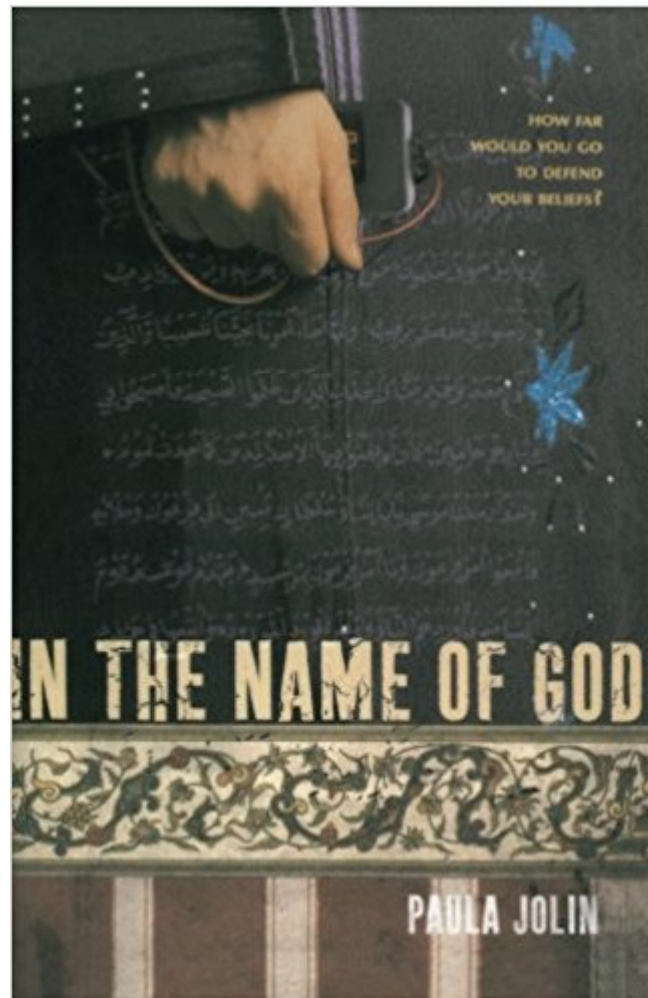




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In The Name Of God



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Synopsis

They talked about doing things, of course, these macho cousins and uncles of mine. But nothing happens. God did not reward the Muslims for waiting in patience while the Unbelievers picked them off one by one, did He? God helps she who helps herself, she who helps the Muslims. Someone has to take control, right? I've already decided that someone will be me. Nadia is an excellent student, daughter, and sister, living in Damascus, Syria. Above all, she strives to walk the straight path and follow the laws of Islam. But she's confused by the world around her and how she fits into it. She's conflicted about her Westernized cousins, the internal struggles of her country, and the war raging in Iraq. When her cousin is arrested by Syrian authorities for speaking out—she's betrayed by someone in the family—Nadia finds herself drawn into the dark world of Islamic fundamentalism. And she's about to face the biggest decision of her life.

Book Information

Paperback: 208 pages

Publisher: Square Fish; Reprint edition (October 28, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0312384556

ISBN-13: 978-0312384555

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.5 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #963,565 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #9 in [Books > Teens >](#)

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Customer Reviews

Grade 8 Up—In this believable depiction of the growth of religious zealotry, 17-year-old Nadia describes the period after her cousin's arrest by the Syrian secret police. Already committed to Islam, she moves toward fanaticism, actually seeking out an attractive man whom she hopes will help her to learn more about the revolutionary cause. Moderates in her family attempt to counter her extremism; this is not the kind of flirtation her mother expected of a teenage daughter, and the mother's quiet example of a different Muslim way is the most appealing part of this unsettling picture. Nadia's internal and external arguments provide a stark vision of how others see the U.S.

Jolin effectively works in every negative impression, real or perceived, about America and its foreign policy. Beyond the usual stereotypes of American commercialism, there are comments on 9/11 and the war in Iraq, quotations from George Bush, and allegations of worldwide Jewish conspiracies. American readers may find that Nadia's change from an ambitious student to a suicide bomber comes a bit too quickly. But the author's Islamic studies and long residence in the Middle East help make this a convincing picture of life in present-day Damascus, and the suspense will keep readers engaged.

—Kathleen Isaacs, Towson University, MD Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Set in contemporary Damascus, Jolin's debut novel is a groundbreaking story of a Syrian teen drawn into Islamic Fundamentalism. Seventeen-year-old Nadia is surrounded by devout Muslim family members, but it's her cousin Fowzi who becomes a role model for her increasingly hard-line religious and political views. Then Fowzi is arrested for speaking out against the government, and Nadia's urgency to carry her beliefs into action leads to her recruitment in a radical group. When she is asked to become a suicide bomber, she agrees. Jolin's novel is certainly provocative, but at times the story reads like a docu-novel: carefully inserted historical and cultural facts occasionally interrupt the narrative, and the characters' religious and political debates sometimes seem purposefully calibrated to show as many viewpoints as possible. However, there are very few novels for young people that give such a comprehensive sense of a contemporary Muslim Arab teen's daily life and concerns. Writing with compassion and sensitivity, Jolin shows the volatile mix of vulnerabilities, passions, anger, fear, yearning, and devotion that pulls Nadia toward her shocking choices, which culminate in a heart-stopping ending. In framing Nadia's questions about faith, Jolin creates an essential starting place for teens to examine their own views about Western culture, the Middle East, the division of church and state, terrorism, and how fear and hate, faith and love affect everything. Cathryn Clinton's *A Stone in My Hand* (2002) and Naomi Shihab Nye's *19 Varieties of Gazelle* (2002) will continue the discussion. Gillian Engberg

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What a great book, Was recommended to me by a high school teacher saying she had learned so much from the book and wanted every student she had to read it. I agree. It would make our young people so understand what we are facing as a nation . It is also a great read as well as a marvelous learning experienc.

I love this book. It's a gifted writer who can take me to the place where I can understand how a person could decide to get involved in terrorism. And gifted, too, to be able to end a dark book with a realistic hopefulness.

I read *In the Name of God* by Paula Jolin while I was on vacation. I was intrigued with the premise of a young Muslim girl and with the setting of Syria. There are many books that take place in the Middle East but there are few that chose Syria as home. So I was interested to learn more of this country. I was quickly to be disappointed in that wish. This book may take place in Syria but references to the country are few and the descriptions seem to generic to the region. At no time did I get a sense of Syria as a country. Which, as I've said, disappointed me since that is part of why I bought this book. The main character of the story is a 17 year old girl named Nadia. She is a devout Muslim struggling to survive and deal with the various family issues that are going on around her. I found Nadia to be young, naive and flighty. This made it hard to connect with her and care about her story. She starts off the novel determined to go to medical school and to help her Westernized cousins to find the true path of a Muslim Woman and get them to take up the veil. Nadia is also dealing with a crush on the older brother of those cousins, who just happens to have very radical ideas. It isn't long before this cousin is arrested for his beliefs/actions and the impressionable Nadia soon takes up his cause with a zeal that is in no way believable. Her move from devout to fanatic is too quick and seemingly without reason. Other than the fact that her beloved cousin was a fanatic and if she takes up his cause then he might love her...that is of course if she ever sees him again. At first it seems like her new found fanaticism will be short lived but amazingly enough she manages to get in contact with the same group that her cousin belonged. Nadia then jumps in with two feet - mostly in her head - and has to meet many many times with a group member in order to convince him of her desire to be a part of the cause. Then just as fast as she joins the cause the book is over. Nadia changes personality and beliefs so much throughout the novel that I never could quite believe that she was real. She changed with the wind and there was often no rhyme nor reason to her changes in attitude. This book also relies too much on stereotyping how Islamic nations look at the western world and at America. It also doesn't go much into the faiths and beliefs of Islam and all the familial interactions seem stale and a little forced.

I just finished this book moments ago. I received an advanced copy years ago, but I didn't have a chance to read it until now. With Syria in the news so much these days, I think this is an important

book to read. Reading it is a huge exercise in putting yourself in someone else's shoes. One of the most important lessons I learned in college in an anthropology class about the Middle East, no less, is that it's possible to understand and even sympathize or empathize with what someone's feelings or actions are without necessarily condoning or justifying those feelings or actions. I was reminded of this lesson while reading this. Nadia, the main character, is trying very hard to be the best Muslim she can be. Meanwhile, she is outraged at the oppression that Muslims face around the world at the hands of the US and European countries. Her desperation, her sadness, her resolve to find a solution is something that I think a lot of people can relate to, even if they might feel defensive or angry when she rails against the West. Nadia's internal struggle about how to be moral, how to make a difference, and how to live up to her ideals is enthralling.

In the name of God was a very unusual book. It's how a 17 year old girl, Nadia, turns from being a devout Muslim to a fanatic. It makes us realize that there is a very thin line between the very religious and the fanatic if there are people who know how to exploit it. Nadia lives in Damascus, Syria with her mother and brother. Nadia just wants to walk the path of God, do whatever he asks and be a good Muslim. But when the conditions in Syria worsen, the conflicts between the Muslims and the Syrian Government are on the rise and American Bombs are attacking the neighboring countries, Nadia is forced to direct her devotion on a path that she thinks will take her directly to heaven. In the name of God gives us a good insight into how a transformation like this can occur and how people are ready to do anything for religion. There were some of the arguments that I had to agree made sense. I had to agree with Nadia's point of view at times. But sometimes, even if I did understand I did not agree with her. This book could work both ways actually. It could be a great read for American teens to see the world from others eyes. I would like to think most of them already know the consequences of the war but this book would give them an experience of being on the other side of the fence. On the other hand, I hate to say this, but this book could feed into the psyche of someone who is already on the path of being a fanatic because the arguments in this book are good on both sides. But as we all know, people see what they want to. I just hope what I'm saying is wrong because this book is good and deserves a wider readership. One more thing, it's a YA book but I don't know what else can be called a cross over, if not this. Note: You need to know the basics of Syrian history. Just Google a bit and you're set to go.

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