

The Reluctant Fundamentalist Study Guide

The Reluctant Fundamentalist by Mohsin Hamid

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Plot Summary

The Reluctant Fundamentalist is a fictional novel about Changez, a Pakistani man who undergoes ideological and political changes as he studies and works in America. Living in New York City at the time of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center, Changez discovers that he no longer wishes to pursue the American Dream and instead finds his path in shifting beliefs and loyalties closer to home. The story is a frame narrative in which Changez tells his story to an American he meets near a café in Lahore, Pakistan. An embedded narrative depicts a suspenseful and ill-fated relationship between Changez and the American as the motives of both men are slowly revealed.

As Changez and the American stranger dine together at the café over a period of several hours, Changez tells his personal story of transformation. Beginning as a student at Princeton University, Changez was among the best of his class. He applied to a prestigious valuation company, Underwood Samson, and following a rigorous interview was hired and on his way to achieving financial success. During a vacation in Greece with other Princeton graduates, Changez met the beautiful Erica and became totally enamored. Their relationship continued and deepened once they returned to New York, but encountered difficulty as Erica was still emotionally attached to her deceased boyfriend, Chris. Meanwhile, Changez made great strides at work. He achieved top ranking among the trainees at Underwood Samson and the top executives were impressed with the work he did for the company. He traveled to Manila with a valuation team and enjoyed the fruit of lavish transportation, accommodations and respect. But a brief encounter with a jeepney driver in the street reminded Changez of the world from which he came and he sensed a closer connection with the poor worker than with his aloof and entitled American colleagues. The news of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center reached the team and Changez had to hide his pleasure upon hearing the news. He was not happy at the loss of lives, but was glad that someone was able to bring the powerful America to her knees.

When he returned to America, he faced extensive scrutiny at airport security because of his ethnic background. Changez attempted to reconnect with Erica. The recent events had sent her into a depression over Chris's death. She remained distant despite the time they spent together. They were only able to achieve physical intimacy when Changez suggested that Erica pretend that he is really Chris. Instead of bringing the two lovers closer, the incident seemed to send Erica into another downward spiral. Her mother spoke to Changez and requested that he function as a stable friend and not a boyfriend. Soon Erica checked-in to an institution so that she could rest and find herself again.

Changez visited his home during a winter vacation break and reconnected with his family. He was concerned for their safety given all the political unrest between Pakistan and neighboring India. The visit gave him the opportunity to appreciate the history and cultural simplicity of his home and he began to question his adherence to the American ideals and business fundamentals of success and power that had been so drilled into him through his education and work pursuits. He returned to America sporting a beard



despite his mother's suggestion to shave it. The decision brought him harsh looks and rude comments from people on the streets, as the beard made him appear decidedly more Muslim. However, Changez wore it with honor and in an act of defiance to America and solidarity with his people.

Changez's next assignment with Underwood Samson was to Valparaiso, Chile to evaluate a publishing company. His interactions with the manager, Juan-Bautista were the final catalyst that pushed Changez to completely change his ideological beliefs. In Chile, Changez was unable to focus on his work, constantly checking on the political happenings around the world and very concerned with the possibility that war would come to his own country. He was also captivated by the simplistic beauty of Valparaiso. The old city had a charm that reminded him of Lahore, his hometown, and he was saddened that both places no longer maintained the economic prosperity they once enjoyed. Juan-Bautista was aware that Changez was different than his American co-worker and used this to his own advantage. He invited Changez to lunch and told him about the janissaries, young Christian boys who were captured and trained to fight in the Ottoman army against their own people. He likened Changez to these boys – converted to foreign ideals and used to bring the economic downfall of others. Changez saw the truth of this comparison and suddenly decided to leave it all behind – quitting his job, saying goodbye to Erica and leaving America. Before leaving New York, Changez tried to visit Erica and discovered that she disappeared from the institution where she was staying. It was unclear if she had committed suicide, but Changez was devastated by the news. He visited her mother and she gave him Erica's manuscript to keep as a remembrance of her. Although he had no real hope of ever seeing her again, Changez holds on deeply to the memory of Erica for many years.

Meanwhile, as Changez tells this story to the American, the evening lengthens as the two men share tea and then a meal. Throughout their meal, Changez toys with the American making veiled comments that he is aware of the American's identity and purpose in Lahore. As the café closes and the two men head for a hotel, Changez tells of his work as a university lecturer and mentor to students and political activists. He says that he has been warned by his friends to keep his activities in check as his anti-American comments are attracting the attention of the American government and that an emissary might be sent to deal with him. The streets become dark and deserted except for a few men lurking in the shadows. The men rush in on the American, he reaches inside his jacket, and Changez begins to leave the scene. The fate of no one is known and the reader must decide the conclusion.



Chapters 1-3

Summary

The Reluctant Fundamentalist by Mohsin Hamid is a suspense-filled tale of one man's life as the culture of his homeland collides with that of his adopted country.

As the story begins, Changez, the narrator, approaches a stranger and directs him to an outdoor cafe for tea. He identifies the man as an American, pointing out his skin tone, his clothes, his physique and especially his bearing. Joining the American stranger, the narrator begins a very one-sided conversation, as the text only reveals the narrator's voice. Any thoughts, movements or words spoken by the American are delivered from the narrator's perspective.

Changez begins by telling the American a bit of his personal background and education. He lived and worked in New York City for four and a half years, and studied at Princeton University, one of only two Pakistani students enrolled that year. He discusses the rigorous admission tests he took and mentions that his skill at playing soccer also contributed to his admission success. Having been granted a scholarship toward his education, he understood that he was expected to contribute to American society upon graduation. He interviewed with Underwood Samson, an extremely prestigious company that assesses the financial value of other companies. At this meeting, the interviewer surmises that Changez must have come from a poor family since he chose to go through the rigorous process of applying for a scholarship. Changez states that his family was not poor, but rather well off, having a home in one of the most expensive districts in the city and several hired servants. However, he acknowledges that his family does not have the kind of money that their ancestors once possessed and they could afford less than previously. One of these things was an education abroad.

As the waiter arrives to take their order, Changez remarks about the American's anxiety concerning the large man's approach to their table. He assures him that there is no need for alarm and continues the story of his job interview. When Jim, the interviewer, asked if Changez's friends knew that he was at Princeton on a scholarship he became annoyed. Jim realized that Changez's friend's were not aware of his true financial position. Changez tells the American that he did in fact discretely hold three on-campus jobs even while he publicly played the part of a young prince.

The tea arrives and once again, Changez points out the American's suspicions, noting that the tea is not poisoned and proves it by switching cups with him. He even attempts to make the moment more congenial by discussing the accompanying sweet treat. His interview tale continues as Changez was given the opportunity to work through a test case for the prospective employer. Changez evaluated the test case and provided a numerical value for the company. Although Jim disagreed with Changez's answer, he was impressed with Changez's approach and offered him a position at Underwood Samson. Changez tells the American that he was never more proud of himself and has



such good memories of Princeton because the school made his success possible. Yet, he says, nothing is so memorable as the tea in the city of his birth.

Upon graduation, Changez took a vacation in Greece with other Princeton graduates. Here he met Erica, with whom he instantly became enamored. As they began to get acquainted, Erica said that she would love to stay in Greece, rent a room and just write, but she knew that she could never do it since she doesn't like to be alone. She seemed to sense that Changez doesn't mind being alone and he agreed with her, commenting that he grew up with lots of cousins and pets, so being alone is nice. Erica commented that Changez seems "solid," but confessed that most of the time she does not feel that way. As they laid on the beach one afternoon, Erica removed her top to sunbath, as is the custom on many European beaches. This initially startled Changez, but he enjoyed it and attempted to act natural. Following a swim in the ocean, Changez and Erica got drinks back in town. Changez asked about the man's shirt that Erica was wearing and learned that it belonged to Chris, Erica's former boyfriend who died of cancer. The pair talked about their homes and growing up. Erica said that is sounded like Changez missed his home and then added that she missed home too, except her home was Chris. At dinner that evening, the entire vacationing group shared their hopes and dreams for the future. Changez said that he hoped to become a dictator of an Islamic republic with nuclear capabilities. He told his friends he was only joking in answer to their shocked looks and observed that only Erica understood his sense of humor.

Meanwhile, as Changez is telling this part of his story the American, the two have noticed a group of young girls from the National College of Arts as they entered the cafe square. They are dressed in paint-splattered jeans and their clothes are in marked contrast to those of a family at another table wearing traditional garb. The American glances at them quite frequently, as does an older, bearded man. Changez remarks that even though the girls are exposing very little skin that is precisely what creates a yearning and interest for the men of their country. Yet, the girls can feel safe around such staring, because their law allows for them to appeal the brotherhood of the mob for their safety should they feel harassed. As the section concludes, the American receives a call on his mobile phone, which Changez notices to be the kind that uses satellites for communication rather than rely on a signal locally. The American does not answer the call, but sends a text message instead, keeping the communication private.

Changez comments that the American is acting extremely nervous, constantly watching every movement around him. He likens it to an animal confused about whether it is still the predator or perhaps has become the prey. He encourages the American instead to enjoy the beauty of the courtyard. He continues the story of life in Manhattan, where he felt very at home, as there were many cultural reminders such as Pakistani food, Urdu spoken by taxi drivers and a general melting pot experience. Changez began his job at Underwood Samson and was immediately impressed with the company. The corporate office was a monument to greatness and the magnificence of it made Changez very proud to be a trainee. He joined five other trainees and met Wainwright, the most relaxed and friendly of the five, They began a grueling period of study consisting of business school classes, computer and soft skills training where they learned to assess and handle people. They were told that the company operated on a merit based system



and they would be ranked and rewarded for hard work or dismissed if found lacking. Changez and Wainwright hit it off and engaged in banter and quoted movie lines to each other in between lectures. Taking full advantage of their expense accounts the trainees went out one evening for drinks and Wainwright and Changez finish the evening with a meal at the Pak-Punjab Deli, which sealed Changez's fondness for his new friend.

In the present once again, a beggar approaches the cafe table asking for money. The American dismisses him saying that it is better for the government to deal with the causes of poverty than to encourage the man. Changez agrees verbally, but then gives the beggar some coins, sending him on his way.

As the training at Underwood Samson continued, Changez performed well and was at the top of the rankings. The group drove out to the Hamptons for a summer party at the manager's house, a property reminiscent of the estate in *The Great Gatsby*. Changez was seated in the limousine with Jim and others from his team. Jim watched Changez and noticed that Changez was very observant of others. He said that such observation comes from feeling that one doesn't fit in. At the party, Jim also took special time with Changez and told him to enjoy all the benefits of what lay before him. A week later Changez was ranked first among the trainees and was awarded a project in the Philippines.

As the present intervenes again, Changez comments that unknown at the time and despite having the world at his feet, his world will soon change, just as the cafe and marketplace are suddenly transforming. Evening falls and the streets are closed to traffic. Tables are brought out into the street and lights strung overhead. He comments that looking at the scene one would think it had always been that way, but because they have watched the transformation, they know differently.

Analysis

From the very start of their meeting, the tension between Changez and the American is evident. The American is alarmed by Changez's approach and Changez assures him to not be frightened by his beard, for he is a lover of America. The statement sharply highlights one of the primary themes of the novel, that of racial prejudice and profiling. The intent of the thought is that a bearded man approaching an American in a Muslim country could only mean danger. And yet, as Changez assures the man of his safety, it later becomes increasingly clear that the statement is not true. There is additional concern for the American as a rather intimidating waiter not only approaches their table but constantly watches over them in a way that is unsettling to the American. Changez also has his prejudice toward the stranger as he identifies him as an American, not by his clothes or physique but merely by his bearing, indicating that he thinks him to carry himself in an arrogant manner.

Without being invited, Changez sits down with the American and proceeds to order tea for them and tell his life story. His tone is friendly and casual and he plays the part of the



perfect host. Many of his comments, however seem overly done, patronizing or intentionally revealing of Changez's purpose in engaging the American. The American's answer that Changez attended Princeton is not such an amazing guess, as Changez states, since he has already mentioned that he had attended college in New Jersey. As the waiter comes to take their order, the American, alarmed, reaches inside his jacket. Changez deflects the action by quickly saying that there is no need to reach for your wallet just yet as we will pay the gentleman when we are finished. The statements hint that Changez has previous knowledge of the American and his reason for being in Lahore. They also serve to raise questions and create tension between the two men in the narrative. Changez continues to toy with his guest, commenting on his nervous behavior as he notices him looking all around, watching everything. He likens him to an animal that has wandered too far from his lair, a word which in itself suggests the den of a wild creature or a the base of some secret operation. Through the analogy of the wild animal, Changez again subtly suggests to the American that he is aware of his identity and purpose. He knows that the American believes himself to be the predator, but in fact, he is becoming the prey.

Changez's initial feelings toward America are all positive. Princeton, in particular, holds very fond memories for him because the education he receives there paves the way for him in the business world. His recounting of this early history shows Changez's belief in the American Dream that education and hard work can pay off in achieving financial and social success. He has made all the right moves – graduating from an Ivy League school and landing a position with a prestigious firm. It seems that he is well on his way to achieving the dream. The capstone of achievement is “getting the girl,” which is the final piece to completing Changez’s American Dream story. As he meets Erica, whose name is contained in America, he is totally captivated. Her describes her a wearing her hair on top of her head like a tiara, seeing her as an American princess. But there are clues that the dream may not be attainable, at least where Erica is concerned. She mentions that her home is with Chris and that most of the time she does not feel “solid.” If Erica cannot move on to a new relationship or find a new "home" with Changez then it is unlikely that Changez himself will be able to find a new home in America. The Dream can't be fulfilled if it is lacking in reaching its crowning achievement. This theme of the complete American Dream, as reflected in Changez and Erica’s relationship never reaching stability or completion, strengthens throughout the novel and it serves as a signal for the end of the ideal.

Hamid uses several literary techniques to add intrigue and contrasts within the text. Foreshadowing is used to add intrigue to the story as Changez states his interest in becoming a dictator of an Islamic republic during dinner in Greece one evening. His companions are startled by his words and do not find the humor in his joke. However, given the political and ideological changes that take place within Changez as the novel develops, talk of extremist politics becomes a sign of what is to come.

Cultural differences are also highlighted through the use of juxtaposition. At the Lahore café, there is a sharp contrast drawn between the young, modernized college girls in jeans and the family dressed in traditional garb. Both find their place in the city although very different. The girls tend toward the dress of western culture, just as Changez



moved toward reaching his dreams in America. But the close proximity of the two styles suggest that Changez cannot really get too far away from the traditional culture that is his. There are contrasts also drawn between the manners of Changez and those of his Princeton vacation companions while in Greece. Changez is annoyed by the rudeness of the American students as they interact with the restaurant staff. He determines that their wealth and privilege has given them the false idea that they may treat others this way. By contrast, Erica tells Changez that she has never known someone of their age to be so polite and respectful. Cultural contrasts are shown again when the beggar approaches the Lahore cafe table. The American is quickly dismissive, appealing to the government to deal with the man. Changez comments on his response and acknowledges that would be appropriate for the government to deal with the issues that lay at the heart of poverty, but proceeds to give the beggar some coins. This draws a sharp contrast between the two men. The American is depicted as unsympathetic to the man's plight. He wishes to keep him at a distance and not feel for the man in any personal way. This juxtaposition reflects one of the novel's primary themes that pursuit of the American Dream results in only sticking to the fundamentals of success and personal advancement. In contrast, Changez embodies the more human and personal response of caring for the individual man in that moment.

Another literary technique that appears very briefly is allusion. As Changez arrives at Jim's home in the Hamptons for a summer party, he is taken in by the beautiful ocean scene. He likens it to Gatsby's estate described in *The Great Gatsby*. Jim reminisces about his first summer party and his dreams of achieving the kind of success that earns one a place in the Hamptons. Changez can identify with the dream. Yet the allusion to the novel about American financial greatness and success is a nod to the impending disastrous end as Changez will never realize the American Dream. Just as the cafe in Lahore transforms for the evening, Changez's ideas about what is important to him change as well. He states to the American that it is important to know the past and from where people have come so that the present can be better understood. In this he hints that the purpose for telling his story to the American is so that he knows the history behind the man in front of him.

Discussion Question 1

Everything we learn in the story is from Changez's perspective. Why does the author not write dialogue for the American? Does that create any questions in your mind?

Discussion Question 2

Changez is extremely observant of many details concerning the American, his dress, his movements, his choices, etc. Do you think that is part of his analytical nature or is there some other reason that he is so aware of these details?



Discussion Question 3

The author juxtaposes the dress of the College of Art girls with the traditional garb worn by a family having tea in the cafe. How does this reflect contrasts in culture? What are the contrasts between Erika and Changez in culture?

Vocabulary

complexions, courtesan, immured, intermittent, compatriots, meritocracy, irreproachably, tenacious, accreted, bourgeoisie, malaise, anachronistic, magnanimous, monikered, irate, pragmatism, maxim, presciently, penchant, belligerence, tenacity



Chapters 4-5

Summary

As this section opens in the cafe, the American notices a scar on Changez's arm and is told that it is not from a rope burn, even though it looks that way. Instead it comes from an accident as a child when he spilled some candle wax. Festive overhead lights come on and the two are reminded once again of the streets of New York.

Changez's story continues with a description of dinner with Erica and her parents. Dressed in a traditional kurta, he made his way uptown, past the disapproving and snobbish doorman and into Erica's penthouse apartment. Changez's impression of Erica's room was that it was "lived in" and it reminded him of home. Erica showed him her completed manuscript and announced that she planned to send it off to an agent. She was somewhat unsettled to see it go, to send away the pearl that had been inside her, but she had held back too long and knew it was time to send it on. Changez was honored to be included in this moment. As they left her room he noticed a drawing on the wall, a sketch by Chris and was taken with its beauty.

Dinner with Erica's parents was a mixed bag of pleasantries and tension. Changez indulged in alcohol much to Erica's father's surprise. The Pakistanis he knew never drank. At this point, the present day is briefly interjected. Changez explains to the American that he must misunderstand the significance of his beard. Many people in his country drink alcohol, he states, much the way marijuana is smoked in America. He comments that just because something is illegal does not mean that people refrain from doing it. Changez then returns to relaying the events during the dinner. Erica's father also criticized the wealthy class in Pakistan of stripping the masses of their ability to make a decent living. He felt that the country has a problem with fundamentalism. Changez was angered by his words, but remained polite and deflected the comments.

Following dinner, Erica and Changez went into the city to attend a gallery opening. Erica introduced Changez to the circle of her elite friends in Manhattan. In the following weeks they attended many events, but always in groups. Erica seemed to prefer the constant presence of many people, often retreating a half-step inside herself. As Changez noted, she was like a child who liked to sleep with the light on. However, on one occasion the couple picnicked in a park and Erica stated that it had been a long time since she did such a thing. She confessed that she pulled away from many activities following Chris's death and that she sank into a deep depression. It saddened Changez that Erica was so broken inside.

The lights suddenly go out around the cafe due to one of the city's frequent blackouts. The American is immediately nervous and responds by placing his hand back into his jacket as if reaching for something. Changez once again, insists that he is perfectly safe. The lights return and Changez orders more drinks. The two discuss the bats that swoop through the air in the plaza. The American finds them creepy, but Changez is



reminded of his childhood in the country. He notes their ability to escape detection as they hunt and that they are clever enough to hunt in a crowd. Continuing his employment tale, Changez traveled to Manila for his first assignment with Underwood Samson to evaluate a music recording business. He was struck by how modern and well off Manila appeared. The local employees seemed to highly respect the American team, so Changez worked hard at appearing very American. He adjusted his speech and became more demanding and impolite whenever he asked for tasks to be completed. He worked extremely hard and his effort was noticed by the executives. He was however unsettled by an encounter while riding in a limousine. Looking out the car window his eyes met with those of a jeepney driver. The man's eyes were filled with utter disdain for Changez, presumably because of his status and wealth. Changez turned to look at a colleague and had a sudden revelation. The co-worker suddenly seemed very foreign to him, while he felt he had more in common with the driver outside.

Meanwhile, Changez and Erica maintained a bit of contact through emails. Erica's communications were usually very brief, but Changez was glad to hear from her and he looked forward to returning to New York to see her again. As the project drew to a close, Jim congratulated him on his success and hard work. He also commented that they are alike, neither really feeling like they belong in the world of financial success. Jim recounted how he grew up very poor and had to work his way up, like a kid looking into a candy store. Changez saw the similarity of being uncomfortable in a wealthy environment, but he did not come from poverty. Instead, he sees himself as having been in the candy store, but being pushed out as the door closes.

Just before returning to the United States, news of the attacks on the World Trade Center reached the team in Manila. As Changez watched the reports, he was surprised by his reaction - a moment of pleasure. He noted that he was not happy about the many lives that were lost, but rather that someone was able to strike a blow to the all powerful America. He was not sure what to do with this realization, but hid it from his colleagues. As they flew home, Changez encountered much scrutiny at the airports and received his first real taste of racial profiling as he was searched and intensely questioned. His teammates seemed unconcerned about his troubles as no one waited for him to get through airport security and he traveled home alone.

The American becomes rather angry at this point in Changez's tale. He balls his fists and his face hardens. Changez comments that he understands the American's displeasure that anyone would be pleased over America's misfortune. But he also points out that perhaps the American himself has experienced such pleasure at watching news footage of the destruction of enemy strongholds following bombing raids in countries which American now wars against. As the section concludes, Changez attempts to calm his guest by suggesting that they order dinner and that he give the American a chance to speak.



Analysis

Changez's moves along the path of achieving the American Dream as he continues to spend time with Erica. He arrives at her family's home and anticipates great things as he rides the elevator to the penthouse apartment. He is glad to hear Erica's news that she is sending her manuscript to an agent. Erica's revelation that she is unsettled is a forewarning of the unstable condition of the Dream. She describes her angst as a sharp speck that was uncomfortable so she tried to make it less so, just as an oyster makes a pearl from the grain of sand inside its shell. This beautiful imagery is used to depict Erica's own fragile state. Her loss of Chris has been an unpleasant piece inside her soul and she needs some way to make it not hurt so much. Writing is an attempt to ease the pain. Yet Chris is never far from Erica. As Changez leaves the room he notices a drawing on the wall. It was drawn by Chris and hangs there always reminding Erica of their past. With Erica clinging to the past it is unlikely that Changez can fully realize attaining this part of the Dream.

The dinner with Erica's parents has its share of difficulties and revelations about Changez's character. When offered wine, Changez immediately says that he does indeed drink, despite Erica's father's skepticism. He believes that Pakistanis never drink, given that it is against Muslim law. In an interjection to the present day, Changez then explains to the American that drinking alcohol in Pakistan is like smoking marijuana in America. It is illegal, but many still do it. The law exists, but that doesn't mean it is obeyed. When Changez explains this he prefaces the statement with another concerning his beard. In Muslim practice most men wear a beard and it is often seen as a symbol for adherence to Muslim law. However, for Changez neither wearing a beard or abstinence from alcohol is a matter of importance. In fact, his lack of concern emphasizes that he is not a devout Muslim in terms of practice. Still, Changez becomes internally angered when the father criticizes Pakistan. From his viewpoint, the wealthy enjoy their life while the poor suffer. He mentions a big problem with fundamentalism, presumably referring to those strongly adhering to the Muslim religion. The details of the comment do not bother Changez as much as the tone of the words - decidedly condescending and American, as he puts it. This strongly supports again the novel's theme of racial issues stemming from American arrogance and condescension. Americans are presumed to have the answers and know the correct way to run the world, while the fundamentalist ideas of those from other countries are considered problematic. It is perhaps this attitude that underlies the reaction that Changez has to the terrorist attacks later in the section. He is glad to see that someone has knocked America down a peg as he has seen firsthand some of the arrogance and condescension of the super-power even if only through the words of some of its elite.

The relationship between Erica and Changez continues to develop. The two attend parties and many social events, yet they are almost always in crowds. Changez believes this is because Erica does not like to be alone. If she is surrounded by lots of people, it is easier to mentally slip away and retreat into her own world of memory and loss. The author uses beautiful imagery here, describing Erica's method as that of a child who likes to go to sleep with the door open and the lights on. Sleeping in that way



does not allow for a fully restful sleep and protective measures have been left in place should any danger arise. Likewise, Erica goes about the task of living, but she never fully engages. She keeps lots of other people around her, so she really never needs to fully engage with a single person on a deep level. When Erica does allow them to go on a picnic by themselves she seems to fully enjoy the time. She tells Changez that she hasn't been out on a picnic in a long time, since she stopped going to the park following Chris's death. It saddens Changez to see Erica so broken inside and it invokes a deep tenderness within him.

In this section as well there is again the clash of race and prejudice as well as class differences. Changez is constantly aware of the contrasts between the well off and the poor. On his business trip, he does not expect Manila to be so highly modern, much like New York. He expects it to be more like Lahore, an older city with character. Instead, it has gleaming high rises and superhighways. Yet as he encounters a poor taxi driver who shows him utter disdain, he feels like he is playing a part. He can personally identify more with the poor man than with his colleagues from his Underwood Samson team. He does not really fit in, as Jim later suggests, but succeeds in a role as he pursues his Dream. Once the September 11 attacks occur, Changez experiences racial and ethnic prejudice unlike ever before. He is stopped at the airport, searched, and questioned. He is detained in a holding room and sits next to a man in handcuffs, which makes him feel like a criminal. This time, despite his dress, employment status and association with a team of successful businessmen, Changez is singled out simply because of his looks and country of origin. The author's use of descriptive imagery to emphasize the unsettling nature of the scrutiny is striking - "I was uncomfortable in my own face," says Changez.

As evening approaches at the cafe, bats begin to come out and swoop through the square. The author uses an allegorical device to point to the nature of the two men. Changez comments that bats are urban dwellers, just like the two men, able to move around and avoid detection all the while hunting their prey. He says they are clever and hunt among a crowd, perhaps referencing that there is temporary protection for them sitting in a crowded cafe, or possibly alluding that there are more hunters in the cafe besides Changez and the American. When the bats return later in the text, the American is still uncomfortable as they add an ominous feeling to the atmosphere. And as the lights black out briefly, the American becomes reactionary, reaching into his jacket for something. Despite Changez' s assurance that the American is perfectly safe, the repetitive "scare," serves to maintain the suspense and concern that the American is in danger.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the rough speck inside of Erica that she made into a pearl. How does she accomplish that?



Discussion Question 2

Discuss Changez's blatant disregard for following the Muslim regulations on alcohol, especially in light of Erica's father's comment about fundamentalism being a problem in Pakistan. Is it a matter of religion or politics? Which is it for Changez?

Discussion Question 3

Why do you think Changez continues to pursue Erica romantically even though he is aware of the tie she maintains to Chris in the past?

Vocabulary

prosaic, phenomenon, cosmopolitan, imperious, prodigious, surreal, nostalgia, sociopath, presumptuous



Chapters 6-7

Summary

Beginning again in the cafe, the two men continue their conversation, without the American revealing the purpose of his trip to Lahore. However, he detects a strong fragrance in the air and Changez confirms that it comes from some jasmine flowers, worn by a woman at an adjoining table. Changez talks about buying jasmine flowers to put on his grandmother's grave. The reference to death and mourning moves him to continue his story of New York life in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks.

He speaks of the signs of mourning evident in the flowers and photos set up on street corners near the scene of devastation. American flags hung everywhere. Changez met Erica for drinks one night and she appeared older to him, yet he described her as regal as ever, an empress-in-waiting. She told him that her mother suggested that they get away to the Hamptons, but Erica preferred to stay in the city - she does not want to be alone. She had been thinking of Chris again and needed medication to fall asleep. Changez told her about his aunt who lost her husband at a young age and was so distraught that she became "mad." Despite her beauty she never remarried. Changez liked that Erica seemed to become more alive whenever she spoke of Chris, but was concerned that he will never be able to compete with him for her attention. Following their second bottle of wine, they walked home, decidedly drunk and end up at Changez's apartment. She fell asleep on his bed, Changez spent the night on the floor and awoke the next morning to find her gone.

The introduction of jasmine occurs again as a flower seller enters the square to sell the flowers. Changez comments that the flowers are rare in New York but common in Pakistan. Returning to his tale of New York, Changez speaks of attending many fundraisers and parties with Erica, pleased with his entry into high society. He was glad to be entering this level of social class in the New York scene, given his family's fall from similar circles back in Lahore. His time with Erica made him desire her even more, yet, he was also protective of her. She often lost herself in thought and drifted away mentally. Changez frequently placed his hand somewhere near her until she sensed his presence and snapped out of her inner thinking. Despite his desire, he never kissed her.

One night, Erica was especially excited to tell Changez that she had acquired an agent. She suggested that they celebrate with champagne at his apartment. Once there, she began to shed some of her clothes and showed Changez a bruise she got during tae kwon do practice. He touched it and things progressed so that Changez tried to make love to Erica. However, she had not been with a man since Chris's death and was unable to go through with it and became emotionally undone. Changez asked her to tell him everything about their love - how they first kissed, first made love. Changez then told her about his non-existent sexual encounters in Lahore. Erica finally relaxed and they fell asleep next to each other. Back in the present, Changez senses that the



American thinks poorly of him for talking about such intimate details, but says that the night is an important one, so he should be forthcoming.

Commenting again about his past, Changez wonders whether he was aware at the time that even as things were crumbling around him in New York, the foundations of his American Dream and his relationship with Erica were beginning to fall apart as well. America reacted to the terrorist attacks by sending troops overseas, close to Changez's family. In New York, Pakistani cab drivers were beaten, Muslim places of worship and shops were raided, people were called in for interrogation. Changez however denied that he would be affected by these actions, as he was a well-paid Princeton graduate. He began a valuation job at a company in New Jersey and the team received a very cold reception. They often found that the company employees tampered with their equipment, stole their security badges or even vandalized their cars. Jim said this was to be expected. The people in the company were afraid of the changes that the closing or reorganization of the company might bring. But, he said, power came from becoming change. Changez therefore continued to focus on his work, making things change for the economic betterment of his clients. He only paused with concern when he noticed some of the older people at the company who would most likely lose their jobs. He mentioned this to Wainwright who reminded him that these business deals would take place with or without them so he should just focus on the fundamentals and determine the company's true value.

Soon another event upset Changez's composure. Having returned from work very late one night, he turned on the TV to relax. A newscast showed American troops dropping into Afghanistan for the beginning of raids on the country. The close proximity to Pakistan greatly upset Changez and he anticipated forthcoming danger for his family. His anger was so great that he drank heavily in order to calm himself. He woke late the next morning with a severe headache and was unable to concentrate on "the fundamentals" at work.

At this point, Changez interrupts the story to comment on his growling stomach, saying that it sounds like a captured lion growling his protest. He once again suggests ordering dinner and makes many references to food in an animalistic manner. Reverting to the past, he explained his next meeting with Erica. She was pale and worn having had an emotional setback. She was taking medication, missing sleep, having trouble eating and was in a generally poor state. Changez was shocked and wanted desperately to console her. She said that she believed it was not good for them to be together, but Changez did not understand. He asked her to go home with him and even though she initially refused, she conceded. Changez once again attempted to make love to her and when he realized that Erica was thinking of Chris, he told her to pretend that he was actually Chris, there with her. At this she was able to relax and the pair made love. Erica said that Changez had been kind to her, but he felt ashamed of what he had done and hoped that he had not caused Erica harm. In the cafe, the American appears turned off by this confession and Changez understands his feelings on the matter. At any rate, he is hungry and turns to order their meal.



Analysis

These chapters signal that all is not well with the American Dream for Changez. He is personally beginning to wrestle with his conscience and more of Erica's bruised heart is coming up to the surface. Changez recalls that he wasn't aware of the state of things at the time, but looking back the signs were fairly clear. America is not only in mourning following the terrorist attacks on September 11 but it is reacting very passionately as well. The streets are filled with flowers and memorials for the dead and the American flag is flying everywhere. Changez senses that it is a sign of solidarity and even a warning. "We have been slighted - beware." When Changez sees the news report of American soldiers being air dropped into Afghanistan he becomes very angry. He takes the invasion almost personally. Afghanistan is a neighbor of Pakistan so the entrance of troops into the region causes him great concern. He is not only concerned for what is beginning to happen politically in that part of the world, but is also concerned for the personal safety of his family. Following his immediate reaction, Changez tries to tell himself that none of these events happening far away would affect his personal life and world in New York. But a nagging sense that all is not well keeps him from focusing on the fundamentals that day. He also sees and experiences the harsh reactions of people in the streets of New York. People who hail from Islamic countries are being questioned, beaten or harassed. Muslim shops and mosques are targeted. While Changez does not receive abuse because of his ethnicity, he does have to deal with harassment at work. The employees at the company his team evaluates in New Jersey do not stand idly by as their jobs are likely to be swept away. They harass the team with small acts of violence and Changez experiences hatred firsthand as a direct result of his work. He is moved only by encountering some of the older workers to whom he would normally show deference and respect. He questions what will become of these men and is concerned for them. These men are about the age of his father, and he knows that he would never do something that endangered the livelihood of his own father. But others tell him to continue to focus on the business fundamentals and determining the company's bottom line because change will take place with or without him. However, the seeds of Changez's ideological changes have been sown and they are growing within him whether he acknowledges them or not.

The relationship between Erica and Changez encounters some ups and downs as well. Erica has regressed into deeper periods of introspection following the attacks. The event dredges up thoughts and feelings of Chris again, possibly because of the many deaths and aura of mourning that fills the city. It seems that Erica wants to move forward in her relationship with Changez as she places herself in a position of intimacy with him, suggesting champagne at his apartment, removing outer layers of clothes, and inviting him to touch her bruise. Some part of her seems to desire something more with Changez, but when the moment comes for making love, she can't go through with it. Changez is patient and understanding and tries to reassure her and do what he can to help her. Listening to Erica tell about her relationship with Chris gives Changez insight into their connection. He sees that their bond had been so strong that he doesn't know if she could ever separate herself from him. In a twist, he ultimately suggests that she pretend that he is actually Chris. This is a strange moment for Changez, because



instead of feeling a deeper bond, he feels ashamed of what he has done. He realizes that he is in an odd love triangle and doesn't know if he can compete with his "dead rival." Here too, his desire for what lays just in front of him overshadows the reality that it is not truly to be claimed. Erica is the capstone of the American Dream - having it all and getting the girl. Even in this deeply intimate moment she shows herself to be unavailable, but Changez still hangs on to the hope that things may turn around.

There are also several uses of figurative language that add interest and depth to the narrative. At one point, Changez's stomach growls and he refers to the sound as that of a "young lion held captive in a gunnysack." The image suggests that a fierce predator has been captured and restrained. While on the surface, the simile is only to highlight his need for food, the metaphor suggests that the American is actually the young lion held captive. This is another example of Changez toying with the American, subtly announcing that he may be the one in control and indeed the predator. As Changez talks about ordering their meal, he also uses many words that relate to the capture and preparation of meat. Words like carnivorous, predatory delicacies, spiced brain and charred flesh all conjure images of slaughter and consumption. Changez explains that this is the traditional cuisine of Lahore; food that does not fear its prey and instead fully indulges one's appetite. At one point the author juxtaposes the smell of charred flesh with the sweet fragrance of the jasmine flower. The American notices the scent and Changez says his senses are like those of a fox in the wild. While the scent of cooking meat suggests the predatory and violent nature of the conflict between the two men and their cultures, the sweet fragrance provides a sharp contrast. The jasmine flower, which is native to the region, is considered a symbol of purity. Changez comments that the flower is everywhere in Pakistan yet somewhat uncommon in America suggesting the motives and ideologies of the countries are reflected in the blooms. Pakistan has a purity of spirit and America is a stranger to it.

Discussion Question 1

Despite some of the signs that everything is not well in Changez's world, what is it that causes him to push on - pursuing the fundamentals in business and trying to secure his relationship with Erica?

Discussion Question 2

Why do you think Changez tells Erica to pretend that he is Chris? Is he being helpful or selfish?

Discussion Question 3

Changez's initial reaction to the invasion of Afghanistan is anger, not worry or concern. Is he justified in this reaction? Was America justified in its response to the terrorist attacks? Discuss.

Vocabulary

impeccability, dormant, crass, enamored, chronometer, atrophy, deference, equanimity, fortnight, destitute, acquiesce, satiation, boor, myopic



Chapter 8-9

Summary

The waiter at the cafe comes to take the dinner order from Changez. His speech, Urdu and chant like, disturbs the American. Changez explains that he is not praying as the American suspects, but simply orally transmitting the menu. Once dinner is ordered, Changez continues with his story. Following their last romantic encounter Changez did not hear from Erica for two weeks. He gave her space, but finally attempted to contact her. They met at her apartment and Changez was greeted at the door by her mother, who took Changez aside to speak privately. She was concerned for her daughter's emotional state and informed Changez that what Erica needed most was a stable friend, not a boyfriend. He agreed to her request, mostly because of her obvious desperation over the situation. His time with Erica was casual and relaxed until Changez asked her about the novel. This upset her and she fretted over not being able to write anymore as it no longer helped to get things out, but rather sucked her inward. Changez's attempts to communicate further with Erica failed as she withdrew inside herself. He left the apartment feeling rather alone. Changez thought about the state of his relationship with Erica and realized more fully that he could not give her whatever it is that she was looking for. Her tie to Chris was too strong, "a religion that would not accept me as a convert." He respected the mother's request to stay away until he is contacted and he complied, describing it as "a man attempting to rid himself of an addiction." While Erica retreated into nostalgia, Changez felt America was retreating into a type of nostalgia as well. The flag flying and news reports about war efforts seemed to reflect the past and Changez was unsure of where he fit into the scene.

The beeping of the American's phone interrupts the story and he texts a response. Changez comments about the on-the-hour regularity of the calls. He then directs their attention to the meat being placed on the grill in anticipation of their meal. Returning to his story, Changez stated the nostalgia everywhere else never affected Underwood Samson. They continued to look forward, not worried about the past and Changez threw himself into his work. While on the job, he was confronted by an angry man who hurled racial insults at him. He was shaken and ready to fight back even though the situation ended without further incident. Shortly afterward, Jim invited him up to his flat for a quick dinner. He was concerned about Changez and asked if he was doing alright. Changez dismissed any need for concern, but Jim remained unconvinced and offered a listening ear at any time. Changez became concerned that maybe he was under scrutiny because he is Muslim and worried about his position at the firm. However, he achieved top ranking again and received a large bonus which allowed him to travel home for a winter break.

Again at the cafe, the American and Changez begin the evening meal, with Changez sampling each dish first, giving the American assurance that he has nothing to fear in eating. They use their fingers, Changez commenting that the time has come for them to "dirty their hands." Changez continues his story, telling about his visit home. At first he



was struck with how shabby his home looked and later realized that the problem lay with him. He was observing his home with the eyes of an American and through that set of standards. As he settled in, he realized the grandeur and history that were a part of his home and he found a renewed sense of pride in his roots. His family greeted him warmly and enjoyed his company. He was concerned for their safety as he heard much discussion about the political situation surrounding them. Changez considered staying in Pakistan, but his parents insisted on his returning to New York, perhaps as a means of protecting him. His mother reminded him to shave his beard which he had allowed to grow while home, a suggestion he did not follow. In the present, Changez comments to the American that he felt very uneasy leaving the site of impending war, feeling as if he should be doing something, and feeling odd returning to a place of relative safety. The American reveals that he is familiar with that feeling of waiting for armed conflict and then admits that he has been in the service. Back in New York, Changez experienced strange looks from his colleagues and rude comments from strangers on the subway as his beard made him look decidedly Muslim.

After six weeks separation, Changez attempted to contact Erica. She responded to his email by inviting him to visit her at the clinic where she was staying. He was greeted by her nurse who explained that Erica was in love with someone else - Chris - and that she did better in an institutional setting where she was not required to live in the real world. When he saw Erica they shared pleasant conversation, but she said goodbye to Changez for all intent and purpose. She was grateful for his friendship, but she did not want him to get hurt or to be around her anymore. It was with great difficulty that Changez left her behind. Back at Underwood Samson, Jim tried to get Changez refocused and not so distracted by his concerns at home. He gave him a new assignment in Chile and emphasized Changez's need to perform well since he would be on his own.

At the cafe again, Changez suggests ordering dessert, a sweet treat to contrast the evening that is taking a grim turn. He states that American soldiers are sent into battle with chocolate in their provisions, so surely the American must be familiar with taking sweet delight in something before performing a bloody task.

Analysis

In this section Changez's internal unrest intensifies as he continues to be concerned with the political situation in the world as orchestrated by America. America's global reach is affecting his family at home, but it does not initially appear to touch him in New York. He finds New York in a state of nostalgia, looking to reclaim a sort of patriotism from the past. His trip home to Pakistan reveals unrest as troops are moving to defend the borders in case India attacks as they have threatened. Changez is upset that the U.S. does not appear interested in defending her ally and only focuses on the attacks on the neighboring Afghanistan. It is also upsetting to him that his family must experience this unrest and threat of war while he sits in New York relatively untouched by these political events. It is for the young men like himself to defend the country and he feels ashamed to return to New York because it feels like he is running away.



America is wielding her power abroad, engaging in armed conflict, and no one in America must deal with the same concerns. In an act of outward defiance to America, Changez does not shave his beard when he returns to America, despite his mother's reminder to do so. They both know that the beard will make him look more Muslim and that it is likely to cause trouble. Changez does experience racial slurs and angry looks from strangers on the subway for the first time. He no longer blends in with the crowd, but now sticks out as a potential threat to American safety. At work one day, he is verbally assaulted in the parking lot and his anger rises suddenly. The incident escalates and a physical confrontation almost erupts. Changez is visibly shaken and he realizes that his cultural and physical ties to the Muslim world cannot be escaped despite his present social status and position in America.

The trip home also reveals to Changez just how much his perspectives have become truly American in nature. As he enters the family home, his initial response is one of embarrassment that the place looks so shabby and is in need of repair. He is reminded of the family's struggle to maintain a level of social and financial success. It is so very different from all the success and luxury that he has been experiencing in New York and in his travels elsewhere in the world. But once he acclimates himself to his familial surroundings, he realizes that the problem is not with the home or with his family's social position. He sees that he has changed dramatically in his viewpoints. He is viewing everything with a decidedly American perspective, looking down on the simple, shabbiness of the dwelling. He hated seeing this attitude of entitlement and superiority when he encountered it from the wealthy in America. In response, he purposefully rids himself of this mindset and is then able to see and appreciate the history and luxuriousness of the home's aging furnishings and its unique charm. He is, however, upset with himself for having felt this way. He wonders how he could have possibly been so ungrateful for the richness of his cultural roots and is disappointed that he was so easily led astray in his thinking. This becomes a key moment of realization for Changez as soon this very issue will be even more clearly revealed to him while on his next assignment.

Changez's American Dream foundations are rocked still further as his relationship with Erica completely deteriorates. Her withdrawal to an institution leaves Changez shocked. Despite the nurse's explanation of Erica's condition and withdrawal into a false world, he cannot grasp how someone could be so powerfully in love with someone who is dead. He does not want her to say goodbye but is more fearful of harming her further. He considers taking her away and trying to lull her back into the real world, but instead respects her wishes, realizing that there is nothing he can really do and no way to reach inside. This is the first piece in the collapse of the American Dream for Changez. He has experienced some political unrest, some firsthand prejudice against him and pangs of conscience in his work that threaten his ideals in the business world. But the loss of love represent the loss of the crowning achievement in his American dream world of success. He sadly decides to let it go, but he never truly lets go of Erica.

Also of note in the section are the interactions between Changez and the American stranger. Changez continues to toy with his guest, commenting that he appears to think that the waiter's recitation of the menu sounds like a Islamic prayer. He has also noticed



that the cell phone rings on the hour. Not let a single action or thought get past him and he lets the American know it. Again, these comments serve to create suspense in the narrative, as Changez appears to be very aware of the American's thoughts, motives and purpose. His tone is still friendly for the most part, but the comments are unsettling. This technique is used as well whenever Changez speaks about their meal. He directs the American's attention to the fire where their meat is being grilled. He uses descriptive language that adds a tone of uneasiness to the moment. Instead of merely mentioning the chicken, he specifies that it is "boneless" and the sparks coming off the coals are "angry and red." These words add a sharp texture to the scene and add to the suspense. When it comes to dessert, Changez makes statements that are even more revealing. He knows that American soldiers are given chocolate in their rations as they are sent out into the battlefield, so he suggests that the American indulge in a sweet dessert as well. He is seemingly aware that the American is to engage in a battle of some kind and even labels it as a "bloody task." While the American's reaction is unknown, the words and blatant admission of knowledge of the American's identity leaves the reader uneasy and worried for the American's fate.

Discussion Question 1

What is stuck inside Erica that can't come out?

Discussion Question 2

Why does Changez decide to keep his beard? What is its significance?

Discussion Question 3

Even though he questions it, what is the importance of Changez's decision to leave Erica at the institution? What does it signify for him?

Vocabulary

formulaic, antechamber, averted, nostalgia, unintelligible, gist, rescinded, provenance, reacclimatized, idiosyncratic, contiguous, bravado, phenomenon, ascetic



Chapters 10-12

Summary

Beginning once again in the cafe, Changez notices an odd bulge under the American's suit, and proceeds to describe a hidden weapon. He lets the American off the hook by saying that he is sure it is only a secret wallet worn by travelers to hide their belongings from pickpockets. He then transitions into relaying the story of his trip to Chile. He no longer enjoyed the amenities of first class travel as he was too focused on what had recently transpired with Erica. He still hoped to reach inside her and save her from herself as his desire for her remained. Upon arriving in Valparaiso, Chile Changez and his superior met with Juan-Bautista, the manager of the publishing company they had been sent to evaluate. Changez mentioned that his uncle was a poet in Pakistan and that his family loved books as a way to connect with the old man. As usual their presence was not welcomed. The two men began their work, but Changez found it very difficult to concentrate. His concern for the political situation between India and Pakistan grew and he scanned websites and news articles for whatever news he could gather. He was disturbed that America seemed to stand quietly by and not go to Pakistan's aid as an ally. His superior demanded that he get his act together and make progress on his work, but despite his reassurances to do so, Changez continued to slack off. The city of Valparaiso distracted him as well as it reminded him of Lahore. One day Juan-Bautista drew him aside and told him to visit the home of a certain man further up in the mountains. Changez slipped away from work one afternoon and enjoyed the grandeur of the location. The view reminded him of Erica and he realized that he was not really sure where he belonged in the world or in life. He once again attempted to contact Erica. He also called his family and discovered that the political situation between India and Pakistan was intensifying. Also, their house was in need of serious repairs so he sent them money. Events were spiraling around him when Juan-Bautista invited Changez to lunch one day. He asked if Changez was ever concerned for the people whose lives became disrupted by his work. The old man told him about the janissaries, young Christian boys who were captured and trained to fight in the Ottoman army against their own people. He likened Changez to the boys and said that he believed Changez was being used by the Americans to have their way in the world. Changez reflected on this information and agreed with Juan-Bautista's comparison. This revelation was the final push that sent Changez in a new direction. He stopped his work and prepared to return to New York knowing that he would lose his job, his work visa and any chance of being with Erica.

The cafe is now nearly empty and Changez remarks that this is how he felt on his return to New York. He realized that America had always been involved in the affairs of other countries and that it used its financial power to orchestrate everything. He was glad that he had chosen to no longer participate in supporting this empire devoted to controlling others. But he was also suddenly worried about giving up social standing, a means of making an excellent income and any hope of trying to still save Erica. He remained confused. He arrived at Underwood Samson to check out. Jim was disappointed but



realized that Changez was going through some personal struggles and told him to feel free to call him if he ever needed to talk. Wainwright was the only other colleague who shook his hand goodbye. In his apartment he drank and calls his brother to say he was returning home. His final important task before leaving was to visit Erica. When he arrived at the institution he learned that Erica was no longer there. She walked away one day and it is suspected that she jumped into the Hudson River. Although her clothes were found folded neatly on a bench by the rocky lookout point, her body was never found. A distraught Changez drove to her parents' home and was met by Erica's mother. The two exchanged words of consolation but didn't really know what to say. Erica's mother gave Changez Erica's manuscript to read. Changez continued to think of her and hoped that she was somehow still alive and that he might someday hear from her. He knew it was unlikely, but he still held out hope.

Changez continued to experience racial hatred which fueled his anger toward America. He decided that America must be stopped in its feeling of superiority over the rest of the world. He left the country and settled into a new life in Pakistan. He frequently thought of Erica and dreamed of the life they might have had together. It was difficult for him to move on and forget her. He paid dues to the Princeton newsletter in hopes that her picture or some other news concerning her might appear there. Meanwhile, he took a job as a university lecturer and began to mentor students concerning political matters as well. He promoted a separation from anything having to do with America and many of his students became involved in anti-American protests and other activities. His friends warned him to be careful with his words or the American government might send an emissary to deal with him.

At this point in the evening, Changez and the American have left the empty cafe and are now walking to the American's hotel. The streets are dark and the American notices that men are hiding in the shadows but clearly following them. He recognizes one man as the waiter from the cafe. Changez makes references to two literary works, *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* and *The Heart of Darkness*, and compares the present scene to the ones in those stories. The American texts another message on his cell phone and continues on. The tension builds as Changez speaks increasingly of his association with those involved in anti-American activities. He comments that the American should not presume that all Pakistanis are terrorists just as he should not presume that all Americans are under-cover assassins. As they reach the hotel gates, Changez hastily begins to leave and the men in the shadows advance on the American as he reaches into his jacket.

Analysis

The transformation taking place in Changez comes to full fruition during the final section of the narrative. Although the transition loosely follows the more common movement of boyhood to manhood, this coming of age theme chronicles in detail the realization and acceptance of Changez's ethnic and political self. Changez is continually concerned with the political upheaval going on near his homeland. As he travels to Chile he is unable to concentrate on his work and on the fundamentals of business practice. He is



dwelling on his separation from Erica and what he could have possibly done to reach her. His longing continues and he is sure that he must somehow still try to break through in order to secure their relationship. He also spends his time surfing the internet for news articles and reports on the increasing tensions between India and Pakistan. He reflects on America's role in the tensions. America is supposed to be an ally to Pakistan, yet it is refusing to intervene in the conflict with India, perhaps even encouraging the conflict in some way. This is greatly disturbing to Changez.

It is Juan-Bautista that opens his eyes to the puppetry of America. He notices Changez's unrest and inability to focus on work. He senses that he is mentally elsewhere. He asks Changez if he is ever concerned about the people that his valuation work displaces. Although Changez's answer maintains the company line, he knows that this is true. He has felt pangs of guilt and concern for the workers before and this place is no different. At this, Juan-Bautista suggests that Changez walk into the mountains and visit the home of a certain local man. The climb is long and beautiful and at the top he gets a sense of not really belonging anywhere. He almost has an identity crisis. He has been educated to function as a brass tacks American businessman, his heart lay in Pakistan with his family and his lost lover has recently sent him away. His head is swirling and he is unsure and unstable. Juan-Bautista takes advantage of this and gives him the final push to complete his transformation. Over a friendly lunch one day, Juan-Bautista tells Changez about the jannissaries. The young boys were taken from their families, converted to Islam and made to fight in the sultan's army. They were fierce and loyal. Juan-Bautista likens Changez to these boys - made to perform the unpleasantness of the American business machine by wielding its financial power. He comments though that Changez began his education and indoctrination at a much older age so he had memories of his home with which to make comparisons. Because he could remember his home and the way things were different in his country it was natural that he should feel uncomfortable with the life he now lives. Changez agrees with this revelation and suddenly refuses to continue in servitude to the American Dream. Yet, while he decides to put an end to working on America's behalf to influence too many others in the world, Changez's decision also puts an end to the positive, personal benefits of the American Dream. By quitting Underwood Samson, Changez loses his nice salary, his social standing, and his ability to stay in America as his visa will expire without employment. So Changez's decision is not simply about leaving behind the fundamental principles of business and finance but also about leaving behind the pursuit of the American Dream. Losing Erica signaled the start of this collapse and this decision makes the transformation complete. Changez has finally decided that striving to stick to the fundamentals and hard work at the expense of anything else, even what is important in one's personal life, is not what he desires to focus on.

In an attempt to not lose everything in America, Changez goes to see Erica one last time, discovering that she has gone away. He cannot except that she has committed suicide and holds on to the hope that she may turn up some day. Even back in Pakistan he tries to keep his eyes open for any sign that she is alive and well. He subscribes to the Princeton journal in case some news of her should appear there and he hopes that perhaps she saw him that one time his political comments were broadcast on the American news networks. As he reads her manuscript, Changez hopes to find



something of Erica in the words, but there is no personal soul-exposing prose written there. He is left with longing for her, much as Erica herself did with Chris.

As Changez's fundamental life focus shifts he moves radically to the other side. Once he was eagerly pursuing the American Dream but by the end of the narrative he is strongly opposed to anything American and speaks out loudly against it. His fundamentals have now become teaching and encouraging his countrymen to seek independence from any type of American control. He knows his ideas are not popular in America and that his life may be in danger because of his outspokenness. It is that very thing that brings the American and Changez to the dark cafe and streets of Lahore. He references two works of literature that are applicable to their situation. He speaks of the terror that Ichabod Crane experiences in *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* as he rides his horse alone in the darkness of night and hears the sound of a galloping horse and his rider, the Headless Horseman. He describes how he imagines the American must feel at this point, sensing that he is being pursued by someone that means him harm. He also mentions *The Heart of Darkness*, but only by the characters who square off in the novel. He says that he feels like a Kurtz, the evil protagonist, waiting for his Marlowe, the antagonist sent to stop him. The literary references are used by the author to enrich the narrative and add depth to the understanding of the emotions each man feels.

While the ending of the narrative is left unclear, the reader can draw a few conclusions. Changez has orchestrated the entire evening to keep the American occupied until dark and to place him a situation which could be controlled. He also has been sure to let the American know that his cover was blown and much was known about him. Changez felt the need to tell the American his story so that the American would fully know the history that was impacting the present situation. For his part, the American remained in contact with someone who perhaps knew his whereabouts and was placed ready to assist if needed. The final outcome of the two men is unknown, but Changez's transformation story was clearly told.

Discussion Question 1

Changez provides evidence that he may be a terrorist. What is the evidence that the American is an assassin? Who was the predator and who was the prey?

Discussion Question 2

Changez is unable to forget Erica after he returns to Pakistan and continues to hold out hope of finding her one day. He images what their life would have been together. Is his reaction normal or has he become like Erica?

Discussion Question 3

Changez has a harsh indictment on America's role in the world political scene. Is he correct in that assessment and could he have responded differently?



Vocabulary

secrete, emaciated, osmosis, belligerent, atmospheric, inflective, inauspicious, ubiquitous, autonomous, janissaries, introspection, euphoria, equanimity, hirsute, etiquette, vacillated, provocation, posturing, repercussions, facades, coterie, effigies, infallible, inveterate



Characters

Changez

Changez is the novel's main character/protagonist and narrator of the novel. He really tells a story within a story. The first, or framework of the novel, takes place in the present at a cafe in the city of Lahore, Pakistan. The other, which occurs in the past, is the account of Changez's personal transformation in thinking, ideology and purpose. In fact, Changez's very name is representative of the fundamental changes which he makes in his life as the novel progresses.

As the story of Changez's personal life begins, Changez is a young student at Princeton University attending on scholarship. He works hard at three part time jobs, plays soccer and excels in his academics. Upon graduation, he lands a position at a prestigious valuation firm and feels he is on his way to success and achieving the economic standing which his family back in Pakistan once enjoyed. Socially he also does well as he becomes involved with Erica, a young Princeton grad he meets while on vacation in Greece. Erica represents the epitome of all that a young man could hope for in the Manhattan social scene, as she is beautiful, has wealthy parents and is well connected. However, she is unable to let go emotionally of her deceased boyfriend which ultimately prevents the couple from fully establishing their relationship.

In the aftermath of the terrorist attacks on September 11, Changez begins to experience discomfort with his life in America and is increasingly concerned for his family back home. As tensions between India and Pakistan mount, Changez worries that his country may soon be at war. He is particularly disturbed that America seems to do nothing to aid Pakistan and that the U.S. may, in fact, be encouraging the tensions. He also begins to experience ethnic prejudice from strangers on the subway and from colleagues at work merely because of his physical appearance.

Vocational changes take place as well. Changez begins to feel sorry for the workers whose lives are disrupted by his valuation reports as jobs are inevitably lost. He begins to question the American business machine that churns along and spits out casualties in its wake. On a trip to a publishing company in Chile, Changez's discussions with Juan-Bautista, the manager, fully forms his hatred of all he has become - a Janissary for America as it wields its economic and political power around the world. He abruptly quits his job and returns to Pakistan, leaving behind everything in America, including Erica. He no longer believes in the fundamental business principals that he once followed and pursued so enthusiastically and efficiently, but shifts to follow the fundamental ideas of loyalty to his country and family.

In Pakistan, Changez becomes a university lecturer in business, but uses the position as an opportunity to influence many of the country's young people politically. He mentors and encourages many to become active voices in the push to separate the country from American influence, a trajectory that is labeled "anti-American" by the



foreign press. His influence attracts enough notice in the U.S. that they send an "emissary" to silence him. It is in fact the presence of the American, who by now appears to be a government operative, that signals the rise in the tension in the novel as the two draw their evening to an abrupt end. Changez's fate is never fully known, but his fundamental ideas are clearly understood.

The American Stranger

Unnamed, the American stranger is the antagonist in the novel. Very few details are known about this mysterious and silent character who spends the late afternoon and evening with Changez and listens to his story of how and why he adheres to his political and ideological beliefs. The American's words and actions are all relayed through the words of Changez as he converses and tells his story. Hamid writes the cafe scenes in the present tense and second person, so the reader experiences first hand the American's point of view.

The American is a very careful person, placing himself in a seat in the cafe with his back to the wall so that he can view everything clearly. He keeps his jacket on, presumably to conceal something underneath. He is uneasy when the cafe waiter approaches and begins to reach into his jacket. The action would not attract any attention normally, but Changez comments that there is no need to reach for a wallet just yet. However, his previous comments suggest that he knows things about the stranger's identity, even though they have just met, and he believes that the American is reaching for a weapon. The reader can feel the tension and panic that is present and that there might be danger at hand.

Throughout the evening the American is cautious and watchful. He notices everything going on around him. He is suspicious of the food being served until Changez offers to taste all of it first. He makes texts on his phone, which Changez notes is a high-tech, satellite based model, one that does not rely on local service and, therefore, should be reliable at all times (and most likely government issued). Although it is never clearly stated, it is clear by the end of the evening, that the American is some type of American operative sent to deal with Changez and his part in anti-American activities.

Jim

Jim is the Underwood Samson analyst recruiter who interviews and hires Changez. He seems to have a special insight into Changez and asks him very direct, probing questions during the interview. He is aware that Changez must have really needed the scholarship money to attend Princeton and asks whether his Princeton friends are aware that he is not rich by their standards. Jim shares that he himself was a Princeton grad, the first in his family to attend college. He worked part-time jobs to pay for school and does not look down at Changez because he needs financial help to pay for his education. In fact, he feels it is a positive thing since he believes that makes Changez "hungry."



Once at Underwood Samson, Jim takes Changez under his wing and is very pleased initially with his training and work. He comments to Changez that he has noticed that he is often quite among the other new hires and says that it is from feeling like one doesn't belong, stating that he knows that from personal experience. He seems himself in Changez, noticing that he works hard and tough, like a shark, and also cautions Changez to not overdo it.

Jim takes special time with Changez both at the summer cookout at his home in the Hamptons and later at his New York apartment where he cooks dinner for Changez. He rates him at the top of his class of trainees and gives him special assignments that other new recruits would not normally be given. And while he is disappointed that Changez ultimately fails him while on assignment in Chile and fires him, he does not seem to hold any personal animosity toward him in the end. He is aware that Changez is struggling with personal issues and leaves the door open for conversation and a friendly beer.

Erica

A young fellow Princeton grad, Erica steals Changez's heart while on vacation in Greece. Changez is struck by her regal air and free spirit. She hopes to be a novelist and has completed a manuscript that is not completely polished. She is haunted by the memory of her deceased boyfriend, Chris, but nevertheless pursues a friendship with Changez. She behaves in a manner that is welcoming, asking Changez personal questions, inviting him to Manhattan social events and sharing personal thoughts with him as their relationship deepens. But she finds it difficult to fully connect with Changez, particularly when they attempt to make love one night. It is only when Changez suggests that she pretend that he is Chris that Erica is able to relax and allow herself to become physically intimate with Changez.

Erica's emotional state concerning Chris sometimes leads her into deep depression and hospitalization. She cuts off communication with Changez and goes to a clinic to rest. She feels more comfortable in an institutional setting where she can live life inside her own mind, away from the outside world. Her nurse at the clinic tells Changez that Erica is love with someone else and, as difficult as it may be to understand, it doesn't matter to Erica that her lover is dead. Eventually, Erica simply disappears. It is not conclusive that she committed suicide since a body is never found, but the clothes that she last wore were left folded on a bench at the edge of a rocky bluff overlooking the Hudson River.

Changez is deeply affected by the news and continues to hold out some small hope that she is alive and will contact him. However, after reading her manuscript, he becomes aware that Erica had chosen to move on with her life apart from him and accepts her decision.



The Cafe Waiter in Lahore

The name of the waiter at the café in Lahore is unknown but he is described as a big burly fellow with a hardened face. The American is alarmed by the waiter's initial approach to the table and it is hinted at that he is rather intimidated and reaches for a gun to protect himself. This is the first sign that the American may be in danger. Throughout the evening at the café, the waiter is both attentive to the needs of his patrons and very watchful of the American's movements. At the close of the evening, the waiter follows Changez and the American along the streets, first at a distance but then he closes in and rushes the American. His fate is unknown but clues in the text suggest that he is a Pakistani terrorist intent on protecting Changez's life by killing the American visitor.

Wainwright

Wainwright is a fellow trainee at Underwood Samson and the closest thing Changez had to a friend in America. He is serious about achieving success and performs well, but he is not as uptight as the other new hires. He jokes with Changez and the two exchange banter using movie quotes from Top Gun. They eat meals together, have drinks and congratulate one another on their success at the company.

When Changez returns from a trip to Pakistan sporting a beard, Wainwright cautions him that wearing it may not be a good idea since he makes him look more Muslim, an ethnic and religious association that is not favorable in the aftermath of the September 11 attacks. He stresses that it doesn't make any difference to him, but expresses his concern that wearing the beard may impact Changez's standing within Underwood Samson. Once Changez begins his downward spiral from the lofty heights he had achieved at the company and suddenly quits, only Wainwright, from among all the employees, shakes his hand and says goodbye.

Juan-Bautista

Juan-Bautista is the chief manager of a publishing company in Valparaiso, Chile. He is an avid smoker, wears thick-lensed glasses and loves his books. He is not happy that Underwood Samson is evaluating the company as his unit is likely to be closed. Changez is assigned to the valuation job and likes the older gentleman immediately. After their first meeting, Juan-Bautista follows up on Changez's comment that he had an uncle who was a poet in Pakistan. He searches out the poet's work and validates the claim. This fact seems to connect the two in some small way and opens the door for further communications. Juan-Bautista watches Changez as he works and tells him that he believes Changez "to be lost" and different than his colleagues from Underwood Samson. He suggests that Changez visit a certain local's house and experience Valparaiso on a more intimate level.



Juan-Bautista serves as a catalyst in pushing Changez to fully accept his shifting ideologies and loyalties. One afternoon, Juan-Bautista invites Changez to lunch. During conversation, he asks Changez if he is ever bothered by the fact that he causes disruption to so many people's lives, often causing them to lose their jobs. He further states that Changez is like the janissaries, young Christian boys captured by the Ottomans and trained to fight in the Muslim army against their own people. They were loyal and fierce in their service and Juan-Bautista sees Changez's service to the American company as similar. Upon reflection, Changez agrees, recognizing that he has pursued the American dream and was working for the financial success and goals of American companies while America wielded its political power around the globe and the expense of those less fortunate. It is this revelation that causes him to abandon his post and switch his loyalties back home to Pakistan.

Chris

Chris is Erica's deceased boyfriend who Erica is unable to let go of emotionally. Their families had lived across the hall from one another and the two were best friends since childhood. They devoured Chris's European comic book collection and created their own with Erica writing the stories and Chris drawing the figures. Their friendship turned romantic and they planned on attending Princeton together. However, Chris never went to Princeton because he was diagnosed with lung cancer. Erica spent long weekends with him during her college years until he passed away three years later. Her attachment to Chris is still so strong when she meets Changez that she goes into deep periods of depression and is hospitalized as a result.

Changez's older brother, Mother, Father

Changez's family lives in Lahore, Pakistan and increasingly struggle to maintain the lifestyle which they once enjoyed. Although they own a nice home in an expensive district of the city, employ servants, a gardener and driver, they cannot afford all the things they once could, particularly an Ivy-League education for Changez.

They love him and enjoy having him visit over the winter holiday. They feed him well and throw a party in his honor. When Changez hesitates to return to America, they insist that he leave, perhaps in an effort to protect him from the war that threatens to take place in their homeland. As he gets ready to go, his mother reminds him to shave his beard, another way she tries to protect her son from the onslaught of prejudice she may sense that he will face if he continues to wear it in America.

Erica's Mother

Like most parents, Erica's mother is caring and supportive. Her emotionally fragile daughter is her first priority. She cares for her at their apartment and at times acts like a gatekeeper for Erica's interactions with Changez. She likes Changez, but lets him know that what Erica needs most is a true friend, not another boyfriend. Upon Erica's

apparent death, she is naturally in mourning. She kindly gives Erica's manuscript to Changez as a way to remember and better understand her daughter.



Symbols and Symbolism

Changez's Name

Changez's name represents the many ideological and emotional changes that the protagonist makes throughout the novel. His ideas about America, the importance of social standing and success, the plight of others and basic principles of life all shift and transform by the story's end. The changes that occur are not only in Changez's personal world, but in the world at large and in the lives of those who interact with him. The foreign policy of America is altered dramatically following the attacks of 9/11, Erica's introspection deepens and the future lives of many employees is ultimately affected by the valuation work Changez performs for Underwood Samson.

America

America is the land of promise and is the place where anyone can achieve their ultimate dreams. Changez initially claims to be a lover of America. He travels and studies there in pursuit of his dreams, like many Americans. He knows that he can learn from many of the best teachers and access a pathway to financial and social success, since his prospects are lessening in his homeland. The country itself represents wealth and power and although Changez initially desires to pursue these things, he comes to disdain America and the political muscle that it wields.

Erica

Erica is a representation of the American princess. When Changez first sees her he is impressed with the regal air with which she carries herself. She comes from a well-to-do family and has an Ivy League education. She is the prize to be won. Changez lands a high paying job in a leading business firm, but he also desires to "get the girl." Ultimately, he is unable to break through the emotional barriers Erica maintains and this failure to succeed in the relationship mirrors his inability to fully grasp the American business fundamentals of success at all costs. He loses his job and he loses the girl as his political and ideological beliefs radically shift.

The Cafe in Lahore

The outdoor cafe in the old district of Lahore, Pakistan reflects the transformation in Changez's views from the sunny optimism of chasing after the American dream to supporting the darker activities of anti-American activists. Initially, the cafe is a sunny, inviting place with a few tables and chairs and an excellent place for afternoon tea, as Changez suggests to the American stranger. As the conversation between the two men continues, the cafe transforms into a dining area, with the street shut off to cars and only pedestrians allowed. The cafe empties as the evening wears on and it gets darker.



The story has become more intimate and intense and there have been frequent suggestions that there is tension between the two men, despite Changez continued attempts at outward friendliness. This transformation of the cafe creates suspense and reflects the physical closing in on the American as the waiter and other men have been watching the scene. It is in the dark and abandoned spaces that danger lurks.

Underwood Samson

Underwood Samson, the prestigious valuation firm that hires Changez upon graduation from Princeton, reflects the striving of corporate American toward building the American dream and achieving financial success and power. The company is a top notch firm that hires only the best and brightest. Employment here represents the pinnacle of success and power as the firm often controls the destinies of the corporations they evaluate for financial viability. They strictly adhere to basic, fundamental business principles and the bottom line. The name and the letters, U and S, subtly represent the United States at large as depicted by Underwood Samson.

Cities

The three primary cities appearing in the novel, Lahore, New York City, and Valparaiso, each represent various stages in prosperity and economic condition that Changez encounters.

Lahore, Pakistan - Changez's home city represents his ethnic heritage and ultimately his identity. The city is declining economically and offers little in the way of a productive future for Changez. He leaves Lahore to gain an education in America, taking a scholarship because his family can no longer afford to pay his way on their own. He first sees this in a negative light, but once his ideologies and priorities shift, he is thankful for his heritage and homeland and passionately speaks out for his city and country.

New York City - The city represents the heart of American business and social life. Changez turns to New York and employment opportunities as a means to regain financial and social standing for himself and his family. He is very proud of his standing in New York and the social and financial success that he achieves there and for a time is happy with his pursuit of the American Dream.

Valparaiso, Chile- When Changez travels to Valparaiso and sees the deterioration of the once regal city, he is reminded of his homeland. He is enamored with the elegance and charm of the homes. It bothers him that the two old cities, having existed long before the upstart American cities, should be struggling to survive and maintain their once glorious existences. As a result of his visit here, he begins to disdain what New York City represents, the pursuit of wealth and global power at the expense of the less significant.



The Twin Towers

The Twin Towers in New York City, standing tall above the skyline, represented the strength and power of the American economy and financial success. The terrorist attack on the towers was meant to strike at the heart of corporate America. By crippling corporations and showing the vulnerability of its people to outside forces, the terrorists hoped to strike a severe blow to the country. As the towers fall and the American people are shaken by the attack, Changez finds himself happy that this attacked has happened. He is not pleased by the loss of life, but rather that America was shown to be vulnerable and that someone was able to bring American to her knees. Yet, he is somewhat confused by his reaction. Even though he is reaping the benefits of a first-rate American education and a well paying job, he senses that pursuing the fundamentals of American business practice and chasing the American dream may not be the right path for him. The collapse of the towers, the representation of financial success, marks the beginning of Changez's turning from American ideals.

Changez's beard

Changez's beard is a symbol of his inner shift to identifying as a Muslim rather than blending in with American society. Throughout his early stay in America, Changez is clean shaven and it is only upon his return to Pakistan for a winter break that he allows his beard to grow, just like his older brother, father and all other men in his country. Because of the political unrest between Pakistan and India and Changez's unrest internally as he struggles with America's role in the global political scene, he decides to continue to wear his beard in America. His mother is seemingly aware of the hostility that will result from this decision and tells Changez to be sure to shave it. He refuses and subsequently suffers the consequences. Although non-white, Changez has a medium complexion and he has never felt out of place in New York City. The spectrum of skin tones is widely varied and the city is literally a melting pot of the world. However, the beard makes him look decidedly more "Arab" and as such he receives harsh looks, insults and even overhears whispered conversations from colleagues at work. The affect is so significant that his friend, Wainwright, cautions him about keeping the beard and says that it may impact his standing at the company. But Changez remains defiant, because for him it is an outward manifestation of his inner shift to identifying with his homeland and not adhering to all things American.

Janissaries

The Janissaries of the Ottoman Empire depict for Changez what he has become in America. Janissaries were young Christian boys taken from their families, converted to Islam and made to serve in the Turkish Army. Trained to fight against their own people, they were fierce and loyal to the Ottoman Empire. Juan-Bautista tells Changez about these young men who were made to serve a foreign entity as the expense of their own people. He likens Changez to these janissaries, perhaps to help Changez sort out his confusion over the political waves taking place between the Mid-East and the United



States or maybe to sabotage the valuation process of Underwood Samson. At any rate, Changez has an awakening by reflecting on this new knowledge and sees the truth in the comparison. He has been duped by the American dream of success and power and has left behind loyalty to his own country and people. It is a significant turning point in his life and he decides to change directions and leave America.

Erica's manuscript

Erica's manuscript represents an escape into a world that holds promise but can never really reach fulfillment. Erica desires to be a novelist but she doesn't believe she will ever truly succeed. She has completed and submitted a manuscript, but it is too short and incomplete to be taken seriously by anyone. Her life is too broken by Chris's death and she is unable to move forward, both in writing and in her relationship with Changez. Following her disappearance and presumed death, Erica's mother gives Changez the manuscript as a way of remembrance. In it he sees Erica in a new light and realizes that she maintained her own world and one that could never contain him. This realization is one that mirrors Changez's own discovery that his former love of America was only superficial and that he really belonged in the world to which he was returning in Pakistan.

The Beggar at the Cafe

The cafe beggar is symbolic of varying approaches to poverty by the main characters. While dining at the cafe in Lahore, a beggar approaches Changez and the American stranger. The American dismisses the beggar and refuses to give him anything, perhaps apprehensive of the beggar's true identity or simply because he feels giving handouts is not the way to address poverty. Changez however, give the beggar a coin. This small incident highlights the contrast between the two men and their national identities. The American prefers to distance himself from the poor man and allow the governmental system to address his plight. Changez however, more closely identifies with the man's situation and offers him help. His fundamental principles have changed from being concerned about the bottom line to being concerned about family and caring for one's own people.



Settings

The Cafe in Lahore, Pakistan

The outdoor café, situated in the old section of the city, is the setting for the present day events within the novel. Changez and the American stranger sit in the café for a cup of afternoon tea and an evening meal. All the activity at the cafe takes place primarily at the opening and close of each chapter and sets a framework for the rest of the novel. The cafe is lively and full of students and families. At dusk, the cafe expands its seating into the street once it closes down to vehicles. It finally becomes a dark and deserted place as the night draws on and the American becomes more anxious as the cafe transforms and the crowds filter away.

New York City

New York City is the primary setting for the portion of the story that takes place in the past. This is the city where Changez lives and interacts with Erica and lands his first job at Underwood Samson. It is significant in that New York is a major financial and business hub in America and as such was a key site of the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001.

As the story begins, Changez is fully enveloped in this world and is excited to be on his way to achieving financial and business success. He loves the vibrancy of the city, the melting pot nature of the city and he enters into the social world of the Manhattan elite. He is at once a New Yorker. However, as Changez becomes disillusioned with the American dream, his view of the city itself also darkens, seeing prejudice and elitism among its people.

Greece

The graduation vacation to Greece is where Changez meets Erica. He enjoys the beaches, dinners and company of his fellow Princeton grads, but he is most enamored with Erica and begins his pursuit of her romantically.

Manilla, the Phillipines

Changez's first valuation assignment with Underwood Samson takes him to Manilla. Here, he has a very brief encounter with the driver of a jeepney and experiences one of his first pangs of discomfort with his American lifestyle as he sees the contrast between it and the lifestyle of the third world worker. It is also in Manilla that the team hears of the terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and Changez must hide his pleasure.

Valparaiso, Chile

Valparaiso is an old city in Chile that reminds Changez of Lahore. Both were once stately and prosperous, but have deteriorated and lessened in importance economically with the country. While on assignment in the city, Changez undergoes many emotional and ideological changes, somewhat due to the influence of Juan-Bautista, the manager whose company they are evaluating.



Themes and Motifs

America's Global Reach

The opinion that America's global reach and influence is too great and as such much be curtailed is a primary theme in the novel. America is a powerful country and Changez is aware of all the opportunity that awaits him as he studies at Princeton and finds employment in a prestigious American corporation. However, viewing the country from the outside, as he did initially, and later learning firsthand and understanding how America wielded its power around the globe were two very different things. Changez is schooled in the fundamental principles of finance. Decisions are made by adhering to the principles and checking the bottom line. Changez is very good at developing these skills and rises to the top of the pile, both at school and work. But after he experiences life in other cities such as Manilla and Valparaiso, he sees the effects of America's calculating power.

The valuation work that Underwood Samson performs often results in job losses for many of the workers at the companies they evaluate. Because of the power and expertise they hold, the companies often determine the economic and social outcomes for many people. They breeze into cities, wearing their fancy suits, traveling in limousines and staying in expensive hotels. Yet, when they leave, they potentially leave great loss behind as a result of their reports. In Chile, Juan-Bautista asks Changez, "Does it trouble you to make your living by disrupting the lives of others?" (151). He then proceeds to tell Changez about the janissaries of the Ottoman Empire, a revelation that serves as a catalyst for Changez's change of heart.

Of primary concern to Changez is the political power that he sees America wield in the wake of the terrorist attacks on September 11. America has been attacked and she will have justice. He watches American forces engage in air strikes in Afghanistan. He sees political pressure being put on India concerning its relationship with Pakistan. As political tides shift across the globe, Changez is aware of the influence and reach of America. He becomes increasingly concerned of the possibility of war in Pakistan and is upset that America seems to do nothing to stop it, perhaps even encourages it. Speaking of America he says, "You retreated into myths of your own difference, assumptions of your own superiority. And you acted out these beliefs on the stage of the world, so that the entire planet was rocked by the repercussions of your tantrums, not least my family," (168). He concludes that America had to be stopped.

Ethnic Prejudice

Throughout the novel, the classic theme of prejudice is broadened to expose racial or ethnic discrimination along geo-political dividing lines.



Changez is a Princeton graduate and skilled at his work as the story begins and he is seemingly untouched by any negative racial problems. New York City is a racial melting pot and he blends in with the masses. He comments that he fell somewhere in the middle of the skin tone scale. He is even somewhat of an exotic interest to his school friends and his love interest, Erica. But in the wake of the September 11 attacks, he begins to fall under suspicion simply because he looks Muslim. He experiences taunts and racial slurs on the subway and in parking lots. "More than once, traveling on the subway - where I had always had the feeling of seamlessly blending in - I was subjected to verbal abuse by complete strangers," (130). After he decides to grow his beard, the comments and stares increase, even from his colleagues. His friend, Wainwright, suggests that he should shave the beard, so as to not create ill feelings at work among the upper level staff. "Look man, I don't know what's up with the beard, but I don't think it's making you Mr. Popular around here," (130). All these instances work to heighten Changez's dislike of the many Americans that seemingly judge him only by his skin and ethnicity. It is one of the points on which Changez makes his decision to leave America and return home.

Changez himself exhibits prejudice toward Americans. While in Greece vacating with fellow Princeton grads, he is turned off by their behavior which he attributes to their elitist attitudes and a sense of entitlement as wealthy Americans. "I, with my finite and depleting reserve of cash and my traditional sense of deference to one's seniors, found myself wondering by what quirk of human history my companions...were in a position to conduct themselves in the world as though they were its ruling class," (21). Also, at the cafe, he tells the American stranger immediately upon meeting him, that he knows he is an American, not by his skin tone, but by his "bearing," (2) or the manner in which he carries himself.

Finally, Changez addresses this issue directly with the American at they part for the night. He states that the American should not assume that every Pakistani is a terrorist, just as he should probably not assume that every American in his country is an undercover assassin (183). And although he speaks about being above the prejudicial judgments, his comment seemingly rings true - at least on that night.

Human Connections

Despite the major threads of division and conflict between Changez, the Pakistani, and the American stranger there are several moments of shared humanity between several of the characters. In general, the novel consists of opposing ideas and objectives between its protagonist and antagonist. But is interesting that the two men, most likely planning to do harm to one another, spend several hours conversing and sharing a meal. Although they are not friends, and there is no mistake that they will keep to their agendas, Changez shares many extremely personal details with the American, especially the details of his sexual encounters with Erica. "Allow me to assure you that I do not always speak this openly; indeed, I almost never do. But tonight, as I think we both understand, is a night of some importance," (92). Perhaps he is trying to explain



the reason behind their ill-fated meeting and he wants the American to fully understand what lies behind his task at hand.

Changez also obviously connects deeply with Erica. While Changez is an outsider to the country and New York, Erica connects him to the social life of her world. Like all human connections, however, theirs is marred and imperfect. Because of Erica's lingering connection to Chris, she is unable to connect fully to Changez. She leaves him longing for her and hanging on to her memory for years to come.

Another connection is found in Changez's work environment. The corporate ladder can be a lonely place, but Changez easily finds a friend in Wainwright, the only other non-white trainee at Underwood Samson. The two connect immediately, cracking jokes and quoting movie lines from *Top Gun* and *Star Wars*, (35). There does not appear to be jealousy from Wainwright, even though Changez usually outperforms him. They share meals, get drinks together and enjoy their camaraderie at the company. In an act of true friendship, Wainwright warns Changez that wearing a beard to work may not be such a good idea as it makes him appear more Muslim, an undesirable trait following the terrorist attacks. He says that the veneer of corporate friendliness only goes so far and that Changez should not push his luck .

A final connection comes from Jim, the recruiter who hires Changez and takes him under his wing at the Underwood Samson. Jim always takes special time with Changez, complimenting him on his work. Jim believes that they are alike, both feeling like they don't fit in so they work extra hard to get ahead and make their own way. Jim gives Changez a special assignment in Chile and although he is disappointed that Changez blows it, he seems to sense and understand that Changez is going through a difficult time. "You really screwed us, kid, ...but I'll tell you this. I like you Changez. I can see you're going through a crisis," (159). He leaves the door open for Changez to call if he ever needs to talk.

Coming of Age

The Coming of Age theme in *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* focuses on the development of nationalistic and ideological beliefs rather than the simple passage from boy to adult. The story is not typical in that Changez is already a young adult when the story of his time in America begins. He is a college student and just setting out to acquire his first job. His future success and fortune lay before him as he starts on this next major chapter of his life. He is hardworking and determined to do well for himself, hoping to seize all that America has to offer. By landing a job at Underwood Samson, Changez is on his way to becoming a well paid and respected member of corporate Manhattan. He is on the ladder to success and headed toward fulfilling his dreams of reclaiming the economic standing that his family in Pakistan once knew.

Changez is also finding love for the first time. He is quickly taken with beautiful and regal Erica who symbolizes the American princess. Having gotten a great job, he now strives to get the girl. The relationship grows and Changez is hooked, but Erica is sadly



unavailable, given to bouts of depression over her deceased boyfriend. Changez learns to navigate the distance this creates in their relationship. "I was desirous of embarking upon a relationship with her that amounted to more than a friendship, and I felt in the strength of her ongoing attachment to Chris the presence of a rival - albeit a dead one - with whom I feared I could never compete," (82). Changez tries to be a supportive friend, all the time longing for a deeper bond, yet he somehow knows he may not ever win out.

As Changez grows and matures, his ideologies and loyalties change. He learns that there is more than pursuing the American Dream at all costs. He realizes that others are affected by his actions and he begins to feel concern for those that his work displaces. He also becomes increasingly aware of America's economic power around the world and how it is used to influence the politics of other countries. All these things begin to color his view of the path he is taking. He no longer is the starry-eyed young student with the world laid out at his feet. He is a man with a conscience and a desire to stand by his family and countrymen at a time when they are at the mercy of the others.

As the relationship between Changez and Erica begins to cool, he visits her at the institution and learns that she is saying goodbye to him and creating a permanent break between them. Out of love and respect for her, he leaves without trying to change her mind. After he quits his job and is preparing to leave America for the last time, he learns of her disappearance and is devastated. His first love is gone and he must learn to deal with her permanent loss. After reading Erica's manuscript, he states, "When I put down the manuscript, it was not with the conviction that Erica was alive or dead. But I had begun to understand that she had chosen not to be a part of my story," (167). He never really moves on either, just as Erica was unable to do with Chris. He spends many years afterward looking for her picture in the Princeton alumni magazine or hoping for an email from her. And although his family is encouraging him to marry, he only wishes to hold onto the memory of Erica for a bit longer. Changez has experienced young love and like many must now also cope with losing it.

Changez's final step of coming of age is as he finds his place in Pakistani culture as a university lecturer and mentor to many students. Where he was once the student and trainee, he is now the teacher and one who is sought for advice. Based on all he has experienced, he is only too happy to counsel many to separate themselves from anything having to do with America. No longer at the whim of the financial machine and power of the U.S., Changez is powerful by becoming the change he desires to see.

Self-sacrifice

Changez's life and story exhibit much sacrifice, although to achieve a variety of goals. He leaves home to study abroad and works at three part-time jobs in order to pay for his education. At Underwood Samson he works long hours in order to achieve his vocational goals of being the best at his job and rising in financial and social status in the American pinnacle of achievement, New York City. Yet, as he earns a good salary, he does not spend it all on himself, but sends money home to his family so that they can



fix the plumbing. "The only manner in which I could be of aid to them at that moment was to provide money, and this I did, wiring what little savings I possessed to my brother because my father refused to accept it," (149).

In his relationship with Erica there is also much sacrifice. Changez longs for a deeper relationship and connection with Erica, but she is unable emotionally to give herself fully to him. As Erica takes another downward turn into depression, her mother asks Changez to be there for her, not as a boyfriend, but as a stable friend. This is a difficult shift for him, but he is willing to stand back a bit in order to support Erica and hopefully pull her out of her withdrawn state. Instead of holding her or trying to snap her out of her introspection, he merely places his hand nearby hers until she becomes aware of him and comes out of her trance. He repeats this sacrificial act many times. On a larger scale, as Erica says goodbye to him at the institution, he again respects her wishes and despite his own heart, leaves her there to work things through on her own. "I had to choose whether to continue to try to win her over or to accept her wishes and leave, and in the end I chose the latter," (136).

Ultimately, he gives it all up as he quits his job and leaves America. He passes on the American Dream and the business fundamentals that have been so ingrained in him. And though it is a big change, he believes his choice to be the right one.

Styles

Point of View

There are two points of view used throughout the novel, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*. The two view points are skillfully toggled back and forth to present different perspectives and even moods while reading. The majority of the narration is from the first person point of view while there are small sections interspersed throughout that are written in the second person point of view.

The author has the narrator use a first person point of view as he tells the story of his life in America. This is all presented in the past tense. Having Changez personally tell his story makes it fully reliable. Not only are the actions and words to be believed, but Changez is able to share his emotions and thoughts. This is very important because the story needs to be reliable in order to understand the changes which take place in Changez's thinking and feelings as the novel progresses. The reader can experience firsthand Changez's joy at landing an excellent job, his concern for Erica and heartache at losing her, and his anger and hatred for those who are prejudiced against him.

The main narrative is interspersed with narration of present day interactions told from a second person point of view. The same narrator still speaks, but is addressing the American as "you," putting the reader into the position of the American stranger. This technique allows the reader to sit in the American's place as he is addressed and experience Changez. As the tension is increased between the two men and motives are revealed, the tension transfers easily to the reader, thus creating a deeper sense of suspense and danger. It is easy to feel the unease of the American and the fear at what may happen next from this vantage point.

The switching between points of view allows for the ebb and flow of emotions and the creation of suspense. When listening to Changez's story in the past, the mood is relaxed; it is simply the story of a man's life with the typical ups and downs one expects. But the present day interactions between the American and Changez are tension-filled and are designed to create anxiety within the reader. This tension is turned up with each interaction of the two men until the climax is reached and the final confrontation hits.

Language and Meaning

There are a few things to consider when thinking about the choice of words and language used in the novel. The author's varied word choices and styles of speech work well to enhance the development of the individual characters, and the use of various literary devices adds depth to the themes of the story.

Several of the characters have specific ways of speaking that add to their overall persona or role within the novel. For example, Changez speech is friendly when he is telling his story. He is well spoken and uses advanced vocabulary that reflects his



excellent education. "I retained from my soccer-playing days a sort of controlled aggression - not belligerence, mind you, but determination," (41). His tone shifts, however, as he speaks conversationally to the American. For example, "And will you not remove your jacket? So formal! Now that is not typical of Americans, at least not in my experience," (2-3) He frequently asks questions as a way of restating the American's words and "speaks" for the American by describing his actions, the things he notices, the comments he makes, etc. which allows the reader to catch a small glimpse into the American's position.

Other characters' speech is enhanced by word choices as well. Wainwright, for example, is very friendly and jokes with Changez. He is casual and quotes movie lines to his co-worker/buddy. When it comes time to give Changez a warning, Wainwright is still very buddy-buddy, and uses the close work relationship they have to drive home the point that Changez should shave because his beard is causing him to become unpopular in the office. "Jerk chicken is common where I come from, but I don't smear it all over my face. You need to be careful," (130-131). The other colleague and boss, Jim, is likewise friendly, but with more of a big brother tone. As he has taken Changez under his wing somewhat, he is more relaxed and informal with him as he gives advice. He maintains a professional air, while adding a touch of familiarity. "Your performance is what counts as far as I'm concerned, and you're the best analyst in your class by a long way. Besides, I know it must be tough for you with what's going on in Pakistan," (137).

Additionally, Hamid uses several literary devices to add meaning to both the themes and suspenseful nature of the story. In several places throughout the narrative Changez uses language that refers to predators and prey, animal carcasses, lions growling, and the hunting nature of bats, avoiding detection and hunting in public. All these metaphors represent the relationship between Changez and the American. It is unknown which one is the predator and which one is the prey, but that is what adds to the suspense of the story. "And you - to jump as though you were a mouse suddenly under the shadow of a hawk!" (60-61). The fact that Changez casually talks about these things, lets the American know or at least suspect that his dinner companion knows more about him and his purpose than he previously thought.

Another literary device is the juxtaposition of the college girls and the traditional family in the cafe. The two are in marked contrast, just as the American and Pakistani cultures are in contrast. The girls reflect the western taste and style and attract the American's attention, while the family dressed in traditional Muslim garb blends into the scenery and is not really noticed. The contrast serves to emphasize the contrast between the flamboyant American culture and the more subdued Pakistani one. Changez points out this contrast as if to stress that appearance affects the way people feel towards those they encounter. This distinction highlights a developing theme within the book that American sentiment towards Muslims or even those who appear Muslim becomes negative as a result of a few terrorist's actions. "It seems an obvious thing to say, but you should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you Americans are all undercover assassins," (183). A second juxtaposition is the moment when a beggar comes up to the table while the two men are talking. The American dismisses him and turns him away. Changez verbally agrees that



it is better to let the government deal with the poor, but then gives the beggar some money. "What am I doing? I am handing him a few rupees - misguidedly of course, and out of habit," (40). However, it serves to again contrast the crass and dismissive attitude of the American to the plight of the less fortunate, while emphasizing the compassion of the simpler Pakistani.

Structure

The book follows a frame narrative structure. The outer frame holds the story together and takes place in the present in a cafe in Lahore, Pakistan. The embedded narrative, or story within a story, occurs in the past as Changez tells his life story to the American stranger. The two stories move back and forth within each chapter, but the outer frame always begins and ends each chapter. This format holds the story together and grounds the reader in the present. It is the present mission of the American that has brought the two men to the cafe, so it is appropriate that the outer frame focuses on both characters and their relationship.

As the novel moves forward, the suspense builds chapter by chapter as Changez reveals more and more of what he knows about the American. These cafe scenes move them through the afternoon and evening as well, perhaps keeping the American occupied until it is dark, making his mission more difficult. At times it may be easy to get lost in the narrative of the past, but the sudden interjection of what is going on at the cafe in the present jolts the reader back to the present. It is important to not forget the current story line and understand that the past is there to inform the present. As Changez states in reference to the transformation of the cafe at dusk, "we have acquired a certain familiarity with the recent history of our surroundings, and that - in my humble opinion - allows us to put the present into much better perspective," (45). Here is talking not only about the cafe, but perhaps the reason for why he is telling the American this story. Changez wants the American to understand who he has become and why.

The inner narrative occupies the majority of the novel. It is chronological in nature, taking the reader through approximately a year of Changez's life in America and including significant life events. Every event seems to affect the next, particularly where relationships are concerned. Particular attention is paid to emotions as these are the catalysts for the changes that Changez takes in the direction of his life. Details that influence these decisions are especially included.

Even as the story moves to a rapid conclusion, Changez still does not speak clearly or reveal everything. Many specifics are left up to speculation and the fate of the characters is unknown. This cliffhanger leaves the reader with major questions and perhaps an uneasy feeling in the stomach.



Quotes

You seem worried. Do not be; this burly fellow is merely our waiter, and there is no need to reach under your jacket, I assume to grasp your wallet, as we will pay him later, when we are done.

-- Changez (chapter 1 paragraph 10)

Importance: In this statement, Changez, the main character and narrator, tells the American with whom he is sharing a cup of tea that there is no need to be concerned about his personal safety. However, the fact that he makes the observation that the American might be reaching for a weapon and is so casual in his dismissal of any concern raises questions about his real motives in having tea with the American stranger.

When my turn came, I said I hoped to one day be the dictator of an Islamic republic with nuclear capability; the others appeared shocked, and I was forced to explain that I had been joking.

-- Changez (chapter 2 paragraph 26)

Importance: While on vacation in Greece the group of Princeton grads talk together after dinner one evening and share their hopes and dreams for their futures. Changez jokingly says that he hopes to become a dictator someday and everyone is shocked by the remark. He reassures them that he is merely joking, but given his Islamic background, it puts a question in the group's mind. The statement can be viewed as foreshadowing of Changez's vocation and political involvement by the end of the novel.

So I kind of miss home, too. Except my home was a guy with long, skinny fingers.

-- Erica (chapter 2 paragraph 25)

Importance: Erica and Changez are getting to know each other while in Greece. He tells Erica about his country and home and she comments that is obvious that he misses it all. After she tells Changez a bit about Chris, her dead boyfriend, she states that missing him is like missing home. Her relationship with Chris was so well established and longstanding that she misses him profoundly. When she was with Chris, she was comfortable and happy, much like being at home. This is significant because Erica is never able to move past this former relationship, she is never able to move on to another "home."

I hope you will not mind my saying so, but the frequency and purposefulness with which you glance about - a steady tick-tick-tick seeming to beat in your head as you move your gaze from one point to the next - brings to mind the behavior of an animal that has ventured too far from its lair and is now, in unfamiliar surroundings, uncertain whether it is predator or prey!

-- Changez (chapter 3 paragraph 1)

Importance: Changez is speaking to the American in a friendly tone, questioning why



he appears to be uneasy. Yet, his metaphorical description of the American's behavior as an animal unsure of whether it is the predator or the prey subtly suggests that he knows why the American is in the city. Though outwardly friendly, Changez is hoping that he is getting under the American's skin. The statement also hints at the central conflict between the two men. Each is aware of the other's identity and purpose, despite having just met, and each has a planned outcome for the encounter. The statement creates suspense about who is the predator and who will be the prey.

My world would be transformed, just as this market around us has been....Yes, we have acquired a certain familiarity with the recent history of our surroundings, and that - in my humble opinion - allows us to put the present into much better perspective.

-- Changez (chapter 3 paragraph 33)

Importance: As the afternoon turns to evening, the cafe in Lahore begins to transform. The streets shut down to only pedestrian traffic and tables are set up in the street. Changez comments that the transformation mirrors the changes that were about to take place in his own life back in New York. As he speaks with the American, he lets him in on why he is telling his story - by understanding Changez's past the American can better understand what has brought them both to this ill-fated meeting.

Its like I'm an oyster. I've had this sharp speck inside me for a long time, and I've been trying to make it more comfortable, so slowly I've turned it into a pearl. But now it's finally being taken out, and just as it's going I'm realizing there's a gap being left behind, you know, a dent on my belly where it used to sit. And so I kind of want to hold on to it for a little longer.

-- Erica (chapter 4 paragraph 9)

Importance: Erica tells Changez that she is finally sending her completed manuscript to an agent. She has held onto it for a long time, but she is taking the step to send it out. But she is still unsure. Her work has been an internal part of her for so long that she is uneasy with letting it go. It represents an attempt at letting go of Chris. Her developing relationship with Changez could mean the start of something wonderful for her, but she needs to let go of all the feelings for Chris she has left inside.

But bats have survived here. They are successful urban dwellers, like you and I, swift enough to escape detection and canny enough to hunt among a crowd.

-- Changez (chapter 5 paragraph 2)

Importance: Changez comments on the bats that are swooping in the air around the cafe as dusk approaches. He likens the American and himself to the stealthy creatures, commenting on their skills and cleverness. He interjects this comment as a shrewd way to let the American know that he and his mission has been detected and he is playing with him. It also highlights that the two men are spending the evening in a public place where it is safe. As soon as it gets dark and the streets empty, neither man may be safe from the other.



Power comes from becoming change.
-- Jim (chapter 7 paragraph 7)

Importance: Jim is talking to Changez about the economy and how it is a changing animal. He says that he and Changez both come from places that were wasting away but they are becoming vital and useful within the animal by being a part of the changing financial world. Companies such as the ones they evaluate are resistant to change and will fall by the wayside, but because he and Changez are part of the "change," they will become powerful forces in the financial world and successful, powerful men. The statement is also somewhat prophetic, because after Changez returns to Pakistan, leaving behind the financial principles of American business, he becomes a powerful force in the anti-American movement and encourages others to bring about changes for their country.

I watched our skin - mine healthy and brown, hers sickly white - separated by a distance not greater than the width of an engagement ring, but she did not notice me.
-- Changez (chapter 8 paragraph 8)

Importance: Whenever Erica becomes absorbed in her own inner world, Changez often places his hand near Erica in order to draw her out of herself and back into the real world. In this instance, he is keenly aware of their physical proximity and yet how very far apart they are emotionally. He describes the distance as the width of an engagement ring which highlights the desire of his heart to be committed to Erica. Changez wishes a very different kind of relationship, but the small gap cannot be closed.

But as I re-acclimatized and my surroundings once again became familiar, it occurred to me that the house had not changed in my absence. I had changed; I was looking about me with the eyes of a foreigner, and not just any foreigner, but that particular type of entitled and unsympathetic American who so annoyed me when I encountered him in the classrooms and workplaces of your country's elite.
-- Changez (chapter 9 paragraph 3)

Importance: When Changez returns to his home in Pakistan he is initially struck by its run-down appearance and seeming disrepair. He feels ashamed that he has come from such a lowly place. But then he realizes that he is viewing the house with an elitist American mentality, an attitude that he has come to disdain whenever he has seen it in America. He is angry with himself for having taken on this mentality and resolves to not look at things that way anymore. This is an important moment for Changez as he recognizes that he has adopted some of the American ideas and thoughts that he dislikes and has observed in many Americans and he strives to rid himself of these unwanted thoughts. As a result, he comes to appreciate more fully the charm and history of his family's home.

I would encourage you to have, at the very least, a tiny bite. After all, one reads that the soldiers of your country are sent to battle with chocolate in their rations, so the prospect of sugaring your tongue before undertaking even the bloodiest of tasks cannot be entirely alien to you.



-- Changez (chapter 9 paragraph 26)

Importance: Changez orders dessert and encourages the American to at least enjoy a little bite. His reference to American soldiers being given chocolate in their rations before going into battle is a foreshadowing of what he seems to know will be occurring later in the evening. This is another of Changez's many hints that he is aware of the American's identity and mission and he is toying with him, almost daring him to outwardly embrace his role.

The janissaries were always taken in childhood. It would have been far more difficult to devote themselves to their adopted empire, you see, if they had memories they could not forget.

-- Juan-Bautista (chapter 10 paragraph 21)

Importance: Juan-Bautista has just told Changez about the jannissaries and their role in the Ottoman Empire. He comments that because the boy soldiers were taken, converted and indoctrinated at such a young age their loyalties were secured. They could not remember much about their previous life, families or homes, so they did not miss anything or long for the past; they were committed to their present roles and duties. Juan-Bautista recognizes that Changez's indoctrination into the fundamentals of American business and finance have only taken place in recent years and at a much older age. Therefore, he concludes, it is obvious why Changez appears conflicted about his role and the disruptive nature of the work he does at Underwood Samson. Juan-Bautista senses that Changez is uncomfortable with selling out to American business ideals and gives him this information in an attempt to derail him from the evaluation work at the publishing company. The conversation does have a deep impact on Changez and ultimately causes him to leave Chile, Underwood Samson and America.

You retreated into myths of your own difference, assumptions of your own superiority. And you acted out these beliefs on the stage of the world, so that the entire planet was rocked by the repercussions of your tantrums, not least my family, now facing war thousands of miles away. Such an America had to be stopped in the interests not only of the rest of humanity, but also in your own.

-- Changez (chapter 11 paragraph 21)

Importance: Changez's fundamental ideals are now fully shifted. He is angry with America and is headed to Pakistan with plans to stop America and its interference in global matters. He is now fully aware of America's attitude of superiority toward the rest of the world and he is fed up with it. He is going to do his part to lessen America's impact on his his family, his country and the world.

It seems an obvious thing to say, but you should not imagine that we Pakistanis are all potential terrorists, just as we should not imagine that you Americans are all undercover assassins.

-- Changez (chapter 12 paragraph 25)

Importance: Changez is giving his final words to the American as they have arrived in



front of the hotel and the men in the shadows are beginning to close in on the two men. He makes a statement that on the surface would appear to be true, that one should not judge a man or assume his purpose based on his ethnic origin. Yet, the truth is the exact opposite for it appears that Changez is deeply involved in terrorist activities and that the American is an operative sent to deal with him.