



Cutting for Stone: a novel

by Abraham Verghese

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2009.

541 pages

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Summary

A sweeping, emotionally riveting first novel—an enthralling family saga of Africa and America, doctors and patients, exile and home. Marion and Shiva Stone are twin brothers born of a secret union between a beautiful Indian nun and a brash British surgeon at a mission hospital in Addis Ababa. Orphaned by their mother’s death in childbirth and their father’s disappearance, bound together by a preternatural connection and a shared fascination with medicine, the twins come of age as Ethiopia hovers on the brink of revolution. Yet it will be love, not politics—their passion for the same woman—that will tear them apart and force Marion, fresh out of medical school, to flee his homeland. He makes his way to America, finding refuge in his work as an intern at an underfunded, overcrowded New York City hospital. When the past catches up to him—nearly destroying him—Marion must entrust his life to the two men he thought he trusted least in the world: the surgeon father who abandoned him and the brother who betrayed him. An unforgettable journey into one man’s remarkable life, and an epic story about the power, intimacy, and curious beauty of the work of healing others.

Synopsis of *Cutting for Stone*

Narrated by Marion Stone, the story begins even before Marion and his twin brother, Shiva, are born in Addis Ababa's Missing Hospital (a mispronunciation of "Mission Hospital"), with the illicit, years-in-the-making romance between their parents, Sister Mary Joseph Praise, a beautiful Indian nun, and Thomas Stone, a brash, brilliant British surgeon. Mary and Thomas meet on a boat out of Madras in 1947; she follows him to Ethiopia and to Missing, where they work side by side for seven years as nurse and doctor. After Mary dies while giving birth to the twins—a harrowing, traumatic scene on the operating table—Thomas vanishes, and Marion and Shiva grow up with only a dim sense of who he was, and with a deep hostility toward him for what they see as an act of betrayal and cowardice.

The twins are raised by Hema and Ghosh, two Indian doctors who also work at Missing, and who shower Marion and Shiva with love and nurture their interest in medicine—part of the deep, almost preternatural connection the brothers share. They are so close that Marion, as a boy, thinks of them as a single entity: *ShivaMarion*.

Marion and Shiva come of age as Ethiopia hovers on the brink of revolution, and their lives become intertwined with the nation's politics. Addis Ababa is a colorful, cosmopolitan city: the Italians have left behind cappuccino machines, Campari umbrellas, and a vibrant expat community. But they've also left a nation crippled by poverty, hunger, and authoritarian rule: Ethiopia in the 1960s and 1970s is both bolstered and trapped by its notorious emperor, Haile Selassie, and rocked by violence and civil war.

Yet it is not politics but love that tears the brothers apart: Shiva sleeps with Genet—the daughter of their housekeeper and the girl Marion has always loved. This second betrayal, now by the two people this sensitive young man loves most, sends Marion into a deep depression. And when Genet joins a radical political group fighting for the independence of Eritrea, Marion's connection to her forces him into exile: he sneaks out of Ethiopia and makes his way to America.

Marion interns at a hospital in the Bronx, an underfunded, chaotic place where the patients are nearly as poor and desperate as those he had seen at Missing. It is here that Marion comes to maturity as a doctor and as a man. It is here, too, that he meets his father and takes his first steps toward reconciling with him. But when the past catches up to Marion—nearly destroying him—he must entrust his life to the two men he thought he trusted least in the world: the father who abandoned him and the brother who betrayed him. The surprising, stunning denouement both arises from and reenacts the major themes of *Cutting for Stone*: love and betrayal, forgiveness and self-sacrifice, and the inextricable union of life and death.

In *Cutting for Stone*, renowned physician Abraham Verghese has given us a remarkable reading experience that explores the lives of a memorable cast of characters, many of them doctors; the insight the novel offers into the world of medicine, along with its wealth of precise detail about how doctors work, is unparalleled in American fiction. Verghese is so attuned to the movements of the heart and of the mind, so adept at dramatizing the great themes of human existence, and he has filled this world with such richly drawn, fascinating characters, that *Cutting for Stone* becomes one of those rare books one wishes would never end, an alternate reality that both rivals and illuminates the real world readers must return to when the book is closed.

Reviews

Library Journal Review

Focusing on the world of medicine, this epic first novel by well-known doctor/author Verghese (*My Own Country*) follows a man on a mythic quest to find his father. It begins with the dramatic birth of twins slightly joined at the skull, their father serving as surgeon and their mother dying on the table. The horrorstruck father vanishes, and the now separated boys are raised by two Indian doctors living on the grounds of a mission hospital in early 1950s Ethiopia. The boys both gravitate toward medical practice, with Marion the more studious one and Shiva a moody genius and loner. Also living on the hospital grounds is Genet, daughter of one of the maids, who grows up to be a beautiful and mysterious young woman and a source of ruinous competition between the brothers. After Marion is forced to flee the country for political reasons, he begins his medical residency at a poor hospital in New York City, and the past catches up with him. The medical background is fascinating as the author delves into fairly technical areas of human anatomy and surgical procedure. This novel succeeds on many levels and is recommended for all collections.

Publishers Weekly Review

Lauded for his sensitive memoir (*My Own Country*) about his time as a doctor in eastern Tennessee at the onset of the AIDS epidemic in the '80s, Verghese turns his formidable talents to fiction, mining his own life and experiences in a magnificent, sweeping novel that moves from India to Ethiopia to an inner-city hospital in New York City over decades and generations. Sister Mary Joseph Praise, a devout young nun, leaves the south Indian state of Kerala in 1947 for a missionary post in Yemen. During the arduous sea voyage, she saves the life of an English doctor bound for Ethiopia, Thomas Stone, who becomes a key player in her destiny when they meet up again at Missing Hospital in Addis Ababa. Seven years later, Sister Praise dies birthing twin boys: Shiva and Marion, the latter narrating his own and his brother's long, dramatic, biblical story set against the backdrop of political turmoil in Ethiopia, the life of the hospital compound in which they grow up and the love story of their adopted parents, both doctors at Missing. The boys become doctors as well and Verghese's weaving of the practice of medicine into the narrative is fascinating even as the story bobs and weaves with the power and coincidences of the best 19th-century novel. (Feb.) (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved

Bookmarks Magazine

One might envy Abraham Verghese, who makes the transition from essayist to novelist look easier than it should be. *Cutting for Stone* will remind readers of the fiction of Salman Rushdie, John Irving (*The Cider House Rules*), and Ha Jin (*A Free Life*); it seems likely that the author knows the work of doctor and essayist Richard Selzer (*Letters to a Young Doctor*) as well. Verghese's first novel is an expansive story well told. If he has a weakness as a novelist, though, as the *New York Times Book Review* points out, it is a surplus of passion for his characters and an unwillingness to let the smallest detail go unremarked. ("Only the telling can heal the rift that separates my brother and me," Marion writes, and that single sentence justifies Verghese's motivation.) Would that all writers suffered for paying the same attention to their craft.

Biography

<http://www.abrahamverghese.com/>

Abraham Verghese was born in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 1955. He received an M.D. from Madras University, India, in 1979 and came to the U.S a year later to do a residency in Tennessee. He also earned an M.F.A. from the University of Iowa in 1991. Verghese has been involved mainly in medical research and teaching. His specialties include internal medicine, pulmonary diseases, geriatrics, and infectious diseases; the latter has led to an interest in AIDS, which has been the subject of much of his writing. Verghese's thesis was a collection of stories about AIDS, and he then went on to write *My Own Country: A Doctor's Story of a Town and Its People in the Age of AIDS*. *My Own Country* received the Lambda Literary Award for Nonfiction and was selected by Time as one of the top five books of 1994.



Verghese is also the author of *The Tennis Partner: A Doctor's Story of Friendship and Loss*, and his short stories, articles, and reviews have appeared in magazines and newspapers such as *North American Review*, *Sports Illustrated*, and *MD*. Verghese, who is divorced, has two children, Steven and Jacob and resides in El Paso, Tex. Abraham Verghese, MD, MACP, is Professor for the Theory and Practice of Medicine at the Stanford University School of Medicine and Senior Associate Chair of the Department of Internal Medicine.

Early Years

Born of Indian parents who were teachers in Ethiopia, he grew up near Addis Ababa and began his medical training there. When Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed, he completed his training at Madras Medical College and went to the United States for his residency as one of many foreign medical graduates. Like many others, he found only the less popular hospitals and communities open to him, an experience he described in one of his early *New Yorker* articles, *The Cowpath to America*. From Johnson City, Tennessee, where he was a resident from 1980 to 1983, he did his fellowship at Boston University School of Medicine, working at Boston City Hospital for two years. It was here that he first saw the early signs of the HIV epidemic and later, when he returned to Johnson City as an assistant professor of medicine, he saw the second epidemic, rural AIDS, and his life took the turn for which he is most well known: his caring for numerous AIDS patients in an era when little could be done and helping them through their early and painful deaths was often the most a physician could do.

His work with terminal patients and the insights he gained from the deep relationships he formed and the suffering he saw were intensely transformative; they became the basis for his first book, *My Own Country: A Doctor's Story*, written later during his years in El Paso, Texas. Such was his interest in writing that he decided to take some time away from medicine to study at the Iowa Writers Workshop at the University of Iowa, where he earned a Master of Fine Arts degree in 1991. Since then, his writing has appeared in *The New Yorker*, *Texas Monthly*, *Atlantic*, *The New York Times*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *Granta*, *Forbes.com*, and *The Wall Street Journal*, among others. Following Iowa, he became professor of medicine and chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases at Texas Tech Health Sciences Center in El Paso, Texas,

where he lived for the next 11 years. In addition to writing his first book, which was one of five chosen as Best Book of the Year by Time magazine and later made into a Mira Nair movie, he also wrote a second best-selling book, *The Tennis Partner : A Story of Friendship and Loss*, about his friend and tennis partner's struggle with addiction. This was a New York Times' Notable Book.

Emphasis on the Physician-Patient Relationship

As founding director of the Center for Medical Humanities & Ethics at the University of Texas Health Science Center at San Antonio, he brought the deep-seated empathy for patient suffering that had been honed by his previous experiences to his new role in the medical humanities. He saw empathy as a way to preserve the innate empathy and sensitivity that brings students to medical school but which the rigors of their training frequently suppress. In San Antonio, also, he became more focused on bedside medicine, inviting medical students to accompany him on bedside rounds. Rounds gave him a way to share the value he places on the physical examination in diagnosing patients and demonstrating attentiveness to patients and their families, a vital key in the healing process.

Dr. Verghese's deep interest in bedside medicine and his reputation as a clinician, teacher and writer led to his being recruited to Stanford University in 2007 as a tenured professor. Today, in his writing and his work, he continues to emphasize the importance of bedside medicine and physical examination in a time in medicine when the use of advanced technology frequently results in the patient in the bed having less attention than the patient data in the computer. His recent article in the *New England Journal of Medicine*, *Culture Shock: Patient as Icon, Icon as Patient*, clearly lays out his viewpoint. In his book, *Cutting for Stone*, he also addresses the issue "I wanted the reader to see how entering medicine was a passionate quest, a romantic pursuit, a spiritual calling, a privileged yet hazardous undertaking. It's a view of medicine I don't think too many young people see in the West because, frankly, in the sterile hallways of modern medical-industrial complexes, where physicians and nurses are hunkered down behind computer monitors, and patients are whisked off here and there for this and that test, that side of medicine gets lost."

Bibliography

Cutting for Stone (2009) a novel

***The Tennis Partner* (1998) a memoir**

His second book, *The Tennis Partner: A Story of Friendship and Loss*, written during his time in El Paso, is another eloquently written personal story, this time about his friend and tennis partner, a medical resident in recovery from drug addiction. The story deals with the ultimate death of his friend and explores the issue and prevalence of physician drug abuse. It also concludes the account of the breakdown of his first marriage, an integral part of the narrative in both *My Own Country* and *The Tennis Partner*. This book will be reissued shortly.

***My Own Country* (1994) a memoir**

During these years in El Paso, he wrote and published his first bestselling book, *My Own Country: A Doctor's Story*, about his experiences in East Tennessee, but also pondering themes of displacement, Diaspora, responses to foreignness and the many individuals and families affected by the AIDS epidemic. This book was one of five chosen as Best Book of the Year by Time magazine and it was later made into a movie by Mira Nair with TV *Lost* series star Naveen Andrews playing his role.

Interview with the Author

San Francisco Chronicle March 12, 2010

We caught up with Verghese by e-mail as he traveled from Boston to Spain.

Q: As a man of medicine, weren't you aware of the harm that reading a 600-page novel can cause to one's wrists?

A: I was more worried about my own wrists, lugging around thrice that many pages in double-spaced manuscript form! But I confess to a love of big books, the kind you don't want to end.

Q: Without giving away too much, the heart of your novel's conclusion is centered on the liver. Your surprisingly moving descriptions of that organ's functions brought to mind the Romans' belief that the liver is the seat of love and passion. Were the Romans on to something?

A: The Romans were way ahead of their time - it is an incredible organ, a veritable factory but one that produces not just one kind of widget, but everything from clotting factors to crucial proteins, and if that were not enough, it also processes the drugs and alcohol we consume, produces bile for digestion - and even that is a very short list of all it does. Like the heart, it is an unpaired organ (unlike lungs and kidney, say), but unlike the heart, surgical techniques can now divide it so you can give part of your liver to save your child's life, for example. I have been intrigued with the liver both because it is the Renaissance man or woman of all the organs and because surgical techniques have had to be at their peak to deal with transplanting it.

Q: Is it true that you've been approached at book readings by people who confuse you with a certain other doctor and writer of Indian extraction?

A: People have said to me, "Dr. Gawande, I love your writing." I have debated whether to simply gracefully accept the praise on Atul's behalf, but I usually counter that I am better looking and have more hair than Atul. (Not.) The problem is compounded by the fact that we are both on the best-seller lists together the last few weeks. I sent him a photo from Chicago showing our two books nestling together on a display of best-sellers. Very proud of what he does.

Q: You're on the road a lot these days. Are you reading anything you'd recommend?

A: I am reading voraciously. Finished "Wolf Hall" (Hilary Mantel) and "Let the Great World Spin" (Colum McCann), and now as I head off to Spain, Italy and France for two days each for the release of the translations of my book, I have packed Cervantes, Eco and, of course, my great favorite, Zola. A goal I had with my book was to write of medicine the way Zola wrote of Paris, so that every page should be steeped in medicine directly or indirectly.

Q: There's a fair amount about Ethiopian food and drink in your novel. For those who can't travel to Addis Ababa for the weekend, what Ethiopian restaurants would you recommend in the Bay Area?

A: There are a ton of superb restaurants all over the Bay Area, and if I mention one as being super, I hope the others will forgive me or better still invite me for a free meal so that I can increase my sample size. But Zeni's in San Jose is the best I have had ever, I must say, and Muna and his wife Zeni are great ambassadors for Ethiopia.

Q: You've been blogging for TheAtlantic.com about the sorry state of health care in this country. Is there anything we can learn from Ethiopia?

A: I think we learn from medicine everywhere that it is at its heart a human endeavor, requiring good science but also a limitless curiosity and interest in your fellow human being, and that the physician-patient relationship is key; all else follows from it. I think we can see how blessed we are in America to have access to the kind of health care we do if we are insured, and even if

uninsured, how there is a safety net. Now, as to the problem of how much health care costs and how we reform health care ... it is another story altogether.

Q: "Cutting for Stone" is cinematic in so many ways, from its varied settings to its rich array of characters. Are there any plans for a movie adaptation?

A: Lots of talk, but as far as I know, no one has signed on the dotted line.

Q: In the free time left over from teaching, touring with your book, blogging, writing op-eds and reviews and being a father, are you working on a new 600-page novel?

A: A new novel is the one thing I have not started. But I think the seeds of a story have just been sown, and I am fertilizing and nurturing and looking to spring and summer for the first sign of a bud.

Nashville Scene Interview February 25, 2010

Cutting for Stone is rich with charming asides — Matron Hirst's warning, for instance, that the soil around Missing Hospital was so fertile that stepping in it barefoot might cause one to "sprout new toes." You grew up in Ethiopia, where much of your story is set. Do such images come from your own early life?

I think such images come from both early life and from long hours sitting in the chair worrying over a manuscript, trying to find images and metaphors to ground the reader. The early section of the book is one I revised untold times, and so that image of the sprouting toes probably came from all that reworking of the opening.

What came first for you, an interest in creative writing or an interest in medicine?

At the time I grew up in Ethiopia, the very idea of a career related to writing was nonexistent. I went into medicine out of love for that field. I had always written, and, from a young age, had kept a diary and made observations. But when I was an intern and resident, I began writing largely for my own pleasure. Later, when I was working as an internist and infectious diseases specialist, particularly when I was in Johnson City in the mid- and late '80s, I wrote short stories and essays as a way of keeping sane during those intense days during the early AIDS epidemic. I finally felt I was burning out from the intensity of the AIDS experience, and so after five years, I took a break and attended the Iowa Writers Workshop. Going there involved a big sacrifice for my family — I had cashed in my tenured position and cashed in my 401(k) plan. It forced me to take myself very seriously as a writer.

You're a teaching physician, and one of your particular areas of interest is the doctor-patient relationship — you've referred disparagingly to technologically obsessed doctors who treat their clients like "iPatients." One of the main characters in *Cutting for Stone*, Dr. Thomas Stone, is a skilled surgeon who's passionate about healing but is hardly Marcus Welby in the bedside manner department. Is Dr. Stone a stand-in for modern physicians who may have exceptional tools but lack the ability to demonstrate compassion?

I don't think there are necessarily "technologically obsessed doctors." What does happen is that technology gradually invades and supersedes common sense. It is easier to order a CAT scan than to actually go see the patient, and as long as American medicine operates as a 'menu without prices,' to quote my colleague Alan Garber, then it is just the easy way, but not the best way. Thomas Stone, I would argue, cares deeply but is also deeply scarred, and therefore has the illusion that by focusing

all his technical skills on the patient he is spared from self-analysis or deep insight or commitment to friendships. This is a common seduction in medicine: The "best" intern in my days was the one who never seemed to go home. We admired such a person, and we did not worry too much about what this meant to his or her personal life.

Your 1994 book, *My Own Country*, documents your experience battling the AIDS epidemic in remote Johnson City. *Cutting for Stone's* narrator, Dr. Marion Stone, Thomas Stone's son, is a physician who struggles against overwhelming odds in neglected facilities. To what extent is Marion Stone an autobiographical character?

Obviously, the story is reflective of my own life to some degree — I was born in Ethiopia of Indian parents, raised in that country and began my medical training there, leaving during the civil unrest when Emperor Haile Selassie was deposed. But I was not a twin and did not grow up in a mission hospital. In short, the geography and the politics are real; all the rest is made up.

Marion Stone says, "I chose the specialty of surgery because of Matron, that steady presence during my boyhood and adolescence. 'What is the hardest thing you can possibly do?' she said." Do you, too, recommend the path of most resistance?

I used Matron's character as one might use a teacher or another guide in one's life to make the point that achieving to the best ability you have is something very worthwhile to strive for. It seemed to ring true to me that a figure as towering and consistent as Matron might represent such an influence in a young boy's life. Also it seemed to work with what would have been the ideal of a Christian mission — development and stewardship of the talents you are given — and also to make the point that while medicine can be a calling to serve others, it is often a difficult and exhausting path to choose. And yes, I recommend challenging oneself. The most interesting and charismatic people one meets are rarely people who have taken the easy and expedient path.

One theme of *Cutting for Stone* is healing — physical, emotional, spiritual and relational. "We are all fixing what is broken. It is the task of a lifetime. We'll leave much unfinished for the next generation," says Marion Stone. For you, does literature also offer a form of healing?

Yes, I think writing is how we make sense of the world, how we explain ourselves to ourselves. Stories are justice-dealing machines, a way to take the world in for repairs.

You're one of those people who remind a lot of people of how little they accomplish. Between teaching medicine at Stanford and the University of Texas, writing for the likes of *The New Yorker* and *Esquire*, and composing rich, historic novels such as *Cutting for Stone*, you must be very busy. What's your secret to time management?

I regard myself as a poor time manager, really. I have a busy and fulfilling job as a physician and teaching medical students, so I write when I have time rather than, as many writers do, writing for a set amount of time every day. At Stanford, I actually have two offices, which is more than a blessing as it takes me out of the hubbub of activity several times a week. If I manage to control my schedule properly, this gives me undisturbed writing time during the day — a real luxury. Of course, I still do a lot of writing at home at nights. The key is doing a little bit of something each day, and it is amazing how soon it adds up.

Discussion Questions (from the publisher)

1. Abraham Verghese has said that his ambition in writing *Cutting for Stone* was to “tell a great story, an old-fashioned, truth-telling story.” In what ways is *Cutting for Stone* an old-fashioned story-and what does it share with the great novels of the nineteenth century? What essential human truths does it convey?
2. What does *Cutting for Stone* reveal about the emotional lives of doctors? Contrast the attitudes of Hema, Ghosh, Marion, Shiva, and Thomas Stone toward their work. What draws each of them to the practice of medicine? How are they affected, emotionally and otherwise, by the work they do?
3. Marion observes that in Ethiopia, patients assume that *all* illnesses are fatal and that death is expected, but in America, news of having a fatal illness “always seemed to come as a surprise, as if we took it for granted that we were immortal” (p. 396). What other important differences does *Cutting for Stone* reveal about the way illness is viewed and treated in Ethiopia and in the United States? To what extent are these differences reflected in the split between poor hospitals, like the one in the Bronx where Marion works, and rich hospitals like the one in Boston where his father works?
4. In the novel, Thomas Stone asks, “What treatment in an emergency is administered by ear?” The correct answer is “Words of comfort.” How does this moment encapsulate the book’s surprising take on medicine? Have your experiences with doctors and hospitals held this to be true? Why or why not? What does *Cutting for Stone* tell us about the roles of compassion, faith, and hope in medicine?
5. There are a number of dramatic scenes on operating tables in *Cutting for Stone*: the twins’ births, Thomas Stone amputating his own finger, Ghosh untwisting Colonel Mebratu’s volvulus, the liver transplant, etc. How does Verghese use medical detail to create tension and surprise? What do his depictions of dramatic surgeries share with film and television hospital dramas-and yet how are they different?
6. Marion suffers a series of painful betrayals-by his father, by Shiva, and by Genet. To what degree is he able, by the end of the novel, to forgive them?
7. To what extent does the story of Thomas Stone’s childhood soften Marion’s judgment of him? How does Thomas’s suffering as a child, the illness of his parents, and his own illness help to explain why he abandons Shiva and Marion at their birth? How should Thomas finally be judged?
8. In what important ways does Marion come to resemble his father, although he grows up without him? How does Marion grow and change over the course of the novel?
9. A passionate, unique love affair sets *Cutting for Stone* in motion, and yet this romance remains a mystery-even to the key players-until the very conclusion of the novel. How does the relationship between Sister Mary Joseph Praise and Thomas Stone affect the lives of Shiva and Marion, Hema and Ghosh, Matron and everyone else at Missing? What do you think Verghese is trying to say about the nature of love and loss?
10. What do Hema, Matron, Rosina, Sister Mary Joseph Praise, Genet, and Tsige-as well as the many women who come to Missing seeking medical treatment-reveal about what life is like for women in Ethiopia?

11. Addis Ababa is at once a cosmopolitan city thrumming with life and the center of a dictatorship rife with conflict. How do the influences of Ethiopia's various rulers-England, Italy, Emperor Selassie-reveal themselves in day-to-day life? How does growing up there affect Marion's and Shiva's worldviews?

12. As Ghosh nears death, Marion comments that the man who raised him had no worries or regrets, that "there was no restitution he needed to make, no moment he failed to seize" (p. 346). What is the key to Ghosh's contentment? What makes him such a good father, doctor, and teacher? What wisdom does he impart to Marion?

13. Although it's also a play on the surname of the characters, the title *Cutting for Stone* comes from a line in the Hippocratic Oath: "I will not cut for stone, even for patients in whom the disease is manifest; I will leave this operation to be performed by practitioners, specialists in this art." Verghese has said that this line comes from ancient times, when bladder stones were epidemic and painful: "There were itinerant stone cutters-lithologists-who could cut into either the bladder or the perineum and get the stone out, but because they cleaned the knife by wiping their blood-stiffened surgical aprons, patients usually died of infection the next day." How does this line resonate for the doctors in the novel?

14. Almost all of the characters in *Cutting for Stone* are living in some sort of exile, self-imposed or forced, from their home country-Hema and Ghosh from India, Marion from Ethiopia, Thomas from India and then Ethiopia. Verghese is of Indian descent but was born and raised in Ethiopia, went to medical school in India, and has lived and worked in the United States for many years. What do you think this novel says about exile and the immigrant experience? How does exile change these characters, and what do they find themselves missing the most about home?

For Further Reading

Chinua Achebe, *Girls at War*;

Amy Bloom, *Away*;

Andre Brink, *A Dry White Season*;

Pauline Chen, *Final Exam*;

Dave Eggers, *What Is the What*;

Tracy Kidder, *Old Friends*;

John Irving, *The Cider House Rules*;

Ryszard Kapuscinski, *The Emperor*;

Barbara Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible*;

Somerset Maugham, *Of Human Bondage*;

Maaza Mengiste *Beneath the Lion's Gaze : A Novel*

Samuel Shem, *The House of God*;

William Carlos Williams, *The Doctor Stories*.