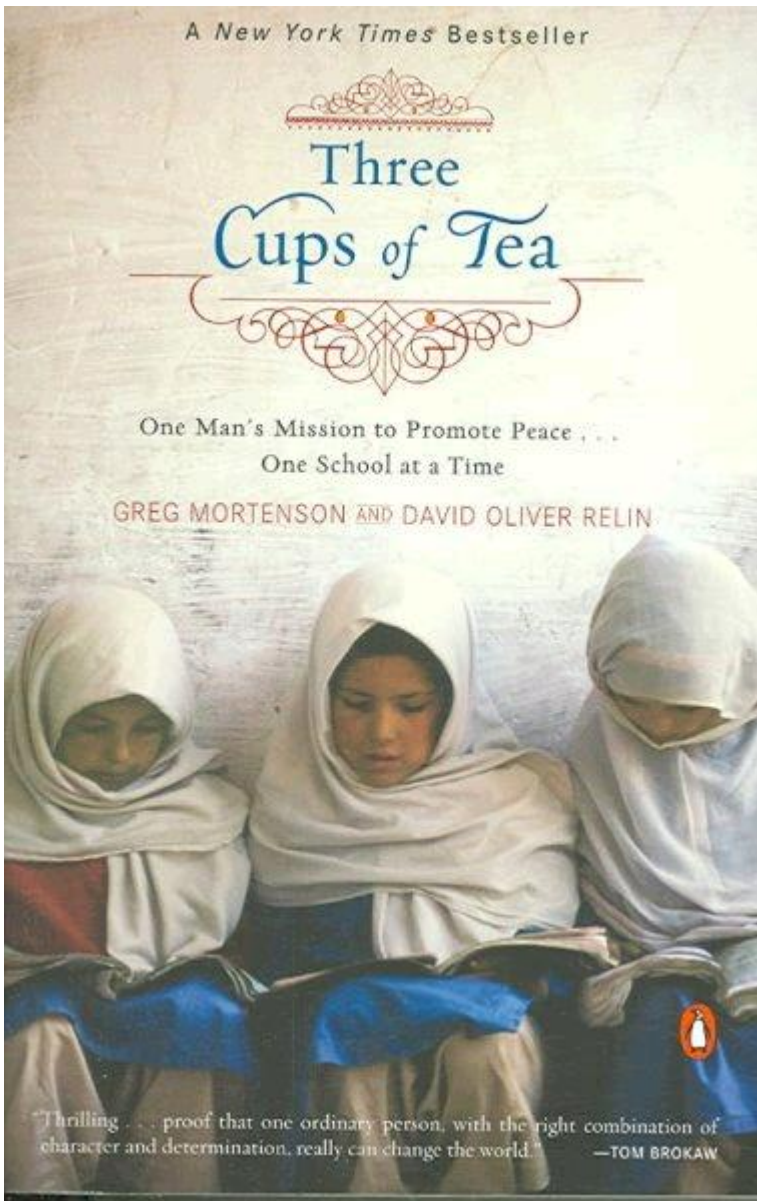


Ann Arbor District Library: Book Club to Go Discussion Guide

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1308893>

About the Book



In 1993 Greg Mortenson was the exhausted survivor of a failed attempt to ascend K2, an American climbing bum wandering emaciated and lost through Pakistan's Karakoram Himalaya. After he was taken in and nursed back to health by the people of an impoverished Pakistani village, Mortenson promised to return one day and build them a school. From that rash, earnest promise grew one of the most incredible humanitarian campaigns of our time—Greg Mortenson's one-man mission to counteract extremism by building schools, especially for girls, throughout the breeding ground of the Taliban.

Award-winning journalist David Oliver Relin has collaborated on this spellbinding account of Mortenson's incredible accomplishments in a region where Americans are often feared and hated. In pursuit of his goal, Mortenson has survived kidnapping, fatwas issued by enraged mullahs, repeated death threats, and wrenching separations from his wife and children. But his success speaks for itself. At last count, his Central Asia Institute had built fifty-five schools. *Three Cups of Tea* is at once an unforgettable adventure and the inspiring true story of how one man really is changing the world—one school at a time.

About the Authors

Greg Mortenson Source: <http://www.gregmortenson.com/>

Greg Mortenson is the co-founder of nonprofit Central Asia Institute www.ikat.org, Pennies For Peace www.penniesforpeace.org, and co-author of New York Times bestseller '*Three Cups of Tea*' www.threecupsoftea.com which has been a bestseller for over nine months since its release and was Time Magazine Asia Book of The Year. Mortenson was born in Minnesota in 1957. He grew up on the slopes of Mt.

Kilimanjaro,

Tanzania (1958 to 1973). His father, was a founder of Kilimanjaro Christian Medical Center (KCMC) www.kcmc.ac.tz a 480 bed teaching hospital, and his mother founded the International School Moshi www.ismoshi.org.

He served in the U.S. Army in Germany during the Cold War (1977-1979), where he received the Army Commendation Medal, and later graduated from the Univ. of South Dakota (1983), and pursued graduate studies in neurophysiology. On July 24th, 1992, Mortenson's younger sister, Christa, died from a massive seizure after a lifelong struggle with epilepsy on the eve of a trip to visit Dysersville, Iowa, where the baseball movie, 'Field of Dreams', was filmed. In 1993, to honor his sister's memory, Mortenson climbed Pakistan's K2, the world's second highest mountain in the Karakoram range. After K2, while recovering in a local village called Korphe, Mortenson met a group of children sitting in the dirt writing with sticks in the sand, and made a promise to help them build a school. From that rash promise, grew a remarkable humanitarian campaign, in which Mortenson has dedicated his life to promote education and literacy, especially for girls, in remote, volatile regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan.

As of 2007, Mortenson has established over 61 schools in rural and often volatile regions of Pakistan and Afghanistan, which provide education to over 25,000 children, including 14,000 girls, where few education opportunities existed before.

David Olin Relin Source: <http://www.davidoliverrelin.com/>

David Oliver Relin is lucky enough to live in Portland, Oregon. He is the author of the New York Times bestseller *Three Cups of Tea: One Man's Mission to Promote Peace...One School at a Time*, which was named nonfiction winner of the 2007 Kiriya Prize, 2007 Pacific Northwest Booksellers' Book Of The Year, Time Magazine Asia Book Of The Year, People Magazine Critic's Choice, and a BookSense Notable Title.

Relin is a graduate of Vassar and was awarded the prestigious Teaching/Writing Fellowship at the Iowa Writer's Workshop. After Iowa, he received a Michener Fellowship to support his groundbreaking 1992 bicycle trip the length of Vietnam. He

spent two additional years reporting about Vietnam opening to the world, while he was based in Hue, Vietnam's former imperial capital. In addition to Vietnam and Pakistan, he has traveled to, and/or reported from, much of East Asia.

For two decades, Relin has focused on reporting about social issues and their effect on children, both in the U.S., and around the world. He is currently a Contributing Editor for Parade. For his work as both an editor and investigative reporter, he has won dozens of national awards. His interviews with child soldiers (including a profile of teenager Ishmael Beah, who would later write the bestseller *A Long Way Gone*) have been included in Amnesty International reports. And his investigation into the way the INS abused children in its custody contributed to the reorganization of that agency.

Relin is currently at work on a secret book about food, a children's book with the artist Amy Ruppel, and a novel about Vietnam.

Awards

Three Cups of Tea won the Kiriyaama Prize (<http://www.kiriyaamaprize.org/>), as well as the Pacific Northwest Booksellers Association's Nonfiction Award (<http://www.pnba.org/>) and the Montana Honor Book Award (<http://www.montanabookaward.org/>). It was a Banff Mountain Festival Book Award Finalist (<http://www.banffcentre.ca/mountainfestival/competitions/book/>), and was the 2007 Nonfiction Runner-Up for the Dayton Literary Peace Prize (<http://daytonliterarypeaceprize.org/>).

Reviews

Publishers Weekly *Starred Review*

Some failures lead to phenomenal successes, and this American nurse's unsuccessful attempt to climb K2, the world's second tallest mountain, is one of them. Dangerously ill when he finished his climb in 1993, Mortenson was sheltered for seven weeks by the small Pakistani village of Korphe; in return, he promised to build the impoverished town's first school, a project that grew into the Central Asia Institute, which has since constructed more than 50 schools across rural Pakistan and Afghanistan. Coauthor Relin recounts Mortenson's efforts in fascinating detail, presenting compelling portraits of the village elders, con artists, philanthropists, mujahideen, Taliban officials, ambitious school girls and upright Muslims Mortenson met along the way. As the book moves into the post-9/11 world, Mortenson and Relin argue that the United States must fight Islamic extremism in the region through collaborative efforts to alleviate poverty and improve access to education, especially for girls. Captivating and suspenseful, with engrossing accounts of both hostilities and unlikely friendships, this book will win many readers' hearts.

Bookmark Magazine

While critics agree that *Three Cups of Tea* should be read for its inspirational value rather than for its literary merit, the book's central theme, derived from a Baltistan proverb, rings loud and clear. "The first time you share tea with a Balti, you are a stranger," a villager tells Greg Mortenson. "The second time, you are an honored guest. The third time you become family." An inspirational story of one man's efforts to address poverty, educate girls, and overcome cultural divides, *Three Cups*, which won the 2007 Kiriya Prize for nonfiction, reveals the enormous obstacles inherent in becoming such "family." Despite the important message, critics quibbled over the awkward prose and some melodrama. After all, a story as dramatic and satisfying as this should tell itself.

Booklist

On a 1993 expedition to climb K2 in honor of his sister Christa, who had died of epilepsy at 23, Mortenson stumbled upon a remote mountain village in Pakistan. Out of gratitude for the villagers' assistance when he was lost and near death, he vowed to build a school for the children who were scratching lessons in the dirt. Raised by his missionary parents in Tanzania, Mortenson was used to dealing with exotic cultures and developing nations. Still, he faced daunting challenges of raising funds, death threats from enraged mullahs, separation from his family, and a kidnapping to eventually build 55 schools in Taliban territory. Award-winning journalist Relin recounts the slow and arduous task Mortenson set for himself, a one-man mission aimed particularly at bringing education to young girls in Pakistan and Afghanistan. Readers interested in a fresh perspective on the cultures and development efforts of Central Asia will love this incredible story of a humanitarian endeavor.

Literary Criticism

Cup Runneth Over

In September 1993, cold, hungry and lost after a failed ascent of K2, Greg Mortenson stumbled into the village of Korphe, Pakistan. His misstep forever changed the lives of thousands of Pakistani and Afghan children.

In gratitude to the people of the village who helped him, Mortenson vowed to build a school for their children, who were studying in the open air, scratching in the mud with sticks. Keeping that vow turned Mortenson -- a laid-back drifter, emergency nurse by profession and climber by avocation -- into a driven fund-raiser who helped found, and now directs, the Central Asia Institute. Mortenson didn't stop with one school: realizing how desperately children in the region needed education, he traveled to the remotest outposts of Pakistan and Afghanistan to create more. His foundation has built 78 schools, which have educated 28,000 children, including more than 18,000 girls, who had rarely received an education before.

This story is familiar by now to the 1.2 million adults who have kept Mortenson's book *"Three Cups of Tea"* on the best-seller list for more than two years. The success of his book has led to these two new versions for young readers.

"Listen to the Wind" tells Mortenson's story in the clear, succinct voices of the children of Korphe. Leaving out background and history, the picture-book version is nevertheless true to the spirit of Mortenson's experience and mission. The minimal text is splendidly paired with Susan L. Roth's textural, earth-toned collages, which evoke the roughness of the terrain and the primitive quality of life there. A community spirit pervades: on nearly every spread, we see the multitude of villagers (girls in colorful headscarves; dark-haired boys) who worked with Mortenson to build their school. "Our mothers carried water to mix the cement. . . . With our small fingers we wedged tiny slivers of stones into the cement to make the walls stronger." The raw quality of the art is counterbalanced by a "Korphe Scrapbook" of color photos documenting the people and places, helping answer a child's question: Is this true?

Three Cups of Tea: Young Readers Edition aims to stay faithful to Mortenson's story and to inspire readers. It is chock-full of extras, including an introduction by Jane Goodall, a timeline, a glossary, a "who's who" and a lengthy, affecting interview with Mortenson's 12-year-old daughter, Amira. Framed by so many elements, however, the story itself loses impact. Boldface vocabulary words direct readers to the glossary but are distracting and create an off-putting textbook aura.

In her pared-down version, Sarah Thomson has kept the pacing and the cast of characters intact, but flat renditions of events like Mortenson's armed kidnapping, just weeks before the birth of his daughter, fail to capture the power of the original. Yet this edition is valuable: Children have contributed in practical ways to Mortenson's mission, and there is no shyness here about calling them to action.

Source: Goddu, Krystyna Poray. "Cup Runneth Over." *The New York Times Book Review* 15 Mar. 2009: 12(L). Literature Resource Center.

<http://www.aadl.org/research/browse/books>

Discussion Questions Source:

http://us.penguinroup.com/static/rguides/us/three_cups_of_tea.html

1. There is a telling passage about Mortenson's change of direction at the start of the book: "One evening, he went to bed by a yak dung fire a mountaineer who'd lost his way, and one morning, by the time he'd shared a pot of butter tea with his hosts and laced up his boots, he'd become a humanitarian who'd found a meaningful path to follow for the rest of his life." What made Mortenson particularly ripe for such a transformation? Has anything similar happened in your own life?

2. Relin gives a “warts and all” portrait of Mortenson, showing him as a hero but also as a flawed human being with some exasperating traits. Talk about how Relin chose to write about Mortenson’s character—his choice of details, his perspective, the way he constructs scenes. Is Mortenson someone you’d like to get to know, work with, or have as a neighbor or friend?
3. At the heart of the book is a powerful but simple political message: we each as individuals have the power to change the world, one cup of tea at a time. Yet the book powerfully dramatizes the obstacles in the way of this philosophy: bloody wars waged by huge armies, prejudice, religious extremism, cultural barriers. What do you think of the “one cup of tea at a time” philosophy? Do you think Mortenson’s vision can work for lasting and meaningful change?
4. Have you ever known anyone like Mortenson? Have you ever had the experience of making a difference yourself through acts of generosity, aid, or leadership?
5. The Balti people are fierce yet extremely hospitable, kind yet rigid, determined to better themselves yet stuck in the past. Discuss your reactions to them and the other groups that Mortenson tries to help.
6. After Haji Ali’s family saves Greg’s life, he reflects that he could never “imagine discharging the debt he felt to his hosts in Korphe.” Discuss this sense of indebtedness as key to Mortenson’s character. Why was Mortenson compelled to return to the region again and again? In your opinion, does he repay his debt by the end of the book?
7. References to paradise run throughout the book—Mortenson’s childhood home in Tanzania, the mountain scenery, even Berkeley, California, are all referred to as “paradise.” Discuss the concept of paradise, lost and regained, and how it influences Mortenson’s mission.
8. Mortenson’s transition from climbing bum to humanitarian hero seems very abrupt. However, looking back, it’s clear that his sense of mission is rooted in his childhood, the values of his parents, and his relationship with his sister Christa. Discuss the various facets of Mortenson’s character—the freewheeling mountain climber, the ER nurse, the devoted son and brother, and the leader of a humanitarian cause. Do you view him as continuing the work his father began?
9. “I expected something like this from an ignorant village mullah, but to get those kinds of letters from my fellow Americans made me wonder whether I should just give up,” Mortenson remarked after he started getting hate mail in the wake of September 11. What was your reaction to the letters Mortenson received?

10. Mortenson hits many bumps in the road—he's broke, his girlfriend dumps him, he is forced to build a bridge before he can build the school, his health suffers, and he drives his family crazy. Discuss his repeated brushes with failure and how they influenced your opinion of Mortenson and his efforts
11. The authors write that “the Balti held the key to a kind of uncomplicated happiness that was disappearing in the developing world.” This peaceful simplicity of life seems to be part of what attracts Mortenson to the villagers. Discuss the pros and cons of bringing “civilization” to the mountain community.
12. Much of the book is a meditation on what it means to be a foreigner assimilating with another culture. Discuss your own experiences with foreign cultures—things that you have learned, mistakes you have made, misunderstandings you have endured.
13. Did the book change your views toward Islam or Muslims? Consider the cleric Syed Abbas, and also the cleric who called a fatwa on Mortenson. Syed Abbas implores Americans to “look into our hearts and see that the great majority of us are not terrorists, but good and simple people.” Discuss this statement. Has the book inspired you to learn more about the region?

Multimedia

'Tea' Debacle Reflects The Murky Waters of Memoirs (Radio Broadcast)

<http://www.npr.org/2011/04/19/135541513/tea-debacle-reflects-the-murky-waters-of-memoirs>

Discussion of the fraud allegations against Mortenson, and their impact on reception of the book.

Greg Mortenson (Video Clip)

<http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=7363068n>

He has written inspiring best sellers, including "Three Cups of Tea," but are the stories all true? Steve Kroft investigates. CBS News report on *60 Minutes*.

Further Reading

***Stones into Schools* by Greg Mortenson**

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1348838>

(Call number: 371.822 Mo)

From the author of the #1 bestseller *Three Cups of Tea*, the continuing story of this determined humanitarian's efforts to promote peace through education. In this dramatic first-person narrative, Greg Mortenson picks up where *Three Cups of Tea* left off in

2003, recounting his relentless, ongoing efforts to establish schools for girls in Afghanistan; his extensive work in Azad Kashmir and Pakistan after a massive earthquake hit the region in 2005; and the unique ways he has built relationships with Islamic clerics, militia commanders, and tribal leaders. He shares for the first time his broader vision to promote peace through education and literacy, as well as touching on military matters, Islam, and women—all woven together with the many rich personal stories of the people who have been involved in this remarkable two-decade humanitarian effort. Since the 2006 publication of *Three Cups of Tea*, Mortenson has traveled across the U.S. and the world to share his vision with hundreds of thousands of people. He has met with heads of state, top military officials, and leading politicians who all seek his advice and insight. The continued phenomenal success of *Three Cups of Tea* proves that there is an eager and committed audience for Mortenson's work and message.

Three Cups of Tea website

<http://www.threecupsoftea.com/>

Information about the book and the related non-profit organization.

Author's official website

<http://www.gregmortenson.com/>

Links of interest, including one to the author's Twitter account.

***Three Cups of Deceit* by John Krakauer**

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1390827>

(Call number: 361.74 Kr)

Argues that author and humanitarian Greg Mortenson, noted for his campaign to open schools for girls in Pakistan and Afghanistan, has not been truthful about his past, his reasons for opening schools, or his abduction by the Taliban.

Summaries from AADL.org Catalog

Read-Alikes *Source: LibraryThing*

***Leaving Microsoft to Change the World: an entrepreneur's odyssey to educate the world's children* by John Wood**

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1273240>

(Call number: 370.913 Wo)

John Wood discovered his passion, his greatest success, and his life's work—not at business school or leading Microsoft's charge into Asia in the 1990s—but on a soul-searching trip to the Himalayas. Wood felt trapped between an all-consuming career and a desire to do something lasting and significant. Stressed from the demands of his job, he took a vacation trekking in Nepal because a friend had told him, "If you get high enough in the mountains, you can't hear Steve Ballmer yelling at you anymore."

Instead of being the antidote to the rat race, that trip convinced John Wood to divert the boundless energy he was devoting to Microsoft into a cause that desperately needed to be addressed. While visiting a remote Nepalese school, Wood learned that the students had few books in their library. When he offered to run a book drive to provide the school with books, his idea was met with polite skepticism. After all, no matter how well-intentioned, why would a successful software executive take valuable time out of his life and gather books for an impoverished school? But John Wood did return to that school and with thousands of books bundled on the back of a yak. And at that moment, Wood made the decision to walk away from Microsoft and create Room to Read—an organization that has donated more than 1.2 million books, established more than 2,600 libraries and 200 schools, and sent 1,700 girls to school on scholarship—ultimately touching the lives of 875,000 children with the lifelong gift of education. "*Leaving Microsoft to Change the World*" chronicles John Wood's struggle to find a meaningful outlet for his managerial talents and entrepreneurial zeal. For every high-achiever who has ever wondered what life might be like giving back, Wood offers a vivid, emotional, and absorbing tale of how to take the lessons learned at a hard-charging company like Microsoft and apply them to one of the world's most pressing problems: the lack of basic literacy.

Book Club to Go! *The Zookeeper's Wife* by Diane Ackerman

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1328243>

(Call number: 940.531 Ac)

When Germany invaded Poland, Stuka bombers devastated Warsaw--and the city's zoo along with it. With most of their animals dead, zookeepers Jan and Antonina Zabinski began smuggling Jews into empty cages. Another dozen "guests" hid inside the Zabinski's villa, emerging after dark for dinner, socializing, and, during rare moments of calm, piano concerts. Jan, active in the Polish resistance, kept ammunition buried in the elephant enclosure and stashed explosives in the animal hospital. Meanwhile, Antonina kept her unusual household afloat, caring for both its human and its animal inhabitants--otters, a badger, hyena pups, lynxes.

How Starbucks Saved My Life: a son of privilege learns to live like everyone else

by Michael Gates Gill

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1296869>

(Call number: 921 Gill)

In his fifties, Michael Gates Gill had it all: a big house in the suburbs, a loving family, and a top job at an ad agency with a six-figure salary. By the time he turned sixty, he had lost everything except his Ivy League education and his sense of entitlement. First, he was downsized at work. Next, an affair ended his twenty-year marriage. Then, he was diagnosed with a slow-growing brain tumor, prognosis undetermined. Around the same time, his girlfriend gave birth to a son. Gill had no money, no health insurance, and no prospects. One day as Gill sat in a Manhattan Starbucks with his last affordable luxury—a latte —brooding about his misfortune and quickly dwindling list of options, a

28-year-old Starbucks manager named Crystal Thompson approached him, half joking, to offer him a job. With nothing to lose, he took it, and went from drinking coffee in a Brooks Brothers suit to serving it in a green uniform. For the first time in his life, Gill was a minority--the only older white guy working with a team of young African-Americans. He was forced to acknowledge his ingrained prejudices and admit to himself that, far from being beneath him, his new job was hard. And his younger coworkers, despite having half the education and twice the personal difficulties he'd ever faced, were running circles around him. The other baristas treated Gill with respect and kindness despite his differences, and he began to feel a new emotion: gratitude. Crossing over the Starbucks bar was the beginning of a dramatic transformation that cracked his world wide open. When all of his defenses and the armor of entitlement had been stripped away, a humbler, happier and gentler man remained. One that everyone, especially Michael's kids, liked a lot better. The backdrop to Gill's story is a nearly universal cultural phenomenon: the Starbucks experience. In *How Starbucks Saved My Life*, we step behind the counter of one of the world's best-known companies and discover how it all really works, who the baristas are and what they love (and hate) about their jobs. Inside Starbucks, as Crystal and Mike's friendship grows, we see what wonders can happen when we reach out across race, class, and age divisions to help a fellow human being.

There is No Me Without You: one woman's odyssey to rescue Africa's children

by Melissa Fay Greene

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1273343>

(Call number: 362.732 Gr)

Atlanta-based journalist Greene is the author of three books and has written for a number of major publications, including the *New Yorker*, the *Washington Post*, the *New York Times Magazine*, the *Atlantic Monthly*, *Newsweek*, and *Life*. She offers an insightful look into the AIDS crisis in Africa through the story of Haregowoin Teferra, an Ethiopian woman who, since losing her husband and 23-year-old daughter to AIDS, has cared for hundreds of AIDS orphans in Addis Ababa.

***Book Club to Go!* *Mountains Beyond Mountains* by Tracy Kidder**

<http://www.aadl.org/catalog/record/1308883>

(Call number: 921 Farmer)

Tracy Kidder is a winner of the Pulitzer Prize and the author of the bestsellers *The Soul of a New Machine*, *House, Among Schoolchildren*, and *Home Town*. He has been described by the *Baltimore Sun* as the "master of the non-fiction narrative." This powerful and inspiring new book shows how one person can make a difference, as Kidder tells the true story of a gifted man who is in love with the world and has set out to do all he can to cure it. At the center of *Mountains Beyond Mountains* stands Paul Farmer. Doctor, Harvard professor, renowned infectious-disease specialist, anthropologist, the recipient of a MacArthur "genius" grant, world-class Robin Hood, Farmer was brought up in a bus and on a boat, and in medical school found his life's

calling: to diagnose and cure infectious diseases and to bring the lifesaving tools of modern medicine to those who need them most. This magnificent book shows how radical change can be fostered in situations that seem insurmountable, and it also shows how a meaningful life can be created, as Farmer--brilliant, charismatic, charming, both a leader in international health and a doctor who finds time to make house calls in Boston and the mountains of Haiti--blasts through convention to get results. *Mountains Beyond Mountains* takes us from Harvard to Haiti, Peru, Cuba, and Russia as Farmer changes minds and practices through his dedication to the philosophy that "the only real nation is humanity" - a philosophy that is embodied in the small public charity he founded, Partners In Health. He enlists the help of the Gates Foundation, George Soros, the U.N.'s World Health Organization, and others in his quest to cure the world. At the heart of this book is the example of a life based on hope, and on an understanding of the truth of the Haitian proverb "Beyond mountains there are mountains": as you solve one problem, another problem presents itself, and so you go on and try to solve that one too. "*Mountains Beyond Mountains* unfolds with the force of a gathering revelation," says Annie Dillard, and Jonathan Harr says, "[Farmer] wants to change the world. Certainly this luminous and powerful book will change the way you see it."

Summaries from AADL.org Catalog

Extras!

The allegations of fraud against Mortenson have blighted the reputation of both his book and the nonprofit organizations with which he is associated. Do misdeeds by an author or other creator impact your interest in their causes or creations? Discuss this as a group.

