

## DELVE DEEPER READING LIST

# THE WAR TO BE HER

A film by Erin Heidenreich



This list of fiction and nonfiction books, compiled by Susan Conlon, MLS and Kim Dorman, Community Engagement Coordinator of Princeton Public Library, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the POV documentary *The War to be Her*.

*In Waziristan, “one of the most dangerous places on earth”, Maria Toorpakai defies the Taliban, disguising herself as a boy so she can play sports freely. But when she becomes a rising star, her true identity is revealed and death threats force Maria to leave her country. Undeterred, Maria decides to return facing the danger and to play the sport she loves.*

## ADULT NONFICTION

**Talbot, Ian. *Pakistan: A Modern History*. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.**

This book fills the need for a broad, historically sophisticated understanding of Pakistan, a country at fifty which is understood by many in the West only in terms of stereotypes—the fanatical, authoritarian and reactionary “other” which is unfavorably compared to a tolerant, democratic and progressive India. There is a need at the time of Pakistan’s golden jubilee for it to be taken seriously in its own right as a country of 130 million people.

**Rashid, Ahmed. *Descent into Chaos: The United States & the Failure of Nation Building in Pakistan, Afghanistan and Central Asia*. Viking Books, 2008.**

After September 11th, Ahmed Rashid’s crucial book *Taliban* introduced American readers to that now notorious regime. In this new work, he returns to Pakistan, Afghanistan, and Central Asia to review the catastrophic aftermath of America’s failed war on terror.

**Lieven, Anatol. *Pakistan: A Hard Country*. Penguin Books, 2012.**

With almost 200 million people, a 500,000-man army, nuclear weapons, and a large diaspora in Britain and North America, Pakistan is central to the hopes of jihadis and the fears of their enemies. Yet the greatest short-term threat to Pakistan is not Islamist insurgency as such, but the actions of the United States, and the greatest long-term threat is ecological change.

**Toorpakai, Maria and Katharine Holstein. *A Different Kind of Daughter: A Girl Who Hid From the Taliban in Plain Sight*. Twelve, 2016.**

Maria Toorpakai Wazir has lived her life disguised as a boy, defying the Taliban, in order to pursue her love of sport. Coming second in a national junior weightlifting event for boys, Maria decided to put her future in her own hands by going in disguise. When she discovered squash and was easily beating all the boys, life became more dangerous.

**Zakaria, Rafia. *The Upstairs Wife: An Intimate History of Pakistan*. Beacon Press, 2015.**

For a brief moment on December 27, 2007, life came to a standstill in Pakistan. Benazir Bhutto, the country’s former prime minister and the first woman ever to lead a Muslim country, had been assassinated at a political rally just outside Islamabad. Back in Karachi—Bhutto’s birthplace and Pakistan’s other great metropolis—Rafia Zakaria’s family was suffering through a crisis of its own: her Uncle Sohail, the man who had brought shame upon the family, was near death. In that moment these twin catastrophes—one political and public, the other secret and intensely personal—briefly converged.

**Suleri, Sara. *Meatless Days*. University of Chicago Press, 1989.**

*Meatless Days* is a searing memoir of life in the newly-created country of Pakistan. When sudden and shocking tragedies hit the author’s family two years apart, her personal crisis spirals into a wider meditation on universal questions: about being a woman when you’re too busy being a mother or a sister or a wife to consider your own womanhood; about how it feels to begin life in a new language; about how our lives are changed by the people that leave them.

## ADULT FICTION

**Shamsie, Kamila. *Home Fire*. Penguin Random House, 2017.**

Isma is free. After years of watching out for her younger siblings in the wake of their mother’s death, she’s accepted an invitation from a mentor in America that allows her to resume a dream long deferred. But she can’t stop worrying about Aneeka, her beautiful, headstrong sister back in London, or their brother, Parvaiz, who’s disappeared in pursuit of his own dream, to prove himself to the dark legacy of the jihadist father he never knew. When he resurfaces half a globe away, Isma’s worst fears are confirmed.

**Ahmad, Jamil. *The Wandering Falcon*. Riverhead Books, 2012.**

Tor Baz, known as the Wandering Falcon, is a young boy who roams the Federally Administered Tribal Area between Pakistan and Afghanistan. The area has become politically volatile and dangerous since the Taliban’s takeover. As Baz traverses the FATA, he encounters the inhabitants that give this land its reputation for danger—but also for humanity and love. This book is a glimpse into the clash between tradition and modernity that is playing out in a poorly understood region of modern-day Pakistan.

**Bhutto, Fatima. *The Shadow of the Crescent Moon*. Penguin Books, 2013.**

*The Shadow of the Crescent Moon* begins and ends one rain-swept Friday morning in Mir Ali, a small town in Pakistan's Tribal Areas close to the Afghan border. Three brothers meet for breakfast. Soon after, the eldest, Aman Erum, recently returned from America, hails a taxi to the local mosque. Sikandar, a doctor, drives to the hospital where he works, but must first stop to collect his troubled wife, Mina, who has not joined the family that morning. No one knows where Mina goes these days. But when, later in the morning, the two are taken hostage by members of the Taliban, Mina will prove to be stronger than anyone could have imagined.

**Hanif, Mohammed. *A Case of Exploding Mangoes*. Vintage, 2009.**

Ali Shigri, Pakistan Air Force pilot and Silent Drill Commander of the Fury Squadron, is on a mission to avenge his father's suspicious death, which the government calls a suicide. Ali's target is none other than General Zia ul-Haq, dictator of Pakistani. Enlisting a rag-tag group of conspirators, including his cologne-bathed roommate, a hash-smoking American lieutenant, and a mango-besotted crow, Ali sets his elaborate plan in motion. There's only one problem: the line of would-be Zia assassins is longer than he could have possibly known.

**Haji, Nafisa. *The Writing on my Forehead*. William Morrow, 2009.**

A free-spirited and rebellious Muslim-American of Indo-Pakistani descent, willful, intelligent Saira Qader rejected the constricting notions of family, duty, obligation, and fate, choosing instead to become a journalist, making the world her home. But when tragedy strikes, throwing Saira's life into turmoil, the woman who circled the globe to uncover the details of other lives must confront the truths of her own. In need of understanding, she looks to the stories of those who came before—her grandparents, a beloved aunt, her mother and father.

**Hamid, Mosin. *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. Harcourt Press, 2007.**

Changez is living an immigrant's dream of America. At the top of his class at Princeton he is snapped up by an elite valuation firm. He thrives on the energy of New York, and his budding romance with elegant, beautiful Erica promises entry into Manhattan society at the same exalted level once occupied by his own family back in Lahore. But in the wake of September 11, Changez finds his position in his adopted city suddenly overturned, and his relationship with Erica shifting.

## NONFICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

**Yousafzai, Malala. *I am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban*. Little Brown and Company, 2013.**

*I Am Malala* is the remarkable tale of a family uprooted by global terrorism, of the fight for girls' education, of a father who, himself a school owner, championed and

encouraged his daughter to write and attend school, and of brave parents who have a fierce love for their daughter in a society that prizes sons.

**Razzak, Shazia. *P. is for Pakistan*. Frances Lincoln Children's, 2007.**

Each letter of the alphabet is associated with a word in Urdu or English that has something to do with Pakistan's history, culture or geography.

## FICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

**Ellis, Deborah. *The Breadwinner*. Groundwood Books, 2009.**

*The Breadwinner* tells the story of eleven-year-old Parvana, who lives in Kabul. Forbidden to earn money as a girl, Parvana must disguise herself as a boy and become the breadwinner for her family. First published in 2000, *The Breadwinner* is the first book in the four-part award-winning Breadwinner series about loyalty, survival, family and friendship under extraordinary circumstances during the Taliban's rule in Afghanistan.

**Khan, Rukshana. *A New Life*. Groundwood Books, 2009**

A children's novella about a young girl's immigrant experience. This book is a trade version of Rukhsana's *Coming to Canada* which was commissioned by the Canadian government for distribution to immigrant children entering Canada.

**Saeed, Aisha. *Written in the Stars*. Penguin Random House, 2015.**

Naila's conservative immigrant parents have always said the same thing: She may choose what to study, how to wear her hair, and what to be when she grows up—but they will choose her husband. Following their cultural tradition, they will plan an arranged marriage for her. And until then, dating—even friendship with a boy—is forbidden. When Naila breaks their rule by falling in love with Saif, her parents are livid. Convinced she has forgotten who she truly is, they travel to Pakistan to visit relatives and explore their roots.

**Khan, Rukhsana. *Ruler of the Courtyard*. Viking Juvenile, 2003.**

Between the mean chickens in the yard pecking her feet and the snake that has snuck into her bathhouse, Saba knows she has got a busy day ahead of her trying to get things back to normal, in a story set in Pakistan.

**Robert, Na'ima B. *She Wore Red Trainers*. Kube Publishing Ltd, 2014.**

When Ali first meets Amirah, he notices everything about her—her hijab, her long eyelashes and her red trainers—in the time it takes to have one look, before lowering his gaze. And, although Ali is still coming to terms with the loss of his mother and exploring his identity as a Muslim, and although Amirah has sworn never to get married, they can't stop thinking about each other.