

The Reluctant Fundamentalist, Mohsin Hamid.

This is a short, fast-paced read, tightly framed as an extended monologue in which a young Pakistani engages an American tourist in hospitable conversation at a cafe in Lahore, recounting the story of his five years in the U.S., first at Princeton and then at a prestigious financial firm in New York City, where he fell in love. Then came 9/11.... It's clear his avid listener is intrigued and increasingly nervous, while suspense builds toward an ending that's ambiguous-- forcing readers to confront our own prejudices: Which man is the terrorist, which one the victim? I loved Hamid's way of writing, spare, evocative, as rich in symbolic truth as poetry, even to the names of characters. In deceptively simple language he creates convincing individuals, social complexity, and a thought-provoking challenge to reflect on America's relationship to the world. One of the best novels I've ever read, and never more timely.