

# **Stones Into Schools: Promoting Peace with Education in Afghanistan and Pakistan Study Guide**

**Stones Into Schools: Promoting Peace with Education in Afghanistan and Pakistan by Greg Mortenson**

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# Plot Summary

*Stones into Schools: Promoting Peace with Books, Not Bombs, in Afghanistan and Pakistan* is a new work of non-fiction by Three Cups of Tea author Greg Mortenson. In this work, Mortenson continues his story of the Central Asia Institute's quest to bring education to the girls of Pakistan and how they expanded into Afghanistan in a time when the country needed hope the most. Mortenson began CAI with the intention of bringing a school to a tiny village that opened its doors to him when he needed it most. Several years later, Mortenson is sought out by a tiny, mythical group of horsemen from an area so remote it is referred to as the roof of the world. It takes ten years and a great deal of heartache, but Mortenson brings a school to even this remote place, fulfilling the dream of one unique leader. *Stones into Schools* is a touching story of good will and selflessness that will inspire all who read it.

Greg Mortenson was in Pakistan with an acquaintance near the southern entrance of the Irshad Pass when they were surprised to find a group of Kirghiz horsemen riding toward them. The leader of the Kirghiz horsemen told them that they were searching for Dr. Mortenson, the man who builds schools. Their leader wanted him to build a school in their remote village in the Wakhan Corridor. Mortenson made them a promise despite the fact that Afghanistan was under Taliban rule at the time and movement over the border by foreigners was nearly impossible.

After the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, the American military began to invade Afghanistan in the war on terror. This caused the Taliban to relinquish control of the government and made it possible for Mortenson and his NGO, Central Asia Institute, to cross the border and begin the process of building a school for the Kirghiz. This began with a trip to Badakshan Province to get the approval of the local mujahadeen. Not only did Mortenson win him over to the idea of building schools in Afghanistan, he found himself committed to building a school for his village. This would be the first of many schools to be built with CAI support in Afghanistan.

Mortenson and CAI would continue to move closer to the Wakhan Corridor, building schools as they went, until tragedy struck in 2005 in Pakistan. The earthquake that hit the Azad Kashmir in Pakistan was so devastating that entire villages were leveled and whole families perished in the debris. CAI was overrun with donations from people wanting and expecting CAI to help. Mortenson, unsure of how his NGO could help, sent his project manager in Afghanistan, Sarfraz Khan into Kashmir—even as he was continuing to keep an eye on other projects throughout remote areas of Afghanistan—to see what might be done.

Sarfraz met with teachers, parents, and children throughout the most remote villages of Kashmir and learned that many were attempting to restart schools in tents, under trees, anywhere they could. Sarfraz also learned that while these areas would be more than happy to welcome CAI in to build schools, they were concerned that the school buildings would simply fall down again in the event of another earthquake. For this reason, Sarfraz found a Chinese design that would withstand an earthquake stronger



than the one that leveled the area months before and arranged to have these designs put into action in remote Azad Kashmir.

Finally Mortenson and his team found their way into the Wakhan Corridor and were able, ten years after the promise was made, to begin gathering construction supplies to build the school for the Kirghiz people. However, due to the remote area in which the village stood they found it almost impossible to get the supplies to the area. On top of this, the leader of this remote village was old and began to suffer health problems. When the people of his village began coming to visit the old man's death bed, he chastised them for impeding what they had waited so long to gain and urged them to help bring in the supplies. Not only did they bring the supplies, they helped construct the school, finishing it in a record amount of time.

# Part 1: Chapters 1-2

## Part 1: Chapters 1-2 Summary and Analysis

Greg Mortenson is the author of *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace...One School at a Time*. Mortenson is also the co-founder of the Central Asia Institute, a non-government organization that builds schools and promotes the education of girls in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

Chapter 1. Greg Mortenson, a husband and father from Bozeman, Montana, co-founded and helps run the Central Asia Institute, a charity that builds schools in Pakistan. CAI specializes in going into remote areas first where most NGOs usually saturate more populated areas before moving into the more remote places. CAI does this to take education and hope to places that would not normally see it, such as villages so far from civilization that bridges must be built in order to bring in building supplies or areas in the middle of military fighting where the local people are shut off from the world due to violence. CAI was inspired by and begun in 1993 when Greg Mortenson failed in an attempt to reach the summit of K2 and became lost on his way back down the mountain. Mortenson ended up in a tiny village called Korphe where he was taken in and nursed back to health. While there, Mortenson learned of the village's need for a place to teach their children. Mortenson left after making a promise to return to build the school and it is here that the first CAI school stands.

The logistics of building a school in the Wakhan Corridor were so hugely impossible that Mortenson should have refused to consider it. However, coming from a family of missionaries and a father who once offended a whole community of Tanzanian people when he claimed that the top positions in his newly built medical center would all be held by Tanzanians only to die a short time before his prediction came true, Mortenson found it impossible to turn down someone who needed his help so desperately. Together with his unique team of local employees, the Dirty Dozen, Mortenson believed he could accomplish almost anything.

Chapter 2. In 1999, Mortenson met Sarfraz Khan in the village of Zuudkhan at the far end of the Charpurson Valley. Sarfraz was a large personality whose reputation preceded him. Mortenson had heard that Sarfraz was an ex-commando and a jack of all trades of whom it was said he insisted on seeing the face of his second wife despite a centuries old tradition that forbade such a thing. Sarfraz introduced himself to Mortenson when he learned he was in Zuudkhan and proceeded to tell Mortenson his life story, a story in which he admits he has had little success at much of anything. Sarfraz was highly educated and taught school for a while before joining the military where he was shot in the hand and left permanently disfigured. During the invasion of Afghanistan by Russia, Sarfraz became a trader in the Wahkan Corridor. This created in Sarfraz a unique combination of skills that Mortenson would soon realize he needed in a man.



Sarfraz was able to explain to Mortenson who and where the people of the Wakhan Corridor lived and how the power structure of the area worked. Sarfraz explained to Mortenson in order to do anything in the Wakhan, someone would need the permission of the big men, the men with power in this region. The next day, Sarfraz took Mortenson to the Irshad Pass where they ran into the Kirghiz horsemen. Sarfraz led the men back to his home in Zuudkhan where they shared a meal together. Afterward, the leader of the horsemen, who happened to be the son of the Kirghiz leader Abdul Rashid Khan, told Mortenson of his father's request to build a school. Mortenson refused to go into the Wakhan Corridor at that point, but agreed to build the school at some point in the future.

In these first few chapters of the book, Greg Mortenson gives the reader a brief outline of his charity, the Central Asia Institute, and how it works. Mortenson is brief with his description because he assumes that many of the readers of this book will have read his previous book, *Three Cups of Tea*, in which he tells the story of his failed attempt to climb K2 and his subsequent stay in the village of Korphe.

Mortenson goes on to tell the readers of this book that he plans to share with readers some of the day to day workings of CAI while telling the story of how CAI moved into the remote regions of Afghanistan during a time of violence and confusion in that country. To tell this story, Mortenson must introduce three important elements to the reader, the Kirghiz people, the Wakhan Corridor where they live, and Sarfraz Khan, the man who would make building a school on the rooftop of the world possible.

The Kirghiz people are Sunni nomadic pastoralists who live in the eastern end of the Wakhan Corridor in Afghanistan. These people live in a place that is so desolate, so isolated that their own government does not believe anyone could survive there. No roads reach their village, no stores or medical centers exist in the area, and no luxuries exist there. It is a harsh place that will make moving building supplies to the area nearly impossible. Yet, there is a human spirit that exists there that cries out for education and hope for the future.

When Greg Mortenson meets Sarfraz Khan, he is amazed by his charm and his spirit. Sarfraz Khan will prove to be instrumental in fulfilling the promise that Mortenson makes to the Kirghiz people, making it prophetic that Mortenson met him so close to the moment in which he was confronted with the Kirghiz horsemen and their desire to have a school built in their remote section of Afghanistan. However, there lies a long road ahead for Mortenson and his team at CAI that will take them through some interesting twists and turns before they are able to fulfill this promise.



# Part 1: Chapters 3-4

## Part 1: Chapters 3-4 Summary and Analysis

### Chapter 3.

In 1993, the Taliban rose to power by defeating their mujahadeen rivals and seizing control of Kandahar, spreading east. By 1996, the Taliban controlled over two-thirds of the country where they enacted odd and outrageous laws, the most harsh against women including forbidding women to work, to be in public without the company of a man, and to suffer in ignorance without the benefit of an education. Unable to cross into Afghanistan due to Taliban bans on foreign visitors, Mortenson was unable to begin to fulfill his promise to the Kirghiz until the terrorist attacks that took place on September 11, 2001.

Mortenson would begin his first trip into Afghanistan in December of 2001 by traveling over Pakistan's Grand Trunk Highway, a dangerous road through the Khyber Pass. Once he reached Afghanistan, Mortenson moved through territory littered with debris of Afghanistan's legacy of war, including the rotting carcasses of tanks, artillery launchers, and armored personnel carriers. In Kabul there was still more evidence of violence and destruction in the bombed out buildings and the barely operating national airline, Ariana. Mortenson was driven around town by a taxi driver with burned off eyelids and scorched hands. Toward the end of his stay, Mortenson met with Dr. Ashraf Ghani, the minister of finance who told Mortenson of Afghanistan's overwhelming need for money and the lack of funds received as promised from the American government. When Ghani learned of Mortenson's desire to build schools in the more remote areas of the country, he insisted that the need was far greater in the city.

### Chapter 4.

Mortenson hired Sarfraz Khan to be his remote area project director to help coordinate the most far reaching ventures working with the elders in each community in hiring carpenters to do the work. Sarfraz then quickly showed Mortenson a list of villages where he believed they should build schools to pave the way for building the school for the Kirghiz. However, they would first be required to get permission and support of the men with power in the area. For this reason, Mortenson would have to go into the northern province of Badakshan to garner the support of the mujahadeen or commandhan, Sadhar Khan, whose base in Baharak controlled the only road capable of motorized travel into the Wahkan. Mortenson's first drive into Baharak was alive with gunfire and deadly tunnels. On this trip he was not able to meet with Sadhar Khan, but on a subsequent trip he ran into the man for whom he was looking while standing in the street.

After prayers, Sadhar Khan met with Mortenson and was excited to learn he was the Dr. Greg who built schools he had heard about. Sadhar took Mortenson home with him that



night and told him his own story of growing up during the Russian invasion and then fighting the Taliban. As they got to know one another, Mortenson came to appreciate Sadhar's difficult life and his understanding of hope. Over the next two years, Mortenson would visit Sadhar often, learning not only Sadhar's story, but the story of the war torn region in which he lived.

In these chapters, the reader learns about the strong hold of the Taliban over the people of Afghanistan, including their ill treatment of women that included refusing them an education. This situation made it impossible for Mortenson to fulfill his promise to the Kirghiz people. However, the events of September 11, 2001 and the resulting war on terror in Afghanistan would push the Taliban out of power and open the doors to the country for NGOs like CAI.

Mortenson's first travels into Afghanistan would be shocking, opening his eyes to the devastation of wars that continued for more than thirty years. Mortenson would have help, however, in his new friend Sarfraz Khan. Sarfraz knew the area, knew the people, and knew the customs that would allow Mortenson to begin pushing his way into the Wakhan. To begin, Mortenson reached out to Sadhar Khan, a commandhan in Baharak who would open the road into the Wakhan that the CAI would desperately need to fulfill Mortenson's promise.





# Part 1: Chapters 5-6

## Part 1: Chapters 5-6 Summary and Analysis

### Chapter 5.

While Sadhar was not above taking a profit from the sale of opium in his community and the transportation of opium through his community, he would take the money and use it to better the lives of his own people. Sadhar wanted to make a better life for his community, and this included a passion for education for the youth of the area, including the girls. At the same time, CAI had just received a flood of donations due to an article that appeared in Parade Magazine. For this reason, CAI was able to agree to build a school in Baharak to appease Sadhar and guarantee his help in the CAI moving into the Wakhan.

As CAI built this school, Sarfraz began moving into the Wakhan and negotiating contracts with villages there to begin building schools. During this time, Mortenson and Sarfraz would often travel together, with Sarfraz teaching Mortenson how to behave around the locals in what he referred to as style. Sarfraz was diligent about Mortenson's safety and would often hire and fire drivers on a whim, sometimes firing a driver simply because he spent too much time on his cellphone. Sarfraz was also pathological about avoiding letting anyone know where they were traveling. This kept Mortenson safe throughout their extensive travels in Afghanistan. It also led to them meeting a great many of the local people, including one young boy named Abdul who was quite talented in fixing cars. Mortenson wanted to help the boy who was an orphan, but Sarfraz refused to allow this and later the boy disappeared. Mortenson keeps a picture of the boy on his desk in Montana to remind him what he is working to accomplish.

As CAI moved further into Afghanistan, they needed to receive official permission to work inside its borders from the government. However, they found this nearly impossible and they failed on their several attempts to receive the much needed federal certificate. However, they had the support of the local leaders and continued to build their schools.

### Chapter 6.

In the spring of 2005, Mortenson returned to Afghanistan to visit the newly finished school in Badakshan. Mortenson then traveled to Sarhad where he attended the opening ceremony of another newly constructed school. Mortenson was touched by the excitement of the students, especially a young girl who had been left disabled due to rickets. Shortly afterward, Mortenson traveled with his bookkeeper in the Wakhan to Baharak shortly after following the publication of a Newsweek article claiming an American soldier flushed the Koran down a toilet, which sparked riots throughout Afghanistan. For his protection, Mortenson was taken to a building owned by Wohid Khan, a former mujahadeen commander who was in charge of the Border Security Force in eastern Badakshan. It was here that Mortenson would meet the Kirghiz leader,

Abdul Rashid Khan, for the first time. After sharing a meal, Mortenson and Abdul Rashid Khan would sign a contract that would cement the promise made six years earlier to build a school in the remote Kirghiz village.

The following day, Mortenson and his accountant continued their journey to Faizabad despite the growing unrest in the country. Most foreign NGOs ordered the evacuation of their people out of Afghanistan for their own protection, but Mortenson chose to stay. Rioters began attacking the offices of these NGOs, destroying anything that had to do with foreigners. Mortenson began to worry about CAI built schools in the worst areas of unrest, particularly the school in Badakshan. However, when Mortenson arrived in Badakshan he discovered the school was untouched due to the elders who stood up to the rioters and told them the school belonged to the community, not the foreign NGO that helped build it.

On the way to Faizabad, Mortenson saw a group of children in a public toilet. Mortenson forced his driver to stop and went to speak with the children and discovered it was a school. Not only this, but there were multiple grades in the area conducting school in tents, sheds, and old freight containers. This would become Mortenson's newest project until the disaster that took place on October 8, 2005.

In these chapters, Mortenson and Sarfraz begin moving their CAI projects into the Wakhan in order to fulfill Mortenson's promise to the Kirghiz. However, this would be a long and winding road that would require a lot of dedication on both their parts and building a great number of schools. Mortenson fulfills another promise made, this to his readers, by describing his daily activities in Afghanistan with Sarfraz. This was a difficult time that illustrates the kind of world the people CAI is attempting to help live in on a daily basis.

As Mortenson and his CAI build relationships in Afghanistan and push into the most remote villages of the Wakhan, they are also impacted by world events. The riot set off by the Newsweek report of an American soldier flushing the Koran is one of the biggest world events to touch Mortenson during this time period. However, it does little to dampen his enthusiasm or stop him from pushing through to fulfill his promise to the Kirghiz. Not only this, but Mortenson finds himself becoming passionate about the people in Afghanistan and finding new projects where they might not have existed had he not stumbled upon children learning in public toilets.

## Part 2: Chapters 7-8

### Part 2: Chapters 7-8 Summary and Analysis

#### Chapter 7.

On October 8, 2005 just as classes were beginning at the Government Boys' Degree High School in the village of Patika, an earthquake hit that caused the roof of their building to collapse. All the students got out, but several teachers and other personnel were killed. Shaukat Ali Chaudry, an ex-Taliban member who taught at both the boys' school and the nearby Gundi Piran Higher Secondary School for Girls, saw to the safety of his children before taking in the destruction that leveled most of the village of Patika. Included in this destruction was the complete collapse of the Gundi Piran Girls School.

In Salt Lake City, Mortenson received word of the devastating earthquake and would spend many hours on the phone attempting to ascertain the safety of his employees, friends, and colleagues in the area. When all were accounted for, Mortenson then began to focus on the devastation of the earthquake as well as the damage done to CAI sponsored schools. The devastation was overwhelming. Whole families were left homeless if they survived at all, medical care was scarce, hospitals were destroyed, roads impassable, water tables shifted or plugged up. A great many of the dead were children due to the fact it was a school day and many of the schools had been built with an eye on cost, not safety.

In Montana, Mortenson was inundated with donations from CAI supporters who insisted that CAI do something to help the people in Pakistan affected by the earthquake. Unfortunately, there was little Mortenson and CAI could do for those people because his was a charity of education, not emergency relief. However, Mortenson sent Sarfraz into the area to find out what was needed. Sarfraz toured the areas impacted by the earthquake, beginning in Balakot and making his way toward the Azad Kashmir where the epicenter of the earthquake was located. Sarfraz's reports back to Mortenson were filled with devastation.

#### Chapter 8.

On October 15, Sarfraz entered Azad Kashmir. Normally, travel in Azad Kashmir would be restricted to outsiders due to political and military restrictions, but due to the earthquake the borders had been opened. The roads were quickly clogged with relatives of those in Kashmir attempting to find their loved ones and aid workers rushing to give aid where it was needed most. From Muzaffarabad, where most of the aid agencies had set up their headquarters, Sarfraz headed deeper into Azad Kashmir, finding even more devastation than before. Sarfraz would call Mortenson often, telling him of the devastation and the misdirected work of the aid agencies. No one was asking what the people needed, they were simply flooding the area with what they thought might be needed. For this reason, many of those affected by the earthquake were



forced to improvise with what they had to survive. The only bright spot of the aid offered to these people were Chinooks piloted by the American military that flew food and supplies into the more remote areas of the Azad Kashmir.

Although the international relief agencies were failing to provide the victims of the earthquake what they needed, members of the Taliban and other militant groups stepped up and provided assistance that required a high price of the recipients. At the same time, many of the schools had been destroyed, but the people still wanted an education. Therefore many of these education hungry children were taken to madrassas where they were taught a twisted form of the Koran and forced into the ranks of the Taliban. Sarfraz saw what was happening and began providing tents in which the locals could begin teaching school again. Within a few weeks, Sarfraz set up more than a dozen of these tent schools throughout the more remote regions of the Azad Kashmir. At the same time, Mortenson was going crazy sitting at home in Montana, so his wife told him to pack a bag and go to Pakistan despite the fact he would not be able to return home for Christmas.

These chapters describe the first moments of the earthquake that devastated Pakistan in October of 2005. The devastation was overwhelming and the response was on an international scale. However, most aid agencies failed to ask the victims what it was they needed and often gave these poor, uneducated people things they would never be able to use and failed to give them what they truly needed. For this reason, the Taliban was able to get a foot in the door and begin spreading their unique interpretation of the Koran.

CAI is an education charity. CAI specializes in providing for the education of children in remote areas of Pakistan and Afghanistan, not emergency relief. For this reason, CAI had its hands tied as far as the offer of aid to these victims of the earthquake. However, they quickly discovered that reopening the schools, especially at a time so close to the national testing, was a sign of hope in the future. For this reason, the CAI began providing tents and teachers to the remote villages impacted the most by the earthquake.

## Part 2: Chapters 9-11

### Part 2: Chapters 9-11 Summary and Analysis

#### Chapter 9.

Mortenson, Sarfraz, and members of the Dirty Dozen began going into the furthest corners of the Neelum Valley. Everywhere they went was evidence of the devastation of the earthquake, but there were also signs of hope in the rebuilding of homes and communities. Many villagers would pack up and move en masse, going where they could find the resources they needed. For this reason, Sarfraz encouraged Mortenson to delay thinking about closing the tent schools and building more permanent structures. However, Sarfraz would later convince Mortenson and the CAI to help provide water to some of these remote places whose water dried up or shifted due to the earthquake.

During a visit to a tent school in the village of Nouser, Mortenson noticed that many of the children were not attending classes. When Mortenson asked why this was, he learned from one insightful little girl named Farzana that the students were still traumatized by the earthquake and they wanted desks in the classroom even though it was only a tent. The desks symbolized safety and order to these children. For this reason, Mortenson and Sarfraz dug multiple desks out of the rubble of their school and paid some local men to refurbish them. Mortenson also changed the policy of CAI requiring desks for all their schools, even temporary ones.

Mortenson returned to Montana in January, but found himself obsessed with the activity in Pakistan until the night he realized his five year old son could read. Mortenson found himself in tears, realizing how much he was missing with his own kids while caring for the children of Pakistan and Afghanistan. A short time later, Mortenson's daughter Amira asked an innocent question that led CAI to send thousands of jump ropes to Pakistan and to begin incorporating playgrounds at all their schools.

#### Chapter 10.

Back in Patika, Chaudry and his principal continued to teach out of tents, grown weary of the promises of aid workers and government agents who failed to follow through. Despite their hardships, however, more than eighty percent of the students passed their tests that spring. At the same time, Sarfraz continued to both monitor the tent schools in Azad Kashmir as well as monitoring the projects in Afghanistan and the Wakhan. Sarfraz was constantly on the move, supervising ongoing projects and solving problems, such as the lack of knowledgeable stone masons and carpenters in the Wakhan. That summer, however, the toll began to show. Sarfraz became sick while on a trip into the Wakhan, forcing his quick evacuation from the area. After a four day long brutal journey, Sarfraz finally returned to Pakistan where he underwent surgery for an abscess in his gall bladder that had spread to his liver. Angry at the near loss of his colleague and close friend, Mortenson ordered Sarfraz to take at least a month off.



In less than two days of returning home from the hospital, Sarfraz was back in Azad Kashmir. A month later, Sarfraz visited Patika and learned about their struggles to find a more permanent home for their girls' school. The principal was weary of Sarfraz's promises due to all the broken promises they had received before. Sarfraz not only made a promise to build them a new school, but he began researching the possibility of using an earthquake proof design from China. Sarfraz charged ahead, making deals with the designers in China, arranging for labor as well as transportation over the border, and everything else that needed to be done. All Sarfraz had left to do was to tell Mortenson and get the money from the CAI board needed to begin. Sarfraz faxed Mortenson with the specifics and begged him to get the approval. Despite his irritation at Sarfraz's ignoring his orders, Mortenson got the approval for Sarfraz to build four earthquake proof schools in Azad Kashmir, including in the village of Patika.

#### Chapter 11.

On November 1, 2006, Prince Charles of Britain and his wife visited the school at Patika. During interviews, Prince Charles asked Chaudry who built the school. Confused by the role of the CAI, Chaudry did not mention them. He later told CAI representatives that they had not advertised their role in the building of the school, but he later admitted that without the CAI, none of it would have been possible.

The CAI began a new program in Pakistan after the earthquake in which they would chose deserving students both from their schools and other remote schools and offer scholarships to help them continue their education. This was a difficult prospect due to religious and cultural beliefs, but the CAI managed to accommodate most of their students by providing hostels in which the girls could live while attending school under the care of trusted chaperones and bodyguards. One of the first students they chose to receive a scholarship was a survivor of the earthquake at Patika. The girl's father initially agreed, but soon changed his mind because he was left disabled due to a stroke and the girl was his caretaker. However, one of the CAI representatives was able to convince him to let her go by offering to pay for a nurse as part of her scholarship. Unfortunately, the CAI was not able to get a similar happy ending for the daughter of a Pakistani dentist. This young woman's father did not object, but her brother-in-law, who was jealous of her opportunity, would not allow her to take the scholarship.

In 2007, Mortenson found himself constantly on the road giving speeches and raising money for CAI in the aftermath of the success of his first book, *Three Cups of Tea*. Mortenson was constantly on the go, doing something he did not find as stimulating or as enjoyable as building schools in Pakistan. In November he had a panic attack and was forced to go home. This would happen multiple times over the next few years, but Mortenson continued the lecture tour because of the importance of raising money for CAI.

In these chapters, CAI begins building a presence in the earthquake ruined sections of Pakistan, especially Azad Kashmir. Thanks to Sarfraz, the CAI begins providing tent schools for the remote villages that have lost their school buildings and need a place to teach classes, but are more than likely not to remain in that particular area due to the

devastation of the earthquake. At the same time, Sarfraz encourages the CAI to provide water to some of these areas despite the fact that this goes beyond the scope of CAI. Finally, Sarfraz nearly single handedly provides earthquake proof school buildings for four villages in Azad Kashmir, including Patika which is the focus of the first chapter in this part of the book.

Sarfraz simultaneously pushes CAI's agenda in Pakistan and Afghanistan at deep personal risk and Mortenson finds himself pulled further and further from the heart of the organization as he promotes his book and fundraising for CAI. Mortenson also finds himself sacrificing time and precious moments with his family for CAI and the children of Pakistan and Afghanistan. This makes it clear to the reader that Mortenson is passionate about his work, as are the people around him. However, they continue to come up against frustrations that impede their work, such as the families of their scholarship recipients. Despite this, the reader is left with the impression that the work will continue and it will continue to suffer pitfalls as well as successes.

## Part 3: Chapters 12-14

### Part 3: Chapters 12-14 Summary and Analysis

#### Chapter 12.

Mortenson always had a personal respect for military personnel, but has also had objections to them, especially when it comes to the lack of concern for collateral damage left on the ground in Afghanistan from the bombings during the war against terror. For this reason, Mortenson never expected to become affiliated in any way with the military, especially after a scathing speech he made in 2002 at the Pentagon. However, Mortenson soon became aware of military support for his work through CAI, especially among those who had served in Afghanistan and seen the same desperate desire for education among its people as he had. At the same time, the military implemented a counterinsurgency policy that drew heavily from the idea that education could promote hope and healing.

In September of 2007, Mortenson received an email from LTC Chris Kolenda in the Kunar Province in Afghanistan asking for help in building a school for a village near his military base. Due to the fact that the Kunar Province was considered highly volatile and violent at the time, Mortenson was intrigued by the request. As part of his duties in Kunar, Kolenda set out to calm the violence in the area not with force, but by drinking tea with and engaging in jirgas with the village elders. Kolenda tried to adopt the culture of the area in order to create peace. During a jirga with the elders of a small village named Saw, Kolenda learned that the people desperately wanted a school for their children. It was for this village that Kolenda contacted Mortenson. Mortenson hesitated briefly because he had gone to great lengths to avoid the appearance of an affiliation with the military to ensure the trust of the local people. Not only this, but they needed a trusted representative who could begin making contacts in this area.

#### Chapter 13.

Mortenson met Wakil Karimi in 2002 when he began checking into the Peace Guest House on Kabul's Bagh-e-Bala Road during his frequent trips into the area. Wakil, who grew up in a refugee camp and was educated there, was the clerk at the hotel. Wakil would often talk of his village of Lalander and try to convince Mortenson and Sarfraz to commit to building a school there. Finally Wakil convinced them to meet the elders of the village. Mortenson soon relented and got his board to give the green light to building the school even though the village was not a remote one and did not fit most of their usual criteria. Wakil supervised the project for free.

Mortenson chose Wakil to lead the project in Kunar where the violence continued to grow in the war on terror. In fact, the situation was so dire that Kunar almost turned around on his first trip into the Province, but changed his mind after having a dream. Wakil did not see evidence of the reception he had been warned he would receive in





Kunar, however, but was warmly welcomed by all with whom he spoke. During a jirga with Saw's elders, Wakil found himself forced to slow the enthusiasm in regards to the contract being discussed. A month later, Wakil returned not only to finalize the contract, but also to meet Kolenda. After some initial trouble passing through the gates of the military base, Wakil was given a warm reception. In May 2008, construction began during some of the heaviest fighting in the region. The first, in Saw, was finished in September. A week later, threats were made by the Taliban against the school should any girls attend, but the elders hired a well-respected religious man in the area whose presence encouraged the Taliban to back off their threats. As a result of the success in Saw, Kolenda and Wakil identified several other villages that would benefit from CAI schools. These successes encouraged Wakil and Sarfraz to look into the future with the hope of building a school in Mullah Omar's own village.

#### Chapter 14.

Wakil finally managed to do what Mortenson and Sarfraz had failed to do, get an NGO operating certificate from the Afghanistan government. This enabled the CAI to have a bank account in Afghanistan as well as receive plane rides from Red Cross and other support agencies. At the same time, Sarfraz had completed multiple schools in the Wakhan and had several others progressing. In 2008, Mortenson was accompanying him into the Wakhan to pay for supplies, teacher salaries, and other expenses. Mortenson was hoping to get to Bozai Gumbaz, the village of the Kirghiz people, for the first time. However, before they could make the final leg of the journey, Mortenson learned that the president of Pakistan wanted him to have lunch with him in three day's time. Mortenson was receiving the highest award given to a foreigner in Pakistan, an award that would mean open doors for CAI; therefore, he did not want to offend the President. However, Mortenson later found himself wondering what the point of the meeting was when the President offered his resignation several days later.

In this set of chapters, Mortenson describes CAI's movement into Kunar, a province in Afghanistan where the Taliban was hiding and the American military was carrying out continuing maneuvers in the war against terror. This dangerous area became the venue for CAI's next set of projects because of a request made by a lieutenant colonel in the Army. Mortenson explains to the reader that he was never anti-military, though he did not respect some of their actions on the ground in Afghanistan, but that he had tried to keep CAI separate from the military on the ground to gain the trust of the local people. Therefore it was a surprise to Mortenson to find himself not only a source of information for the military, but allied with the military in order to build schools in Kunar Province.

Mortenson introduces a new character in his list of ragtag local workers in Afghanistan and Pakistan. Wakil was raised in a refugee camp and forced to provide for his family after his father's death during the Russian invasion. Wakil is an outgoing, passionate man much like Sarfraz, taking on the mission of providing education to Afghanistan's girls with the same enthusiasm that caused Sarfraz to put his own health at risk to provide earthquake proof schools to the people of Azad Kashmir. Wakil takes this enthusiasm into Kunar and provides schools to villages who need them.

Finally, nine years after making the promise, Mortenson and CAI are moving closer to the village of the Kirghiz people. Mortenson nearly reaches the village for his first visit, but is turned back when the President of Pakistan demands his presence at a lunch. Mortenson is resentful of this request, once again finding himself forced to play at the dog and pony shows instead of being in the field with Sarfraz and the others. Success has begun to take a toll on Mortenson's happiness in his work.



## Part 3: Chapters 15-17 and Epilogue

### Part 3: Chapters 15-17 and Epilogue Summary and Analysis

#### Chapter 15.

As the war on terror escalates, the Taliban begins attacking schools where girls are known to attend. As these attacks begin to impact CAI schools in Kunar, Mortenson finds himself forced to watch from afar as he continues his lecture tour in the United States. Most of this wore on Mortenson and made him feel a physical and mental exhaustion to which he was not accustomed. However, a bright spot in this time of despair was a visit to Washington that brought Mortenson into the office of the highest-ranking military officer in the US armed forces, Admiral Mike Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. Mortenson was able to bring Mullen some of the most positive news out of Afghanistan he had heard in a while.

In the summer of 2009, Mortenson flew into Kabul and was greeted by dozens who recognized him, taking away the anonymity he once enjoyed. From Kabul, Sarfraz took Mortenson immediately on a tour of their latest school projects. Not only did this include new school buildings, but Wakil had also begun opening centers where older women could take classes learning anything from reading and writing to how to use a cellphone. These centers exploded quickly, growing with word of mouth. Mortenson expressed surprise at the number of these centers and their success. During this same trip, Mortenson attended the opening of a new school in the village of Pushgur, a ceremony that was also attended by Admiral Mullen.

#### Chapter 16.

Mortenson became determined to make it to the Kirghiz village in 2009, a full ten years after his promise to build a school for the village. Construction was ready to begin, but Sarfraz was having difficulty finding a way to bring in the building supplies that would be necessary. Due to the remoteness of the village and the lack of navigable roads, there was no way to simply truck in the supplies. To solve this problem, Sarfraz asked for the purchase of a Kamaz, a heavy-duty truck built in Tartarstan that had a reputation of reliability over the worst terrain. Sarfraz hoped to use the Kamaz to move the supplies over the difficult roads leading into the Wakhan and then use yaks to transport the materials the final dozen or so miles. This would require moving part of the caravan through Tajikistan. Wohid Khan, the commander of border security in the area promised to travel with the caravan to appease the Tajik people.

With the movement of the supplies arranged and on the way, Mortenson and Sarfraz began their own journey into the Wakhan toward the Kirghiz village. However, the night before they were to leave on the final leg of the journey, Mortenson became delirious with fever. When the fever broke, Mortenson wanted to continue his journey, but Sarfraz



refused and had him returned to civilization. Mortenson felt as though this trip was a failure on par with his failure to reach the summit of K2 and place his sister's amber necklace there.

#### Chapter 17.

The building materials slowly made their way to the Kirghiz village as planned. Every day Mortenson received optimistic reports from Sarfraz, who was rushing to compete the project before winter began. However, one day Sarfraz called to tell Mortenson that Abdul Rashid Khan was ill in a nearby town. Desperate to save the old man and help preserve the Kirghiz village that had begun to talk about moving elsewhere, Mortenson contacted everyone he knew to get Abdul Rashid Khan out of the area. Mortenson even turned to the military, but failed to find a way to extract him.

#### Epilogue.

Abdul Rashid Khan came to realize that by visiting him at his death bed, the people of his village were impeding the construction of the school. When word came that the building supplies were being delayed due to a lack of available yak, Abdul Rashid Khan ordered his people to send all available yaks to help. Not only this, but dozens of men went to the village to help with the construction already underway. Within a month, the school was completed. Mortenson has yet to see the school except in pictures.

In these chapters, CAI begins to expand their operations, including centers for older women to learn such things as how to use a cellphone. This is beginning to lead to an interest in politics and the women expressing a desire to vote in local elections. As the fighting in Kunar persists with the Taliban, the women of the area are becoming empowered and finding their own voices.

Mortenson and Sarfraz continue to struggle to build the school promised to the Kirghiz people in the Wakhan. Mortenson wants to see the village, to be a part of the building of this school because he has given up so much to promote CAI and to raise funds. However, when the Kirghiz people stand up and build the school themselves, Mortenson becomes aware of how small his role in the building of these schools really is. The Kirghiz have done something for themselves that no one can ever take away and this is a gift that even Mortenson could not have given them. This seems to be the message of the book, a message that Mortenson himself had to learn the hard way.



# Characters

## Greg Mortenson

Greg Mortenson was an American who in 1993 attempted to climb K2 in Pakistan to fulfill a promise to his younger sister who had died the year before. Unable to make the summit of the mountain, Mortenson began to descend when he became lost and wandered into the village of Korphe. The villagers took him in and nursed him back to health. While he was there, Mortenson learned of the need for a school in the village to educate the children, particularly the girls. Before he left, Mortenson promised to return to build a school. This promise led to the formation of the Non-Government Organization, Central Asia Institute.

In the six years after meeting the people of Korphe, Mortenson and CAI returned to Pakistan multiple times to build many schools. Then, while at the southern entrance to the Irshad, Mortenson met a squadron of Kirghiz horsemen who had been sent by their village chief into Pakistan with the express purpose of finding Mortenson and asking him to build a school for them in the Wakhan Corridor. Mortenson, who knew getting permission to travel in and build in Taliban controlled Afghanistan would be nearly impossible, made a promise to build the school. Over the next ten years, Mortenson and CAI would travel extensively in Afghanistan, building schools throughout its remote regions, before finally fulfilling a promise to the Kirghiz people.

## Sarfraz Khan

Sarfraz Khan served as a project manager for CAI. Sarfraz hailed from Pakistan, but proved to be invaluable in aiding in CAI's move into Afghanistan. Sarfraz could speak seven languages and had traveled extensively in Afghanistan in his past. Sarfraz taught Greg Mortenson how to behave in Afghanistan to protect himself from kidnappers and traveled with him often to keep him safe. Sarfraz would prove to be an amazing asset to CAI multiple times, including after the earthquake in Azad Kashmir. Sarfraz was the one who learned of the earthquake resistant buildings being developed in China and arranged to have four schools built from the designs in Azad Kashmir's most devastated areas. Sarfraz also coordinated the movement of building supplies into the remote Wakhan Corridor in order to fulfill a promise made by Mortenson to Kirghiz people to build them a school.

## Shaukat Ali Chaudry

Shaukat Ali Chaudry was the eldest in his household when his father died and he was forced to become the provider for his many sisters. Chaudry worked as a tutor while still taking his own lessons to complete his education. When the Taliban invaded Afghanistan, Chaudry joined their cause, but quickly became disillusioned with the way they were twisting the words of the Koran to fit their needs. Chaudry returned to his



native village and became a teacher both at a local boys school and girls school, the first man in the area to be allowed to teach the girls.

When an earthquake devastated the region of Azad Kashmir in Pakistan in 2005, Chaudry was inside the boys school beginning school for the day. Chaudry and his classroom of children escaped the school building just before the roof fell. However, several others were not so lucky. As Chaudry surveyed the damage in his tiny village, he soon discovered that the girl's school had completely collapsed. Chaudry spent the next two days helping to dig out the survivors by hand, unable to do much more for the severely injured than to offer comfort.

The earthquake devastated the Azad Kashmir, collapsed buildings killing entire families. Chaudry knew that education was incredibly important to the people of the region and could be a sign of hope in this time of devastation. Chaudry walked to the nearest large city and talked the Pakistani Army into giving him four tents to use as temporary schools so that the children would not fall behind in preparations for the matriculation exams.

In the months that followed the earthquake, CAI tried to find ways to offer help. One of their local representatives stumbled upon Chaudry and his group of determined children and teachers. This man offered Chaudry a new school for the girls of the area and contracted with China to put up a building that would withstand a similar earthquake. In a few short weeks, Chaudry and his students celebrated the opening of a new school that would withstand a 8.2 magnitude earthquake and featured a memorial veranda over the graves of seven students who died in the quake and whose bodies were never claimed.

## **Wohid Khan**

Wohid Khan worked as a border security commander in Afghanistan who was important to the work being done by CAI in the Wakhan Corridor. Wohid opened doors for CAI with the local people and offered transportation throughout the corridor for Mortenson and Sarfraz during the construction of their many school buildings. When it became necessary to move building supplies through nearby Tajikistan, Wohid managed to get permission by promising to travel with the caravan despite the time it would force him to take from his own duties.

## **Gulmarjan**

Gulmarjan, an Afghan child who was thrilled to learn that CAI was bringing a school to his small village, constantly watched over the construction, often discussing with the supervisor from CAI the progress of the project. To watch over the construction closer, Gulmarjan would bring his sheep to the area above the construction site so he could watch over them and the construction at the same time. One day, Gulmarjan stepped on a landmine left behind during the Russian occupation of his country. Gulmarjan's father attempted to get him to a nearby town for medical treatment, but Gulmarjan died on the way. Gulmarjan's father, who had lost his two other sons prior to Gulmarjan's death,



buried him near where he stepped on the landmine. As a memorial to Gulmarjan, CAI incorporated a memorial walk from the school to his grave. Gulmarjan's sister would go on to attend school at the new CAI school and his father would enroll in adult classes as well.

## **Wakil Karimi**

Wakil Karimi had been a young man when war in Afghanistan forced his family to flee their home and to move to a refugee camp. Wakil would spend more than twenty years in this refugee camp, forced to provide for his family after the disappearance of his father in the war. Wakil's mother promoted education among her children. Wakil learned to read and write in his native language as well as English, making it possible for him to work as a translator and tutor of English. As an adult, Wakil got a job at a hotel in Afghanistan where he met Greg Mortenson on his many visits to the area. Wakil would talk to Mortenson every time he came to his hotel about building a school in his village until finally Mortenson agreed. The project was such a success and Wakil such a competent project manager that CAI hired him to work in one of the most volatile areas of Afghanistan coordinating new projects.

## **Abdul Rashid Khan**

Abdul Rashid Khan was the leader of Kirghiz people in the Wakhan Corridor of Afghanistan. Khan sent a group of Kirghiz horsemen into Pakistan in 1999 to find Greg Mortenson with the purpose of asking him to build a school in their tiny village. Mortenson was at first reluctant because Afghanistan was under Taliban rule at the time making it nearly impossible for foreigners or NGOs to travel within the country. Not only this, but CAI had up to that point focused only on building schools in Pakistan. However, Mortenson was touched by the actions of the horsemen to find him and promised he would find a way to build a school for them. It would take ten years, but, with the help of the Afghan people and Khan's village in particular, CAI would provide a school for the Kirghiz people.

## **Haji Ali**

Haji Ali was the village chief of Korphe, Pakistan when Greg Mortenson wandered into this village after a failed attempt at climbing K2. Mortenson was nursed back to health by the villagers. Haji Ali told Mortenson about the lack of schools near his village and the burning desire of many of the village children to be educated. Mortenson promised to return to build a school in Korphe. It was this promise that began Central Asia Institute and its mission to provide schools for girl's education throughout Pakistan.



## Pervez Musharraf

Pervez Musharraf served as the president of Pakistan from 1999 to 2008. Musharraf asked Mortenson to have lunch with him while Mortenson was on his way to the village in the Wakhan Corridor where he had promised to build a school for the Kirghiz people, causing him to rush back to Pakistan rather than see that remote area at the top of the world. Musharraf was charming and entertaining to Mortenson and his CAI colleagues, but Mortenson would later regret the missed opportunities this meeting created in light of Musharraf's resignation just ten days later.

## Mullah Omar

Mullah Omar, the Afghan Pashtun tribal leader of the Taliban, was a symbol of the Taliban and the unhappiness they brought to Afghanistan during their rule and subsequent wars. Sarfraz and Wakil would soon dream of building schools in the villages once built and dominated by Omar in order to make a statement against the Taliban's ban on education for women. In fact, they would succeed in building a school in one such location within a short time of conceiving of the dream.





# Objects/Places

## Night Letter

A night letter is a threatening letter delivered under the cover of darkness by the Taliban. A school built by CAI in Kamir received one of these letters threatening violence should girls attend the school.

## Mujahadeen

A mujahadeen is an Afghan freedom fighter.

## Jirga

A jirga is a village council or meeting. A jirga must take place whenever a major decision is to be made within or for the people of a village. The American military leaders in Kunar begin holding jirgas with village leaders in order to end civilian violence in the area.

## Central Asia Institute

The Central Asia Institute, CAI, is the organization co-founded by Greg Mortenson that raises money for and provides building supplies and money for teacher salaries to schools in Pakistan and Afghanistan to promote education for female students.

## NGO

NGO stands for non-government organization. CAI is a NGO that operates in Pakistan and Afghanistan.

## Kirghiz

The Kirghiz people are Sunni nomadic pastoralists who live in the eastern end of the Wakhan Corridor in Afghanistan.

## Irshad Pass

A pass between northern Pakistan and the Wakhan Corridor in Afghanistan, the Irshad Pass is extremely remote and often closed off for six months or more during the winter due to heavy snows. This is the only way in and out of the Wakhan Corridor.



## **Khyber Pass**

Khyber Pass is a mountain pass between Pakistan and Afghanistan that Mortenson and Sarfraz travel on multiple occasions in order to supervise and develop projects for CAI in Afghanistan.

## **Azad Kashmir**

Azad Kashmir is a remote area of Pakistan where the epicenter of the 2005 earthquake was located.

## **Kunar**

Kunar is a province in eastern Afghanistan. Kunar is the location of much violence and fighting in the war against terrorism involving the Taliban and UN soldiers. It is in this location Wakil takes charge of building schools to promote hope and peace.

## **Wakhan Corridor**

Located in the northeastern section of Afghanistan, the Wakhan Corridor is a remote mountainous section of Afghanistan where only a handful of people live under harsh conditions. It is in this extremely remote area the Kirghiz people live.

## **Afghanistan**

Afghanistan is a country in Central Asia to the northwest of Pakistan. Afghanistan was ruled by the Taliban in 1999 when Mortenson made a promise to the Kirghiz people that he would build them a school in their remote village. It would take ten years to fulfill the promise.

## **Pakistan**

Pakistan is a country in Central Asia sandwiched between India and Afghanistan. Mortenson traveled to Pakistan to climb K2 and befriended villagers in the village of Korphe to whom he made a promise to build a school, beginning his charity, Central Asia Institute.



# Themes

## Philanthropy

Greg Mortenson is the son of a missionary who grew up in Africa where his father built a hospital for the people of Tanzania. Then, in 1993 after a failed attempt to climb K2, Mortenson met a village of people in dire need of a school where they could teach their children, especially their daughters. This led Greg Mortenson to co-found the Central Asia Institute, a NGO dedicated to the building of schools for the education of girls in Pakistan. In 1999, at the request of the remote Kirghiz people, CAI moved into Afghanistan.

Mortenson has devoted his life to the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan, often taking months away from his family in Montana to supervise the building of or begin new projects for CAI. Mortenson also wrote a book, *Three Cups of Tea*, that brought international attention to CAI and forced Mortenson to take more time from his family to travel the world giving speeches about CAI's work in Pakistan and Afghanistan in order to garner donations to continue their work.

The definition of philanthropy is the effort or inclination to increase the well-being of humankind. Mortenson chooses to do this by providing a place and teachers to teach the female populations of Afghanistan and Pakistan. Mortenson believes that education not only gives hope, but it helps control population and reduce deaths due to childbirth. Not only this, but when a devastating earthquake destroyed many villages in the Kashmir section of Pakistan, it offered a sense of security as well as hope to the survivors. For this reason, philanthropy is a major theme of the book.

## War

In 1999, when Mortenson promised the Kirghiz horsemen that he would build a school in their remote Wakhan village, Afghanistan was under the control of the Taliban. This made it impossible for Mortenson or CAI to enter the country. However, after the terrorist attacks in the United States on September 11, 2001, the American military attacked the Taliban and sent them running from the country. This allowed the borders to open to foreigners and gave Mortenson the opening he needed to take CAI into Afghanistan.

Afghanistan is a country that has been at war almost continuously for more than thirty years. Before the Taliban took control of the country, Russia invaded. This resulted in devastation to small villages and left debris all over the area, including landmines dotting most of the countryside. Children continue to fall victim to the landmines left behind in fields and under good grazing land. Not only this, but attempts by the American military to rid the country of terrorists perpetuated the violence to which this



country had grown so accustomed. This created obstacles to CAI building schools throughout the remote sections of the country, making war a theme of the book.

## Education

The entire purpose of the CAI is to provide school buildings and teachers to children, particularly female children, in remote sections of Pakistan and Afghanistan. Many of these children are hungry for an education, so hungry that they often form impromptu schools under trees, in tents, or, like one group Mortenson saw alongside the highway, an old public toilet.

Mortenson and his supporters believe that bringing education to a country such as Pakistan can change the poverty and high mortality rate of the children of these countries. CAI has already had many success stories throughout Pakistan. Girls who have graduated from CAI schools have gone on to become medical practitioners, teachers, and to even pursue a medical degree in medical school. These educated girls return to their villages and care for their fellow villagers, reducing deaths due to complications of childbirth and perpetuating the circle of education for younger villagers.

Education is the key to changing the world according to Mortenson and his supporters. Many of CAI's personnel believe that with education comes self-respect and the ability to understand the world around them. For this reason, education is a major theme of the book.



# Style

## Perspective

Greg Mortenson, the author of this book, writes in the first person point of view in order to give the reader better insight into the workings of his organization, the Central Asia Institute. Mortenson's perspective is subjective because it is taken from a very private point of view. The purpose of the book is to give readers insight not only into CAI, but into the people who are aided with their hope. In this book, Mortenson lays it all out for the reader to see, even talking about this personal life and failures in such a way that the reader understands not only the day to day workings of CAI, but the personal toll it takes on Mortenson and his family.

The perspective of this book works because the reader walks away with a better understanding of not only the people of Pakistan and Afghanistan who are helped by CAI's work, but also of the work that goes into the aid offered by CAI. Mortenson's previous book told of the beginnings of CAI, explaining to the reader in the third person point of view how it came to be. However, this book takes the reader deeper into the organization and Mortenson's own work within it as well as the toll it takes on him personally. For this reason, the book is much more personal than the previous one and gives the reader insight that will impact the way they see this charity.

## Tone

The book is written in a relaxed tone that is often comical. The author tells his story with charm and insight, giving the reader a sense of the danger the CAI workers face in Afghanistan without becoming so serious the reader feels bogged down in dark emotions. In fact, the author goes as far as to admit highly personal information in order to show the reader that he does not take himself too seriously despite the deep passion with which he takes on his philanthropic acts.

The tone of the book fits the author's perspective in such a way that the reader has a sense that they are having a relaxed conversation with a good friend about something that is deeply important to him. The author is telling a story that includes many tragic situations, such as the 2005 earthquake that devastated multiple villages in Pakistan, but he tells these stories with a sense of hope that leaves the reader inspired rather than depressed. For this reason, the tone of the book fits well with the story being told.

## Structure

The book is divided into three parts and seventeen chapters. The book includes multiple appendixes, including a glossary, information on how to donate to CAI, and an essay on the importance of educating girls. The book also includes multiple maps of the region in

which many of CAIs projects take place and pictures of the people and places impacted by CAIs projects.

The book is written in a linear fashion that tells the story of how the CAI, which had previously built schools exclusively in Pakistan, moved into Afghanistan during a time of international unrest. The author tells his story in a first person point of view that gives the reader not only insight into the works of the CAI, but also into how his own work with and for CAI has impacted the author's life. It is an inspiring story that is clearly written and filled with humor as well as many tragic truths of life.

## Quotes

"The Irshad Pass is one of the three great gaps leading north through the Hindu Kush into the most forgotten corner of Afghanistan." Prologue, pg. 35

"The good people who inhabit the frontiers of civilization do not, as a rule, tend to be the world's most sophisticated or cosmopolitan human beings." Part 1: Chapter 1, pg. 41

"For the better part of the past forty-two years, Sarfraz had been, by his own testimony, 'no much success.'" Part 1: Chapter 2, pg. 55

"The northern province of Badakshan has always stood somewhat aloof from the rest of Afghanistan—an isolated region, cut off from the south by the soaring escarpments of the Hindu Kush, whose deepest cultural and historical links extend north into Tajikistan and Uzbekistan." Part 1: Chapter 4, pg. 78

"As I watched the children step into the school courtyard, I couldn't help but notice that the gray, lunar-looking dust now bore the imprints of a mosaic of footprints, and I was reminded, oddly enough, of the moment when Neil Armstrong had stepped onto the surface of the moon." Part 1: Chapter 6, pg. 106

"The seismic shock wave originated more than sixteen miles beneath the surface, deep under Kashmir's Neelum Valley at a point whose surface coordinates corresponded almost exactly with the Government Boys' Degree High School in the village of Patika, about twelve miles northeast of the city of Muzaffarabad." Part 2: Chapter 7, pg. 122

"What Farzana had understood was that in the minds of the children, desks provided concrete evidence that at least within the confines of their classroom, a degree of order, stability, and normalcy had returned to their lives. In a traumatized world where everything had been turned upside down and the ground itself had given way, a desk offered certitude. It was something you could trust." Part 2: Chapter 9, pg. 154

"In many ways, Sarfraz, Genevieve, and Nazir agreed, building schools was proving to be easier than dealing with the obstacles thrown up by the extended families of our scholarship candidates."  
Part 2: Chapter 11, pg. 184

"In my view, Rumsfeld's rhetoric and his demeanor conveyed the impression that America's army of laptop warriors was largely indifferent to the pain and the misery that were being inflicted on innocent women and children." Part 3: Chapter 12, pg. 190

"If Baharak was the gateway to the Wakhan, then this was the front door." Part 3: Chapter 14, pg. 229



"The Afghans want their children to go to school because literacy represents what neither we nor anyone else has so far managed to offer them: hope, progress, and the possibility of controlling their own destiny." Part 3: Chapter 15, pg. 239

"In place of our help, what they needed most was the sense of empowerment that comes from knowing that they had done it on their own. And by God's grace, they had achieved that in spades." Epilogue, pg. 282





## Topics for Discussion

Who is Greg Mortenson? How did he come to build schools in Pakistan? Why does he move into Afghanistan? What is the main reason Mortenson builds schools in these areas? What does Mortenson hope to do with these schools? Why does Mortenson focus on girls as students in his schools? Where does Mortenson live? How did Three Cups of Tea change Mortenson's life? Why does Mortenson have a panic attack while making speeches to raise money for CAI? Why does Mortenson feel that he has gotten to a place where he can no longer concentrate on building schools?

What is CAI? Who began it? For what reason? What does it do? Where does it operate? How does it operate? What does CAI provide? Why is this so important? Why does CAI move into Afghanistan? What does CAI hope to do in Afghanistan? What is the main inspiration to some of the project leaders in Afghanistan?

What is the Taliban? How did they come to rule in Afghanistan? Why did the Taliban discourage visitors to their country? What changes did the Taliban make to the lives of women under their rule? For what reason? How does the CAI hope to change this after the Taliban is forced from control by the American military? What is September 11, 2001? How does this change the CAI's ability to enter and build schools for girls in Afghanistan?

Where is Azad Kashmir? What devastating natural disaster took place there in 2005? How did this disaster impact the people of Azad Kashmir? What did people expect CAI to do for these people? What did they do? For what reason? What was the result?

Who are the Kirghiz horsemen? Why do they come to Pakistan to find Mortenson? What do they ask him to do? What is Mortenson's response? How long does it take Mortenson to fulfill his promise? Why does he claim at the end of the book that the fulfillment of this promise had little to nothing to do with him? Is this true? Explain.

Who is Sarfraz Khan? What is his job with CAI? Why does he feel he must teach Mortenson style before taking him into the depths of Afghanistan? What dangers lurk in Afghanistan? How does Sarfraz protect Mortenson on their many travels in Afghanistan? What does Sarfraz do to help the people of Azad Kashmir? For what reason? At what personal risks? What does Sarfraz do to make the school for the Kirghiz come to fruition? For what reason?

Who is Abdul? Why does Mortenson become interested in him? Why does Mortenson keep a picture of him on his desk? What inspiration does this offer to Mortenson? Why does Mortenson often stop on the road to wherever he might be going in Afghanistan and Pakistan to speak with people? What do many of these people want from Mortenson? Can he give this to all these people? Why or why not?