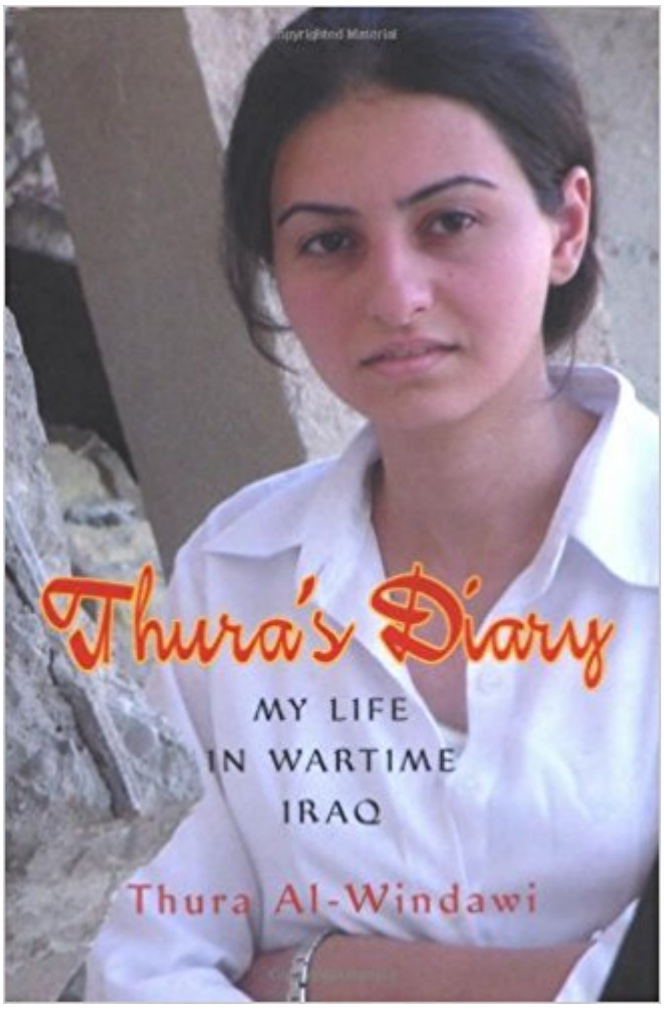
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Thura's Diary: My Life In Wartime Iraq



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Synopsis

Nineteen-year-old Thura al-Windawi kept a diary during the conflict in Iraq, saying that it was her way of "controlling the chaos." The diary, which documents the days leading up to the bombings, the war itself, and the lawless aftermath, puts a personal face on life in Baghdad. As Thura describes her life and that of her two younger sisters, she shows readers the many small details that illuminate the reality of war for Iraqi families, and especially for Iraqi children. Reminiscent of Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl and the recent national bestseller Zlata’s Diary: A Child’s Life in Sarajevo, Thura’s Diary gives the perspective of a young woman caught in the midst of a turbulent time and puts a face, a name, and a voice to the word "Iraqi."

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 8 UpÃ¢â ¬â œThe strength of this diary is in its matter-of-fact delivery. The author, now a scholarship student at an American university, writes of her daily life in war-besieged Baghdad. She describes the events just prior to the U.S. and Britain’s "shock & awe" attack on Iraq. Her family braces for the imminent onslaught, the tension growing. From worrying about who will take care of the dogs when the family evacuates to finding enough insulin for her diabetic sister, she shows what it’s like to live with war. Al-Windawi describes wearing a mask to filter air tainted by the noxious fumes from oil fires around the city and from the dust that the bombs and sandstorms stir up. She writes about the rumbling approach of B52’s and the barrage of bombs that makes her house shudder. Interspersed are the refreshing dreams and goals of a bright and self-motivated young woman. Perhaps some of the emotion has been distilled through translation, as Thura seems

removed from the action, panning through the terror to present the facts. Perhaps it's self-preservation. Politicalsentiments occasionally poke through, but the focus is on explicitly and calmly exposing the ravages of war on the vulnerable members of society. A postscript describes the author's reaction to the capture of Saddam Hussein.Ã¢â ¬â œAlison Follos, North Country School, Lake Placid, NY Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Gr. 6-12. Nineteen-year-old al-Windawi began recording this diary a week before the first American bombs landed on Baghdad. The entries take her through the terror of the bombings to the difficult first days of postwar reconstruction. Much here will surprise American readers: though they understand Saddam was responsible for incredible evil, al-Windawi and her family feel a complicated mix of emotions when his statue is torn down in Baghdad. And though she expresses anger at the religious zealots who threaten women who don't wear headscarves, al-Windawi also asserts her belief that men should make decisions in a family. Readers will wish for more detailed descriptions of al-Windawi's world and the people inhabiting it, but one can feel their house shake as the bombs rain down and sense her frustration as she struggles to return to school after the war. Although it discusses events already several months old, this will remain relevant for a long time, both because it illuminates the complex relationship between the U.S and the average young Iraqi and because it lays bare the brutal nature of war. John GreenCopyright Ã Â© American Library Association. All rights reserved

This is a great and thoughtful look into a teenager's experiences, fears, and life in her home country of Iraq after 9/11. Feelings of hopelessness are coupled with the love of family and the stronger will to survive. My students enjoyed this book as they work to improve their English skills, but don't want to forget where they came from.Several wanted to read and report on Thura's story to the class.

This book is so great because it offers a view of the war in Iraq from someone who is not from the U.S. It really helps readers see the real people that lived through their homes being turned upside-down.

My son had to read this for school. He found it interesting and is a very good discussion book for all ages.

This is the journal of a young Iraqi woman in her late teens writing about what she and her loved ones went through during the "shock and awe" bombing of 2003. The writing was dry and I didn't fully connect with Thura--I wasn't sure if it was because feelings were lost in translation or if Thura's writing is naturally dry. The style didn't impact me emotionally, although I can still appreciate the book for it's gritty realism.

I read this as a required piece for a freshman sociology class in college. My class read this in depth, held class discussions several days, and wrote a six page paper on the book. I had serious problems writing a thoughtful, insightful paper on this book because I felt that there wasn't much there that wasn't written for an audience. Thura wrote what the audience wanted to hear. While many people find this a good book, I thought it might work better as a piece of fiction, such as the Dear America series of books. Actually, some of those have seemed more realistic than this book. It is a well written book; it just doesn't feel real. I can't remember the last time I explained simple games I play all of the time, or wrote in my diary as though my diary were about six years old.

Thura's Diary is an easy read. Simple language and not too complex in its structure. While it is an interesting account of the second Gulf War from an Iraqi civilian perspective, it does seem a little detached and lacking in detail. Yes, we understand the fear and stress that war brings, but we only see the material effects on Thura's family. Thura does not bring us an in-depth examination of her thoughts and feelings, or those of her family.

I was disappointed by the short length. Being a journal keeper myself I can't say that I could have done any better in recording events as they occurred but in reading I still can't help but wish that there was more substance . . . more material. The whole story feels scarcely longer than an extended excerpt one might read in a magazine. Finishing the book, one wishes more had been said.Like many people I watched the Iraqi War unfold, following the event as it was charted in unprecedented detail by the media. I was interested in Thura's Diary in learning how it was, on a personal level, for someone close to my own age who experienced it, as it were, from the other side of the video camera. But, in the end, I realized how narrow her story was. Thura Al-Windawi was there, but her story is only the story of a nineteen year old Iraqi girl from a comfortably well-off Shia family. It wasn't the story of the Kurd or the Sunni, or the young Iraqi man. Her story was real, but it was so little of the complete story. Her fears were real, but I couldn't help but wonder how well she understood the fears of others. In the book Al-Windawi relates a humorous incident where her father

is teasing some younger relatives about being forcibly dragged off to fight. Her father makes the young men so nervous that when a little neighbor girl comes knocking on the door the men all take flight and run to hide in the river. The incident is humorous from this vantage point, but Al-Windawi seems to intellectually acknowledge the danger while not really personally grasping the terror a young Iraqi man would have facing the possibility of being forced to fight in a war.Though I wished for a deeper and fuller exploration of life through this harrowing time I did sometimes find Thura Al-Windawi's innocence refreshing. In Thura's Diary she seems to relate to everyone with openness and a lack of hostility. I had to smile when she related an occasion when she was in Baghdad after it had fallen, and she met some Americans sitting in tanks. She says, "On the way I talked to an American soldier for the first time. He had bright blue eyes and I could tell he felt proud, sitting on top of his tank. I asked him why he was wearing a flak jacket, when the weather was so hot and no one was going to shoot at him now anyway. He told me it was a safety measure, in case someone shot at him from a distance. He seemed to be making fun of me, and his friends were laughing at him because he hadn't been expecting to meet an Iraqi girl who could speak English."What I found most interesting about Thura's Diary was what it left out. The book is slim, and as much can be read between the lines as read in the actual pages. Al-Windawi relates the events of the Iraqi War and her feelings of terror, uncertainty, and hope. But she rarely divulges her thoughts or relates the thoughts of those around her. What does she and her family think of Saddam Hussein? What do they think of the condition of Iraq under his reign? There is a careful emptiness in the book . . . noticeable, but not surprising, considering much was written while Saddam Hussein was still in power. It is only in the end that a few glimmers of true thoughts begin to show through. Even then I was not sure how much Thura Al-Windawi knew, both about what happened in the recent history of Iraq, and what her own family--her own father--thought. Most revealing was what Al-Windawi related only at the very end of the book, in a postscript about the capture of Saddam Hussein. It is only there that she relates an e-mail from her father where he says that "Even though the regime had only ended recently, Saddam had died in the hearts of many Iraqis long ago."

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