

Stacy Towle Morgan. *Escape From Egypt*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1996. 63 pp. \$3.95 (paper), ISBN 978-1-55661-602-0.



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Escape from Egypt

Rating: Advisory

Stacy Morgan's *Escape from Egypt* provides a basis for discussion on several themes including religion and religious persecution, styles of education, and the economic stratification of Cairo.

Egyptians and governments from the pharaonic period to the present have tolerated people holding different religious persuasions, such as Greek Orthodox, Coptic, and Protestant Christians, Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews, Shi'a and Sunni Muslims among others. Increasingly however, Jews and Christians have experienced isolation and difficulty. Muslim fundamentalists have conducted terrorist activities to discourage the influences of European and American Christian and Jewish tourists on Egyptians. *Escape from Egypt* focuses on the religious expression of Protestant Christians and Shi'a Muslims living in contemporary Cairo. The visit of a U.S. family precipitates an Egyptian Muslim's conversion to Christianity and eventual emigration. The author does not indicate which denomination.

In addition, to promoting Protestant Christianity, Morgan advocates home-schooling. The story addresses the strengths of "home-schooling" as opposed to public school instruction. Unlike other young U.S. visitors to Egypt, the two girls in this story continue their studies of various subjects along with their tourism. Like the author, the parents in this story, among others, are also the girls' teachers. The parents create a syllabus that incorporates the parents' religion and lifestyle.

Finally, the author describes the phenomenon of street children, the process of adoption, and single-parent families. These social issues are increasing. As more families move from the countryside to Cairo looking for work, the city cannot serve all their needs. Although cross-family adoption and single-parent households are not characteristic of Muslim tradition, the urban setting exacerbates these situations.

In addition to raising the issues outlined above, *Escape from Egypt* is one of the few novellas available for adolescent girls in the North America which describes contemporary Egypt. When novels are available, they

tend to focus on pharaonic Egypt, such as Rubalcaba's *A Place in the Sun* (1997, Clarion Books). Since Morgan also includes a middle class Egyptian girl in the story, young readers can compare different points of view. The Egyptian characters explain Islamic tradition to their new U.S. friends. The cat is a unifying symbol of continuity and good luck. As in pharaonic time (Trumble, K. *Cat Mummies*. Clarion Press, 1996.), the cat is an important animal in the Egyptian family and the most popular *community* animal in the U.S. family. It foreshadows action in the novella.

Although this book contains a religious focus, young readers can gain from this book an understanding of the

politics and economics that influence religious practices and interpretations of theological concepts. This book was published to proselytize on behalf of Christianity; but it also portrays how people in one society and economic status learn to cope with social pressures through religion. *Escape from Egypt* is an addition to a multicultural curriculum as long as the reader understands the religious biases of the author and publisher.

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