual dance provided an emotional rock for Nakri.

The story is riveting, and at times horrifying as you watch the soldiers threatening Nakri's sister and brother, and you realize how many children were dying. Eventually, Nakri and her brother reunited with their parents and emigrated to the United States. But Nakri struggled. "I should have felt happy with this new life, but there was an air of unreality to it all, as if my eyes were floating above me, and watching me go through the motions of living here."

The author of The Stone Goddess, Minfong Ho, was born in Burma and grew up in Thailand, working in 1980 in refugee camps on the Thai-Cambodian border. It is clear through her novel that she empathizes deeply with Khmer refugees like Nakri. It's a powerful story that would captivate tweens and teens (grades 5 and above) who want to know more about this hard period of history and how one family struggled to survive.

Jessica says

I really enjoyed reading this multicultural book. It seemed like it was historical fiction as well because it was based on the Vietnam War and the fight against communism. I was really emotionally attached to this book and I felt for the Cambodian refugees. I have never had an experience like that but my father served a mission where there were many Cambodian refugees and this might be what their story might be like. Also,

any immigrant could feel the way this family did when they came to the United States. My parents both came to the United States- my father when he was a child, and my mother when she was in college. It must have been difficult for them to adjust and it might have felt somewhat like what this family felt.

One thing I did not like was that the ending was cut short. I thought it would go on to talk about how they ended up in America. It just stopped at a point where Nakri had adjusted to her new environment a little and started dancing again, preserving her culture.

Overall, I really enjoyed this book.

Asferdinand says

Really amazing book. Covers the Khmer Rouge genocide and a family's subsequent settling in the US through the eyes of a young girl in a compassionate, artful way. As someone who works with refugees, asylum seekers and other migrants, I would very highly recommend this book to a YA reader or anyone else.

Stephanie A. says

A powerful, moving story set against a background I'd never read about in detail. It splits the difference between their harsh homeland the confusion of transplanting to America very well, something that really impressed me since I'm often left cold and unmoved by multicultural stories. This reached across the divide and made me appreciate something completely different from my perception of life.

Ian Tymms says

Lovely story of Cambodian girl Nakri who is training in the footsteps of her older sister to be a classical dancer. The Khmer Rouge turn their world upside down and Nakri spends the next few years in a "work camp". The novel depicts the tragedy and horror of Cambodia under the Khmer Rouge but manages also to find beauty and hope in its conclusions. Ho has a way of facing up to the realities of history without becoming fatalistic or pessimistic. A novel I would encourage my Middle School students to read but also adult readers.

Ariana says

I read this YA historical fiction narrative in one night. It beautifully paints a picture of a young girl's experience surviving the 1970s civil war in Cambodia and the resulting horrors and triumphs. I was touched by the family relationships and account of the protagonist's arrival as a refugee in the United States. This is a great primer for anyone who wants an engaging, personal account of what it meant to be Cambodian at this time.

Linda Prieskorn says

Absolutely fantastic YP novel. Why it didn't make more of an impact is beyond me. It tells the struggle of one Cambodian girl and her family as the Khmer Rouge over take the country. One horrific fact - 1/4 of the Cambodian population died during this time. In equivalency terms that same as 15 9/11's happening every day for 4 years. 2 million out of 8 million died, beaten, killed, starved or died from the sheer exhaustion of working in concentration camps.

This highlights one of my major soap boxes, Why do we only teach about the Jewish holocaust and Anne Frank, our kids need to know about the multitude of Holocausts that have happened on every continent over the course of human history.

Note. This book is not longer in print - prepublication title was Gathering the Dew which comes from the myth of Mekhala a hindu goddess.

Ms. Erin says

Sad and touching story about a family torn apart during the Cambodia Civil War.

Mandie says

Cambodia in the 1970's. The Khmer Rouge has taken over bringing communism to the country. From Nakri Sokha and her family, it means fleeing from their home in the capital city of Phnom Penh. They flee to her grandparents' village where they first learn of the New Society. Her father is taken away by soldiers, and she and her older brother and sister are forced into a labor camp. After several years and many hardships, their family is reunited different than before. They flee to Thailand as refugees and try to rebuild their lives.

The story is told through Nakri who idolizes her older sister, Teeda. Both girls have been taught the traditional dance by their mother, and her sister's dream is to dance the dance of the apsara (the stone goddesses). The tradition of the dance and the stories it portrays are woven throughout the story and bring culture and local color to the plot. The dance symbolizes hope and making your way through the darkness into the light; "to live fully, with joy."

Well written and full of tradition and emotion, this book is a wonderful historical novel.
