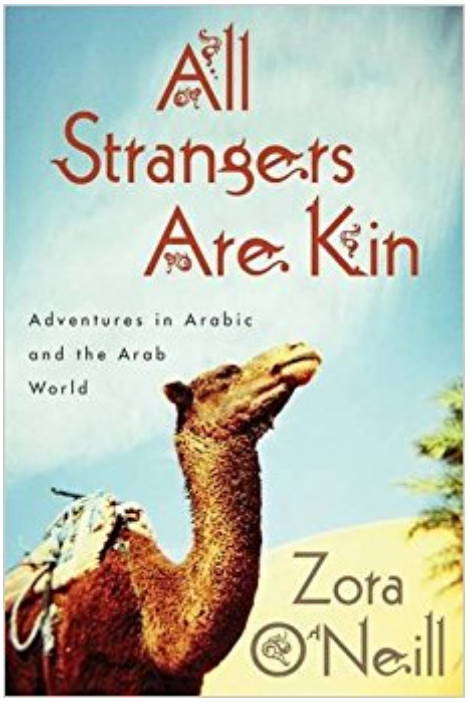
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All Strangers Are Kin: Adventures In Arabic And The Arab World



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Synopsis

Ã¢â ¬Å“The shaddais the key difference between a pigeon (hamam) and a bathroom (hammam). Be careful, our professor advised, in the first moment of outright humor in class, that you donÃ¢â ¬â„¢t ask a waiter, Ã¢â ¬ËœExcuse me, where is the pigeon?Ã¢â ¬â„¢ Ã¢â ¬â • or, conversely, order a roasted toilet.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã Â If youÃ¢â ¬â„¢ve ever studied a foreign language, you know what happens when you first truly and clearly communicate with another person. As Zora OÃ¢â ¬â„¢Neill recalls, you feel like a magician. If that foreign language is Arabic, you just might feel like a wizard. They say that Arabic takes seven years to learn and a lifetime to master. OÃ¢â ¬â„¢Neill had put in her time. Steeped in grammar tomes and outdated textbooks, she faced an increasing certainty that she was not only failing to master Arabic, but also driving herself crazy. She took a decade-long hiatus, but couldnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t shake her fascination with the language or the cultures it had opened up to her. So she decided to jump back inÃ¢â ¬â •this time with a new approach. Join OÃ¢â ¬â„¢Neill for a grand tour through the Middle East. You will laugh with her in Egypt, delight in the stories she passes on from the United Arab Emirates, and find yourself transformed by her experiences in Lebanon and Morocco. SheÃ¢â ¬â„¢s packed her dictionaries, her unsinkable sense of humor, and her talent for making fast friends of strangers.Ã Â From quiet, bougainvillea-lined streets to the lively buzz of crowded medinas, from familiesÃ¢â ¬â„¢ homes to local hotspots, she brings a part of the world that is thousands of miles away right to your door. Ã Â Ã Â A natural storyteller with an eye for the deeply absurd and the deeply human, OÃ¢â ¬â„¢Neill explores the indelible links between culture and communication. A powerful testament to the dynamism of language, All Strangers Are Kin reminds us that learning another tongue leaves you rich with so much more than words.

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Customer Reviews

"OÃ¢â ¬â„¢NeillÃ¢â ¬â„¢s prose is affable and chatty [...] and her approach to her travels is almost recklessly upbeat...Her tale of her 'Year of Speaking Arabic Badly'Ã Â is a genial and revealing pleasure."Ã¢â ¬â •Seattle Times "In a witty memoir, [O'Neill] chronicles her attempt to learn Arabic in the Middle East. The tome is on Seth Meyers' shelf."Ã¢â ¬â •Us Weekly "Along with exploring fascinating local cultures and customs, [Zora O'Neill]Ã Â ties in her unique experiences attempting to master Arabic. Like her journey, her memoir is colorful, comical, and compelling."Ã¢â ¬â •Bustle, "16 Must-Read Nonfiction Books Due Out In June 2016" "As [Zora O'Neill]Ã Â explores local Arabic cultures, she also highlights the often humorous trials and tribulations of learning the difficult language. Along the way, her writing brings to life dynamic settings and captivating people."Ã¢â ¬â •Romper, "New Summer Books to Enjoy On Your Warm Weather Adventures"Ã Â "[O'Neill]Ã Â engages in Arabic with anyone she can, studies colloquial expressions, and chronicles vocabulary, usage, and contradictions. People she interacts with while picnicking, hitchhiking, even at the aftermath of a car accident are opportunities for an exchange. What emerges is the idea of language as a connection, passion, and a reflection of the lives and history of diverse Arab peoples, a view which is lacking in the general news coverage of Middle Eastern conflict. Glimpses of daily life, particularly of Arab women, are intriguing and sometimes unexpected, including the rich assortment of Lebanese cursing while driving. A useful complement to Middle Eastern study and essential for Arabic learners as well as an enjoyable peek into contemporary lives in the region."Ã¢â ¬â •Library Journal "In her engaging, colloquial account, freelance and travel writer O'Neill recounts how, at the age of 39, just after the events of the Arab Spring, she decided to return to Egypt and take up a more vernacular approach to studying Arabic rather than approaching it 'as if it were a dead language'...A valiant chronicle of the author's 'Year of Speaking Arabic Badly.'" Ã¢â ¬â •Kirkus Reviews "OÃ¢â ¬â„¢Neill doesnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t teach readers to be fluent in Arabic, but she imparts a more valuable lesson on how (and how not) to learn a language, and the journey is more fascinating than the result."Ã¢â ¬â •Publishers WeeklyÃ Â Ã¢â ¬Å“Zora OÃ¢â ¬â„¢Neill is a wonderful writer, a hakawati who can spin a tale with the best of them.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â œ Rabih Alameddine, author of The Hakawati and An Unnecessary Woman Ã¢â ¬Å“At a time when politics dominates our view of the Middle East, Zora OÃ¢â ¬â„¢Neill has found a different port of entry:Ã Â the language.Ã Â An

enthusiastic and resourceful student of Arabic, OÃ¢â ¬â„¢Neill captures both the richness of the language and the ways in which it allows an outsider to connect with common people all the way from Morocco to the Persian Gulf.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â œ Peter Hessler, author of Country Driving, Oracle Bones, and others "Part travelogue, part Bildungsroman, part ethnography, this work is as intricate and nuanced as the Arabic language itself. O'Neill masterfully weaves together vignettes, linguistic musings, and a colorful cast of thousands into an always-thoughtful, often hysterically funny paean to a part of the world about which most Americans remain woefully ignorant." Ã¢â ¬â œ Suketu Mehta, author of Maximum City: Bombay Lost and Found Ã¢â ¬Å“Let Zora OÃ¢â ¬â„¢Neill take you by the hand and lead you on this dazzling journey through the word factory. You will travel through countries and across centuries, meeting professors and poets, revolutionaries, nomads, and nerds.
OÃ¢â ¬â„¢NeillÃ¢â ¬â„¢sÃ Â generousÃ Â storytellingÃ Â makes the intricacies of Arabic grammar seem fascinating and inexplicably glamorous. And the most unforgettable character you encounter may be the Arabic language itself, which will feel like an old friend by the time you finish this warm and hilarious book.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â œ Annia Ciezadlo, author of Day of Honey Ã¢â ¬Å“Wry, witty, and charmingly erudite, this lovely book goes through the looking glass of the Arabic languageÃ Â and emerges with aÃ Â radiant image of the Arab world.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â œ Diana Abu-Jaber, author of Life Without a Recipe, Crescent, The Language of Baklava, and others Ã¢â ¬Å“Zora O'Neill is the perfect travel companion: smart, curious, witty and knowledgeable. In times whenÃ Â the news out of the Middle East is too often grim, she finds warmth and humor. By refusing to tread along the same paths that so many news reporters are confined to,Ã Â she reveals to us rich new possibilities for understanding--all in a deceptively breezy tone.Ã¢â ¬Â• Ã¢â ¬â œ Carla Power, author of National Book Award Finalist Ã Â If the Oceans Were Ink

The shaddais the key difference between a pigeon (hamam,) and a bathroom (hammam,). Be careful, our professor advised, in the first moment of outright humor in class, that you don t ask a waiter, Excuse me, where is the pigeon? or, conversely, order a roasted toilet. If you ve ever studied a foreign language, you know what happens when you first truly and clearly communicate with another person. As Zora O Neill recalls, you feel like a magician. If that foreign language is Arabic, you just might feel like a wizard. They say that Arabic takes seven years to learn and a lifetime to master. O Neill had put in her time. Steeped in grammar tomes and outdated textbooks, she faced an increasing certainty that she was not only failing to master Arabic, but also driving herself crazy. She took a decade-long hiatus, but couldn t shake her fascination with the language

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I really wasn't expecting to love this book as much as I did. While I am interested in travel and the Arab region, I'm not particularly interested in the Arabic language and the premise of basing a book around that sounded a bit dull. No worries. This book is so much more than the path it takes.Firstly, Zora's writing is about as good as it gets. She's poetic without a hint of pretension and her phrases are so beautifully crafted that you at once enjoy them and forget that you're reading at all, they flow so smoothly. The book is about the beauty of language and how it can help us understand culture and get a glimpse into the heart of another world. I found myself drawing parallels to English and gleefully geeking out in details that lead me into deeper thoughts about my own culture. No there was not a ton of action and yet, I couldn't put this book down. It was what I wanted to read each night to put a smile on my face and give me good dreams. It felt like a warm bath and a cup of cocoa. I was sorry when it ended!

It's strange rating a book in this format, simply because I usually review the quality of an item. Books are so subjective, depending on your interests. As a teacher of English language learner's, many of whom speak Arabic, this is a very informative book about the first language (or in some cases 2nd language that they learn in school) of many of my students.It really isn't about the language so much as the author's journey in learning Arabic, and it is entertaining in that regard, but that wasn't why I read the book. As a memoir goes, it is well written and full of experiences that the author felt were important in illustrating her journey.

This is a MUST READ for any student of the Arabic language. Zora O'Neill approaches the complicated task of learning Arabic, a notoriously difficult language with a formal version and myriad

colloquial dialects, with a great sense of adventure and plenty of humor to get her through. She spends time in Egypt, Qatar, Lebanon and Morocco, and anyone who has spent time in any of those countries will enjoy seeing them through Zora's sharp eye. As a student of colloquial Arabic myself, I felt that I also learned lots about the history of the language and Arabian culture. Relevant for anyone interested in the Middle East.

I read this book during my own personal journey to learn Arabic, so the author's travels, her struggle and her wins deeply resonated with me. Her writing is so vivid that it made me feel like I had visited places that I've only dreamed of going to. But more importantly, her stories of people and life and listening will stay with me - because there's a powerful lesson in there about being open minded to interacting with others rather than being caught up in your own journey to learn. Incredible read for anyone learning any language, not just Arabic, or even those who aren't but are looking to move past the fear of learning one. Or for those who love travel and are looking for deeper ways of connecting with the people of the places they travel to.

I have lived in the Middle East for sometime and would've wanted to learn more about the region, not just the country I lived in. Zora's book gave me a chance to zoom out and see it on a larger scale through the language and the local flavor of every living - eating out, hiking, driving, etc.I am not a language nerd and sometimes gets lost in when the language part goes more in depth, BUT it is totally worth pushing yourself through it because of the wealth of historical, cultural gems that would help dismantle the box that the media has been putting the Middle East and its people in. One will learn the many layers and differences each country has like how Louisiana is worlds apart from Vermont or how the Manila, Philippines is a far cry from Singapore, Singapore.Do yourself and the rest of the world a huge favor and help opening minds and hearts by recommending Zora's book to others.

I was given this book as a gift and loved it so much I got the Kindle edition also. My experiences have been similar to Zora's--several years of university Arabic study, a couple of years of Arabic study abroad, mostly in Egypt, work in Saudi Arabia, a Fulbright in Morocco, independent travel in several other countries--and her telling of the story of Arabic (and learning Arabic) and her experiences in the region are not only accurate but insightful. She's a lovely, funny writer. I wish that everyone could have similar experiences and so get a more nuanced picture of the Middle East, which isn't what most people think it is. Highly recommended.

A travel memoir set in four areas of the Arabic World--Egypt, the Gulf, Lebanon, and Morocco--All Strangers are Kin explores the complexities of the Arabic language and the challenges of learning it, from Standard Arabic to the spoken Arabic of the street.As someone who has traveled to all the places mentioned and has studied Arabic for years, I found the book to be a terrific read for anyone with an interest in travel, linguistics, the Arabic language, and the vast variations within the Arabic-speaking world. Highly recommended.

I love language and thought I would love this book. It is very technical though in many places and I decided not even to finish the book, which is a very rare decision for me.

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