

TITLE: Words in the Dust

AUTHOR: Trent Reedy

CATEGORY/GENRE: Historical Fiction

SERIES: No

AWARDS: 2012 Christopher Award - Books for Young People; 2012 ALA Best Fiction for Young Adults; 2013 Amazing Audiobooks for Young Adults

SIMILAR BOOKS BY OTHER AUTHORS: *Heart of a Samurai* by Margi Preus, *The Kite Runner* by Khaled Hosseini, *I Am Malala: The Girl Who Stood Up for Education and Was Shot by the Taliban* by Malala Yousafzai with Christina Lamb, *Shooting Kabul* by N. H. Senzai, *A Long Walk to Water: Based on a True Story* by Linda Sue Park, *Thunder Over Kandahar* by Sharon E. McKay, *My Name is Parvana* by Deborah Ellis

AVAILABLE: STC Library: book and book on CD; Libby: eBook and audiobook; Hoopla: audiobook

ABOUT THIS BOOK: Zulaikha is a thirteen-year-old girl living in Afghanistan during and after the Taliban had taken over the country. Zulaikha lives with the memory of her mother being killed by the Taliban for owning books. Each day she must deal with taunting and looks of disgust due to her disfiguring cleft lip. In a society where women are expected to marry and bear children, she feels she will be disappointing her father due to this. When an unexpected offer of surgery is presented, Zulaikha has a glimmer of hope that she can lead a “normal” life. When her hopes seem dashed because her father feels disrespected by the American doctors, Zulaikha secretly turns to an old friend of her mother to teach her to read and write. She remembers the thrill of hearing her mother read and quote poetry. Maybe this was the better life she was destined for?

This book does contain some sensitive material, such as bullying, polygamy, and women’s sex roles.

YOU MIGHT LIKE THIS BOOK IF... You would like to gain a better understanding about the cultures of other countries. It presents some religious, social, economic, cultural, and traditional beliefs and practices of the Afghan people. While the goal of the American soldiers was to assist the people, there was sometimes tension because of their lack of understanding about these practices. The Afghan people sometimes considered the Americans as heroes, but sometimes as villains. This is a good lesson to everyone in learning how to treat each other with respect, even when your beliefs don’t align with theirs.