

THE INTERNATIONAL BESTSELLER

*The story of
Enaiatollah Akbari*

READING
GUIDE

In the Sea
there are
Crocodiles

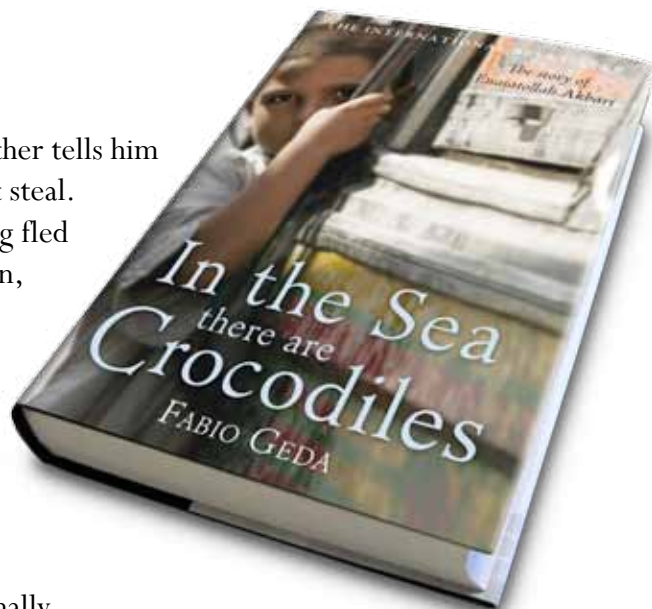
FABIO GEDA

In the Sea there are Crocodiles:

The Story of Enaiatollah Akbari by Fabio Geda

SYNOPSIS

One night before putting him to bed, Enaiatollah's mother tells him three things: don't use drugs, don't use weapons, don't steal. The next day he wakes up to find she isn't there. Having fled their village in Ghazni to seek safety outside Afghanistan, his mother has decided to return home, alone, to her younger children. Ten-year-old Enaiatollah is left alone in Pakistan to fend for himself.



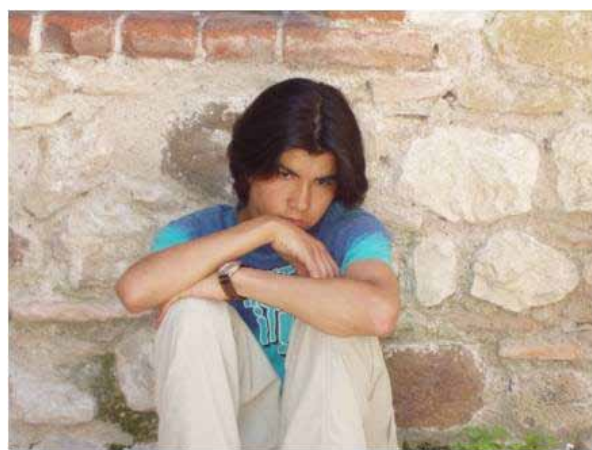
In a book based on a true story, Italian novelist Fabio Geda describes Enaiatollah's remarkable five-year journey from Afghanistan to Italy where he finally managed to claim political asylum. His ordeal took him through Iran, Turkey and Greece, working on building sites in order to pay people-traffickers, and enduring the physical misery of border crossings squeezed into the false bottoms of lorries or trekking across inhospitable mountains. A series of almost implausible strokes of fortune enabled him to get to Turin, where he found help from an Italian family and met Fabio Geda.

The result of their friendship is this unique book in which Enaiatollah's engaging, moving voice is brilliantly captured by Geda's subtle storytelling. In Geda's hands, Enaiatollah's journey becomes a universal story of stoicism in the face of fear, and the search for a place where life is liveable.

CHARACTERS

Enaiatollah Akbari – a young boy from Afghanistan, our narrator (featured in this photo)

Fabio Geda – our author, to whom Enaiatollah tells his story



STARTING POINTS FOR YOUR DISCUSSION:

The novel is narrated by someone recalling their childhood experiences. **How** does this affect your reading of the story? Do you feel more or less sympathetic than if it was in the present tense? Do you always believe the narrator?

Fabio, can I tell you about when the Taliban closed the school?

Of course.

You're interested?

I'm interested in everything, Enaiatollah.

Does knowing that this is a true story affect the way you read the novel? Are Enaiatollah's questions of Fabio throughout the novel meant to remind you that this is true?

There are very few female characters encountered in the novel – **why** do you think this is?

Overall, do you find Enaiatollah's story uplifting or heartbreaking? Is any of it hard to comprehend?

Which sections affected you most?

If Enaiatollah's story was published as a non-fiction memoir, do you think your opinion of the story would be different? Would you have approached it differently? Would it have been a less enjoyable reading experience?

Discuss the contrast of the childhood innocence of playing buzul-bazi and the Taliban arriving to close the school. Does the fact that this is a child's experience of such brutality make it more shocking?

Despite the novel being split into sections named after the countries Enaiatollah has lived in – he says that he 'doesn't want to talk about places. They aren't important' (pg 52). If place and belonging mean nothing to Enaiatollah, **what** do you think drives him and his journeys? Is it freedom, friendship, safety?

Good. At least time is certain.

No, Fabio. Nothing's certain.

Time is, Enaiatollah.

You know something Fabio? I wouldn't be so sure.

Discuss Enaiatollah's ideas about time – maybe consider the episode with his first watch and the fact that he doesn't know his true birthday.

Fabio questions Enaiatollah on his mixture of similes:

It's funny. Sometimes you say things like: he was as tall as a goat. At other times, when you make comparisons, you come up with McDonalds, or baseball.

Why is that funny?

Because they belong to different cultures, different worlds.

Why do you think Enaiatollah does this?

EARLY RECEPTION & REVIEWS

<http://www.bookgeeks.co.uk/2011/07/06/in-the-sea-there-are-crocodiles-by-fabio-geda/>

http://www.thebookbag.co.uk/reviews/index.php?title=In_The_Sea_There_Are_Crocodiles_by_Fabio_Geda

<http://www.thebookette.co.uk/2011/05/irenas-review-in-sea-there-are.html>

<http://www.flutteringbutterflies.com/2011/06/review-in-sea-there-are-crocodiles-by.html>

<http://www.overflowinglibrary.com/2011/07/review-in-sea-there-are-crocodiles-by.html>

OTHER RESOURCES

<http://www.englishpen.org/writersintranslation/supportedtitles2011/intheseathereare-crocodiles/>

www.davidficklingbooks.co.uk

www.kidsatrandomhouse.co.uk

www.vintage-books.co.uk

BIOGRAPHY

Fabio Geda was born in Turin in 1972. A successful Italian novelist, he also writes for several Italian magazines and newspapers, and teaches creative writing in Scuola Holden, Turin. His first novel, *Per il resto del viaggio ho sparato agli indiani*, was published in 2007 in Italy, France and Romania, and won the Best Debut Award for Literary Via Po Torino. He released his second novel, *L'esatta sequenza dei gesti*, in 2008. *In the Sea there are Crocodiles* is Geda's first book to be translated into English. It is based on his relationship with Enaiatollah Akbari, whom he befriended after the young boy's arrival in Turin.



SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER READING

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini

What is the What by Dave Eggers



For more reading guides, news and information about our other unforgettable books visit
www.davidficklingbooks.co.uk