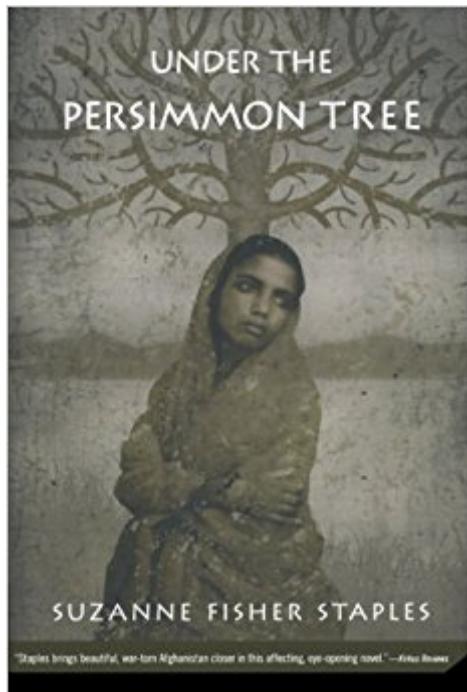


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# Under The Persimmon Tree



## **Synopsis**

Najmah, a young Afghan girl whose name means "star," suddenly finds herself alone when her father and older brother are conscripted by the Taliban and her mother and newborn brother are killed in an air raid. An American woman, Elaine, whose Islamic name is Nusrat, is also on her own. She waits out the war in Peshawar, Pakistan, teaching refugee children under the persimmon tree in her garden while her Afghan doctor husband runs a clinic in Mazar-i-Sharif, Afghanistan. Najmah's father had always assured her that the stars would take care of her, just as Nusrat's husband had promised that they would tell Nusrat where he was and that he was safe. As the two look to the skies for answers, their fates entwine. Najmah, seeking refuge and hoping to find her father and brother, begins the perilous journey through the mountains to cross the border into Pakistan. And Nusrat's persimmon-tree school awaits Najmah's arrival. Together, they both seek their way home. Known for her award-winning fiction set in South Asia, Suzanne Fisher Staples revisits that part of the world in this beautifully written, heartrending novel. *Under the Persimmon Tree* is a 2006 Bank Street - Best Children's Book of the Year.

## **Book Information**

Lexile Measure: 1010L (What's this?)

Paperback: 281 pages

Publisher: Square Fish; Reprint edition (April 1, 2008)

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Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 20.3 x 8.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 3.9 out of 5 stars 26 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #188,383 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #125 in Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Military #7968 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction #36684 in Books > Children's Books

Age Range: 12 - 18 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

## **Customer Reviews**

Grade 5-8 -When her father and brother are taken by the Taliban and her mother and baby brother are killed in a bombing raid during the Afghan war in October 2001, Najmah begins an arduous

journey across the border to Peshawar, Pakistan. There, she meets up with an American woman, Nusrat, who has been conducting a school for refugee children while she waits for her husband, Faiz, who has returned to his native country to open medical clinics. For most of the story, the narration alternates between Najmah and Nusrat, allowing readers to see the war's effect on both of their lives. Only when they meet can they come to terms with their losses and move on. However, readers may feel unsatisfied with the ending. Having cared for the characters and been involved in their lives, they will want to know what happens to them. The use of an American allows the author to provide a clearer description of this unfamiliar world, but because Nusrat is a grown woman, her concerns may be of less interest to readers than those of Najmah, an enterprising and enormously courageous girl. Still, Staples brings the world of the refugee camp to life. Middle grade readers and the adults who teach them will welcome this fascinating glimpse into a world about which far too little has been written.-Kathleen Isaacs, formerly at Edmund Burke School, Washington, DC

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**\*Starred Review\*** Gr. 7-10. In the mountains of northern Afghanistan after 9/11, Najmah watches in horror as the brutal Taliban kidnap her father and older brother. Will they ever return home? When her mother and baby brother die in an American air raid, she stops speaking, and, disguised as a boy, makes a perilous journey to a refugee camp in Pakistan. In a parallel narrative, Nusrat (her American name was Elaine), who converted to Islam when she met Faiz in New York, has set up a rough school for the refugees. She has had no news of Faiz, her husband, since he left to establish a clinic in the north. The two stories come together when Najmah and Nusrat meet in the camp, where they wait in anguish for news of the people they love. Staples weaves a lot of history and politics into her story (including information about the Taliban's suppression of women), and she includes a map, a glossary, and brief background notes to give even more context. But as with her Newbery Honor Book, *Shabanu* (1989), it's the personal story, not the history, that compels as it takes readers beyond the modern stereotypes of Muslims as fundamentalist fanatics. There are no sweet reunions, but there's hope in heartbreaking scenes of kindness and courage. For another book about post-9/11 Afghanistan, suggest Catherine Stine's *Refugees* (2004). Hazel Rochman

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I love reading but the characters that relate to me the most are all dead in the end....so if you don't

have any younger siblings or parents I would read this but the parents and little children all die don't read this unless you are for a school assignment because it is very sad an makes me worry about my family and if today is the last time I'll see them.):

Book received with water damage.

Shipped fast and served its purpose for sons summer reading program.

Read with a box of tissue.

I hate to read but this is looking so far very good. If i can get into the first chapter i am in.

A great read for middle school and beyond. Easy read, great story and wonderful lessons to be learned. Brings new perspective to a very sensitive topic.

bought this for a siblings course requirement. does what it needs too. this was a good purchase at a reasonable price.

Good read.

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