AND THE MOUNTAINS ECHOED
STUDY GUIDE & DIALECTICAL JOURNAL
And the Mountains Echoed Study Guide

Study Guide Part I (Chapters One-Three)

Chapter One
1. What narrative form does the author use to begin his novel?
2. Who narrates the Baba Ayub story?
3. What choice does Baba Ayub have to make? What does he choose to do?
4. What did Baba Ayub see behind the curtain at the Div’s fort?
5. According to the Div, Baba Ayub is courageous. Is this so?
6. The Div tells Baba Ayub “cruelty and benevolence are but shades of the same color.” Explain.
7. Does the Baba Ayub story remind you of other stories, fables, or myths that you have read?
8. What is the significance of the “high-pitched jingle” of a bell sound?
9. What characters are introduced in this chapter?
10. Predict what will happen next.

Chapter Two
1. Identify the change in narration from Chapter One to Chapter Two.
2. Where are Saboor, Abdullah and Pari coming from and where are they going?
3. Create a genealogical tree showing the relationship between the following characters: Saboor, Iqbal, Abdullah, Pari, Uncle Nabi, Mother, Parwana, and Omar.
4. Is this chapter, the author describes several characters: Father, Mother, Pari, Shuja the dog, and Uncle Nabi. Select the words or phrases that provide your favorite description of one of these characters. What is it about the author’s word choice or phrasing that makes a good description?
5. What do you see, smell, hear, and taste in Kabul? Cite key words or phrases that the author employs to convey these sensory details.
6. When Abdullah entered the home of Mr. and Mrs. Wahdati, he “felt as though he had stepped into the Div’s palace.” Does the phrase “Div’s palace” convey a sense of delight or foreboding?
7. Describe or sketch the Wahdati home.
8. How does the author build tension between Chapters One and Two?
9. What is the significance of the giant oak tree?
10. What challenge does Saboor face? What does he decide to do?
11. Why does Abdullah “turn his face up to the sky and wail”? p.45
12. Would the novel make sense in a setting other than 1950’s Afghanistan? If so, where would you transport these characters?

Chapter Three
1. How does the setting change in Chapter Three?
2. Who is Masooma? Why does she feel shame?
3. How do Masooma and Parwana feel about each other?
4. How do the external appearances of Masooma and Parwana differ? Choose a word, phrase or event from the chapter that solidifies this notion.
5. What tragic event takes place in this chapter? Whose future does it impact and how?
6. Masooma asks Parwana to take her to Kabul. However, what is her real wish?
7. What challenge does Parwana face in the desert? How does she resolve it?
8. Select your favorite imagery or figurative language from this chapter. Describe or sketch what you see, feel, hear, or smell.
9. Are any patterns or symbols emerging in the novel?
10. Imagine you are tweeting the most important events in the novel thus far. What would you tweet in 140 characters or less?

Study Guide Part II (Chapters Four-Seven)

Chapter Four
1. What narrative form does the author employ in this chapter? Why might the author want to use this technique to help tell the story?
2. Describe the change in setting.
3. What is Nabi’s job?
4. What characters are introduced and/or developed in this chapter?
5. According to Nabi, does Suleiman Wahdati live a fulfilled life?
6. What character trait(s) does Nabi deem important in a person?
7. What ritual enabled Nabi to interact with Nila once or twice a week?
8. What medical condition befalls Mr. Wahdati? How does this impact plot and characterization?
9. Nila says to Nabi, “It was always you. Didn’t you know?” but Nabi doesn’t understand. What does Nabi “understand” when he discovers Mr. Wahdati’s sketches?
10. How much time is covered in Nabi’s letter to Mr. Markos?
11. What role does culture play in this chapter of the novel?
12. Contrast the Wahdati home of the 1950s with the 1990s.
13. Cite an example of foreshadowing from the novel thus far.

Chapter 5
1. Describe Idris and Timur.
2. How do Idris and Timur feel about one another? Does this parallel other characters’ relationships in the novel?
3. Timur says of Nabi’s decision to let Markos use his home, “Well, either you hate money, old friend or you are a far better man than I am.” Which is it?
4. Who is the “quintessential ugly Afghan-American” according to Idris?
5. Cite examples of characters haunted by their memories in the novel thus far.
6. How does Idris describe “stories” to Amra?
7. What gift does Roshi receive from Idris?
8. How are Masooma and Roshi’s lives similar? How are they different?
9. What character is re-introduced to the reader at Abe’s Kabob House?
10. Compare the change in settings from Kabul to the Bay Area in this chapter. How does the author create a stark contrast between the two settings?
11. Describe Idris’ internal conflict once he returns from Kabul.
12. What role does culture play in this chapter of the novel?
13. Describe the exchange between Roshi and Idris at the end of the chapter.
14. Choose one word to describe the mood of the novel.

Chapter Six
1. Where and when does this chapter take place?
2. What narrative form does the author use in this chapter? How does the change in narrative impact the reader’s understanding of Nila?
3. Describe the relationship between Nila and Pari.
4. How has Nila developed or changed since the readers last saw her?
5. When the reader reads that Pari senses an “absence of something” – for example when she saw a "massive oak tree" outside a farmhouse in Provence, what does the reader know about Pari that Pari herself does not know?
6. The interviewer writes of Nila’s poems that there is often a “sense of struggle against the tyranny of circumstance.” How does this notion repeat itself throughout the novel?
7. Nila tells the interviewer that the creative process is a “necessarily thievish undertaking…” stealing the “desires...dreams...and suffering” of others. Cite an example from the text that supports or negates Nila’s opinion.
8. Compare Pari’s life to that of Qais.
9. Identify the major and minor characters in this section of the novel.
10. Select a minor character and explain what value the character adds to the novel.
11. Describe Pari as a mother and wife.
12. Create a fictitious text to a friend. “Text” the most important events from the chapter.

Chapter Seven
1. Where and when does this chapter take place?
2. How do Gholam and Adel feel about each other?
3. How does Gholam link to characters found earlier in the novel?
4. Where has Gholam spent most of his life?
5. What does Gholam recount about the oak tree?
6. The author writes of Adel “Gholam may have cracked a door open to him, but it was Baba Jan who had pushed him through it.” Explain.
7. How is adulthood like being a war hero?
8. Describe the character for whom you have the most sympathy.
9. Compare the significance of the oak tree in this chapter to that of the beginning in the novel.

**Study Guide Part III (Chapters Eight – Nine)**

**Chapter Eight**
1. What characters are introduced in this chapter?
2. How does the setting change in this part of the novel?
3. How does the narration change in this part of the novel?
4. Predict how this chapter will link to the previous chapters of the novel.
5. Markos tells the reader “...I have not told Mama about Nila Wahdati, her escape to Paris after her husband’s stroke, the decades Nabil spent caring for Suleiman. That history. Too many boomeranging parallels. Like reading aloud your own indictment.” Reflect and comment on this quote.
6. Markos states that Pari wants to go to Shadbahg. Why does she want to go there?
7. Select a phrase or phrases that highlight the author’s use of sensory detail to get the reader to envision Thalia’s scar.
8. What does Mama think of Madaline?
9. What piece of technology does Thalia build for Markos?
10. Once Markos becomes a surgeon, he offers to operate on Thalia. Does Thalia need to be “fixed”?
11. When Markos returns to Tinos, what does he realize about the nature of his relationship with his mother? How does this differ from other parent/child relationships detailed in the novel? How is his relationship similar to others in the novel?
12. Does the author portray his characters as good, evil or somewhere in between?
13. Markos tells the reader “Beauty is an enormous, unmerited gift given randomly, stupidly.” Trace the impact that the absence of beauty has on characters throughout the novel.
14. Markos doesn’t want Thalia to be the one reason he chose plastic surgery as a profession. Rather, he finds comfort... “in the idea of a pattern, of a narrative of my life taking shape, like a photograph in a darkroom, a story that slowly emerges and affirms the good I have always wanted to see in myself.” This story, he says, “sustains him.” Find evidence of the pattern Markos describes. Do other characters have a story that sustains them?

**Chapter Nine**
1. Describe the change in setting and narration in the final chapter.
2. Complete a plot diagram. What is the falling action of the story? How do the storylines connect?
3. Who are the major and minor characters in this chapter?
4. What is Abdullah’s medical condition? Why is this relevant to the story?
5. How does the young Pari’s Afghan heritage impact her American life? Where else in the novel has the author explored a similar theme?
6. Detail the young Pari’s figurative and literal journey over the course of the chapter.
7. Describe what Abdullah gives to the elder Pari (via the younger Pari) after all these years? Does it hold any significance for the elder Pari?
8. How does the title of the novel relate to the structure of the novel?
10. Do some characters stand out as more honorable than others?
11. What are the major themes in the novel?
12. Revisit the novel’s epigraph – the Rumi poem. What connection should the reader draw between the actions of the characters and the notion of a field “out beyond ideas of wrongdoing and rightdoing?” Is there a universal truth the reader could apply to real-world situations?
## Dialectical Journal

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