

Title: *The Lines We Cross*
Author: Randa Abdel-Fattah
Category: Challenging the Status Quo

Response Submitted By: Owen M., 9 th Grade

Date Submitted: November 11, 2020

1. What is the main plot of this book?

This book is about two people from very different walks of life finding out who they want to be, without their parents' beliefs getting in the way. The main characters, Mina and Michael come from very different backgrounds. One is a refugee from Afghanistan that has gone through hardship after hardship to get to Australia and the other is the son of the leaders of a white supremacist group called Aussie Values that hates any group of people coming into the country and “stealing their jobs”. The two end up in the same school and after months of tension end up bonding over a Lord of the Rings marathon with a few of Mina’s new friends. Shortly thereafter Mina’s parents, who had purchased a local restaurant and were just starting to get business running, were attacked by unnamed people who broke windows and tables in a racist frenzy all because they serve Hallal food and these people believed that Hallal food’s processes would be sent to terrorist groups. Michael’s father is the leader of the group and this leads them into a downward spiral between family and morals.

2. Which character did you most identify with and why?

There was no character that I truly identified with, each character was unique in a way that was meant to progress the story, instead of being identified with. I’m sure certain people would have no problem identifying with these characters, but only if they had gone through a similar experience.

3. What do you believe is the main message of this book?

I believe the main message of this book is acceptance. The main character is an immigrant that came to Australia to escape the horrors of Afghanistan, all she does is try and fit in while still retaining her culture. When Michael and Mina first interact you see that Michael has a racist outlook toward her, put there by his parents.

4. Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too “preachy”?

I believe the main message was very subtly thrown into the mix, and made clear through numerous transactions. Michael and his friends have learned to accept the mental disabilities of others, but they can't accept someone of a different culture. They are one in the same when you think about it. Whether you like it or not, it's part of who you are and you should not have to hide it.

5. If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?

The two perspectives presented in this novel were the defendants of racist beliefs and the opposer of those beliefs. I personally aligned myself with the opposers, but because the book was written with each character's perspective, as well as their parents and individual friend groups views, I could feel myself start to believe the defenders.

6. In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about the topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?

My beliefs were not changed in any way, if anything they were stabilized. The ideas that were floated through this book were very much things I can believe and I understand.

7. What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?

If there was a perspective here it would have to be someone who wanted to escape to Australia from Afghanistan and knew nothing about the going ons that others have to deal with. However this is done a small bit with Mina's coming to Australia that is touched upon later in the book.

8. Did this book encourage you to pursue any topic further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?

This book did make me want to research more thoroughly into the ideas presented, but I haven't started that endeavor yet.

9. What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?

A teen would do fine with this. It is a well written book, easy to comprehend and in no way inappropriate. I believe all people should be educated in this way.

10. What other book(s) have you read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?

I believe the book _____ would make a great addition, it is a book based on the killing of the neo nazi leader Jeff Hall. (I can't remember the book's name but it has a picture of combat boots with red laces dripping blood on the cover.)***

*****Teen Librarian's Note:** I believe that Owen is referring to *Devils Within* by S.F. Henson.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Kylee K., 11th Grade

Date Reviewed: 11/18/2023

1. What is the main plot of this book?

The main plot of "The Lines We Cross" revolves around the evolving relationship between Michael and Mina, two teenagers from opposing backgrounds. As their paths intertwine, they confront the complexities of their beliefs and identities amidst a backdrop of social and political tensions surrounding immigration.

2. Which character did you most identify with and why?

I found myself identifying most with Mina, particularly when she reflects on the complexities of her identity as an Afghan refugee in Australia. Her struggles to reconcile her heritage with her desire for acceptance resonate deeply, reflecting my own quest for belonging and self-discovery.

3. What do you believe is the main message of this book?

The main message of "The Lines We Cross" seems to emphasize the importance of empathy and understanding in bridging divides and fostering meaningful connections across cultural and ideological boundaries. As Mina confronts prejudice and discrimination, her journey underscores the transformative power of compassion and solidarity in overcoming fear and ignorance.

4. Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?

The main message was effectively integrated into the story, resonating through poignant moments such as when Mina challenges Michael's preconceptions about refugees: "It's like you're saying, 'You can't come to my house, but I want to come to yours.'" This quote encapsulates the heart of the message without feeling overly didactic, enriching the narrative with emotional depth and authenticity.

5. *If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?*

While the book presents various perspectives on immigration and cultural identity, I found myself agreeing most with Mina's perspective, which emphasizes the importance of empathy and understanding: "Because I understand what it's like to have everything taken away from you and be given nothing back." Her firsthand experience as a refugee lends credibility to her viewpoint, highlighting the human cost of exclusionary policies and attitudes.

6. *In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?*

Reading this book reaffirmed my belief in the power of empathy and dialogue in fostering understanding and reconciliation. As Michael and Mina navigate their differences, their journey serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of listening to diverse perspectives and challenging ingrained biases.

7. *What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?*

While the book offers a nuanced exploration of immigration and identity, it could have delved deeper into the experiences of indigenous communities in Australia, whose voices are often marginalized in discussions about belonging and cultural heritage.

8. *Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?*

This book inspired me to delve deeper into issues surrounding immigration and refugee rights, prompting further reading and research to better understand the complexities of these topics and explore avenues for advocacy and activism.

9. *What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?*

I would recommend this book to young adult readers interested in thought-provoking narratives that explore themes of identity, social justice, and the power of human connection. Its accessible yet profound storytelling makes it suitable for a wide range of readers seeking to broaden their understanding of contemporary issues.

10. *What other book(s) you have read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?*

Another book that would complement "The Lines We Cross" is "The Hate U Give" by Angie Thomas, as it similarly explores themes of identity, privilege, and social activism through a compelling narrative that resonates with readers of all ages.