

BLOG: EDUCATING PETUNIA

LIVING AND LEARNING BY THE BOOK

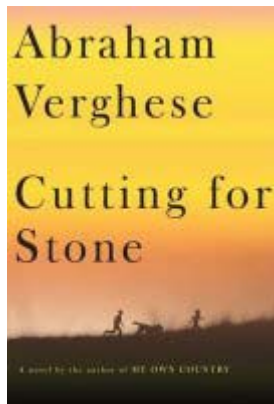
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Review: *Cutting for Stone*

Cutting for Stone by Abraham Verghese

Though I finished reading it over the weekend it took me a few more days to ponder what I had experienced with *Cutting for Stone*. It was a marvelous book. Within the first 100 pages there is a nun giving birth to conjoined twins before she dies and an airplane falling out of the sky. If that sounds a little ridiculous I can assure you that it is masterfully done and not nearly as outrageous as it sounds.

The narrator tells his story from his unusual birth through his upbringing in Africa to the experiences that define his relationship with his family and specifically his twin brother. While the story seems to lag a little after those first 100 pages I found it well worth it to keep reading. Somewhere in the middle I made a connection to my favorite character, Ghosh. He appears earlier in the book but it is in the raising of the twin boys that he becomes a truly wonderful man that is worthy of the reader's respect.



This novel reads like a memoir instead of a fiction. In the acknowledgements at the end the author explains what small parts were fact and what was fiction. He also thanks his good friend, John Irving, the author of *A Prayer for Owen Meany*. Once I read that I could see Irving's influence here. Verghese uses the same techniques to build an engaging story, bringing many different elements together by the end. While *Owen Meany* wasn't a book I'd say I liked, it did make me think and it did leave a rather vivid impression on me. I remember a lot of it clearly though it's been a year and a half since I read it. *Cutting for Stone* uses some of those same techniques and it *is* a story that I can say I liked.

Pretty much all of the characters in the book are doctors so there is quite a bit of medical terminology and descriptions. If you can stomach watching *CSI* and can keep up with the medical mysteries of *House, MD* then you can handle this book. It's a bit graphic and a bit unfamiliar but it wasn't *too* hard to follow and I learned a few things. The details gave the book an authority and showcased the author's knowledge and his ability to make this knowledge understandable to the masses. I had a harder time figuring out how to pronounce the characters' names (mostly Indian and African names) than I did with the medical aspects.

So I liked it. It was an interesting story with some fantastic characters. And it's over 500 pages long so there's enough there to keep you busy for a little while.