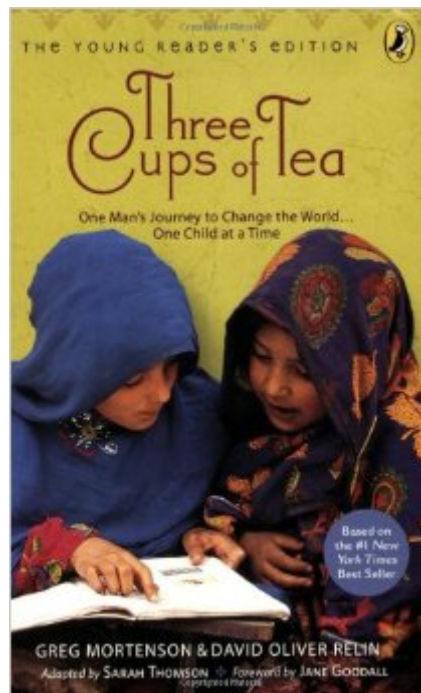


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Three Cups Of Tea: One Man's Journey To Change The World... One Child At A Time (Young Reader's Edition)



Synopsis

This young readers edition of the worldwide bestseller Three Cups of Tea has been specially adapted for younger readers and updated by Greg Mortenson to bring his remarkable story of humanitarianism up to date for the present. Includes new photos and illustrations, as well as a special interview by Gregâ™s twelve-year-old daughter, Amira, who has traveled with her father as an advocate for the Pennies for Peace program for children.

Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (3,134 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #54,353 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #20 inÂ Books > Children's Books >

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Biographies > Social Activists

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

I read this book just a few weeks before the scandal broke. I loved the story and am glad to see children being educated. And yet some things just didn't add up....International development is a challenge, and there is a long history of failure. The main problem is, how do you translate donor money into resources that get to the right people at the right time in the right form? It always seems like 90% is either wasted directly (mismanagement, bribes, etc.), or gets siphoned off to pay for things that aren't used or not wanted. A lot of this is political: local leaders resist being upstaged and have their own priorities and face-saving motives, while the philanthropists insist upon doing it "our way" because "we know what's best". Three Cups of Tea makes it sound like Greg Mortenson has single-handedly solved these problems. Hence the questions that arose when I read the book.

Could it really be that a village would be completely unanimous in support of new school, and with such universal, thumping excitement? There weren't any political toes being stepped on? Was there really no suspiciousness or even apathy among the villagers? Would a villager really approach Mortenson to have a broken bone set (Mortenson is a nurse), when this sort of 'technology-free medicine' is exactly the sort of thing, like midwifery, that less developed cultures maintain quite a good grasp of? Given how hard it is to get a doctor to work in rural but accessible areas in N. America, how could teachers be recruited to work in these new schools in tiny villages, which take days to get to and where the local language is different? How could he know the schools were being built in the right place? Why would his Taliban abductors have had an 1979 issue of Time magazine on hand: why would it have been taken to backwoods Pakistan in the first place and why would it have been kept in storage for 20 years, until the chance kidnapping of an English-speaking American? Using only force of will, would an excitable taxi driver really have been able to singlehandedly get Mortenson moved to the front of the line for Mother Teresa's casket visitation (by far the most preposterous anecdote in the book)? Basically, I concluded that the book is inspirational, but also a grand mix of political and circumstantial implausibilities. Originally I hoped this was mostly due to the publisher and co-author's embellishment. However...Krakauer has just published a thorough 70-page challenge to Three Cups in a free PDF at the Byliner website, called 'Three Cups of Deceit'. Many of Mortenson's stories are challenged by about a dozen witnesses in Krakauer's critique. What is remarkable is that aside from maybe one or two of them (Krakauer himself among them, who comes across as a bit snotty), the witnesses themselves have nothing to gain from telling their stories--they're not going to get ratings, glory or money from telling their point of view. The story that emerges is sad. The testimony suggests that CAI's funds are mismanaged by Mortenson, who spends too much money on himself and his book tour and publicity, and who resents the attempts of his American staff to evaluate what has worked and not worked in his overseas building projects. And that's the crux of the problem: Mortenson is allegedly building schools that are in the wrong place, where no one will use them; when they are in the right place, Mortenson's organization is not paying for teachers to staff the school. I hope Mortenson makes it through his heart surgery safely so he can correct these problems and redeem himself, his values, and his organization. Until then dear readers, please do not give up. There are charities that work on the ground overseas that are much more accountable and centered around local needs. My favorite one even has a blog with pictures and contributions from the locals. Peace.

I picked this book up at a 3 for 2 sale ages ago and it had been getting buried deeper and deeper in

my to be read stack ever since. When I heard about the controversy surrounding the book, I decided it was time to pry it out and dust it off. Although I did not see the "Sixty Minutes" episode, I did read Krakauer's "Three Cups of Deceit". But then it occurred to me that I don't know any more about Krakauer than I do about Mortenson, and nor do I have any more reason to trust him. So I also read Mortenson's statement along with various material from his supporters, and I tried very hard to read the book with an open mind. Even with this effort, however, I have to say, no offense, but people actually believed this to begin with? I know I'm working with the benefit of hindsight and all, but the book is so fantastical I can't believe anyone ever swallowed it whole without gagging. We may never know how much, if any, of what David Oliver Relin tells us about Greg Mortenson is true, but if even half of it is, we all need to throw ourselves on our faces and repent - Greg Mortenson is the Second Coming of Christ. This book is myth-making in the finest tradition. Greg Mortenson is a hero of epic proportions. He's the most competent Army medic and trauma nurse. He's a skilled climber who selflessly spends 96 hours shuttling supplies up a mountain so that others can rest before attempting the summit and then, with only two hours' rest, he spends another 72 hours rescuing a severely ill climbing companion, and it is only with Mortenson's knowledge and skill that the man survives. After wandering back down from K2 (again, with only hours of rest), and after spending a frigid night alone on a ledge with only a thin blanket (but nonetheless confident that he wouldn't die of exposure), Mortenson stumbles into practically the most remote village in Pakistan where, in exchange for being nursed back to health, he promises to build a school. Although lacking any knowledge of how to build a school, let alone in such a remote region, Mortenson not only fulfills his promise (after first building a bridge across a 200+ foot chasm), but also builds dozens of other schools in similarly remote regions, not to mention women's vocational centers, medical clinics, water pumping facilities and myriad other infrastructure improvements all over northern Pakistan before venturing into remote (and war-torn) Afghanistan. And he accomplishes these miracles almost single-handedly, supported only by a dedicated few local Pakistani admirers who make everything happen for the great "Dr. Greg Sahib". The man speaks dozens of different languages which he picks up in a day's time on a ride or hike with a local. He charms everyone from village elders to conservative Muslim clerics; from wealthy donors to U.S. congresspeople. He's so trusted that a conservative Muslim allows him to tend to his ailing wife and newborn when the placenta has not emerged. This scene epitomizes the Mortenson myth - he is not only the only man who can be trusted, but he is the only one who could save those two failing lives. And he does it all while facing trials, tribulations and persecutions of Biblical proportions. He gets mugged in San Francisco. He gets abducted and held hostage by the Taliban. His supplies for his schools get hijacked and stolen.

He's followed by the ISI and interrogated by the CIA. He's the target of two separate fatwas from Muslim clerics for daring to educate girls. On the home front, following September 11, he gets hate mail and death threats from Americans outraged that he dares to help Muslims. His vehicle breaks down in the middle of the night in the middle of a dangerous tunnel and, in trying to get out of the tunnel, he ends up in the middle of a minefield. And then he gets caught in the cross-fire between opium smugglers. But Mortenson's pluck, charm and knowledge always save the day. The man is part Indiana Jones, part Mother Theresa. Seriously, people believed this? From the beginning the money issue alone never adds up. Mortenson supposedly works odd shifts as a trauma nurse, but he's still so poor that he lives in his car, crashes with other mountaineers, or, at best, rents a small, smoke-filled room in an apartment in the low-rent district. Yet he somehow has enough money to take "several" expeditions to the Himalayas. The airfare alone would cost well over a thousand, not to mention the costs of an expedition to a 20,000+ peak. And later, when he finally lands his first major donation from Jean Hoerni, he has \$12,000 for his school and basically pocket change to exist on in Pakistan for months at a time. He has estimated that it will cost exactly \$12,000 to build the school itself. But what about furnishing it? What about staffing it? The book later tells us that he had 500 wooden desks made for his school, but it never tells us how he paid for those. And the book tells us that Mortenson appoints a local village man to be the teacher for the school. Except that the school is a five-room school. Who's going to teach the other four classes? And how are they all going to get paid? I have neither the time, the space nor the interest to elaborate all the gaping holes in the book, but the point is that such holes really don't matter to people looking for a hero. Anyone who is willing to believe that one man can do what dozens of government officials and non-governmental charities haven't been able to do in the last century isn't going to be looking for holes in the story. The myth of Greg Mortenson is the myth of the true "rugged individual", the "self-made man", the man who does what lazy, incompetent and corrupt government can never do. The myth is also born of the "white man's burden". For hundreds of years, remote Pakistani villagers have eked out a primitive existence cut off from the benefits of knowledge and education. But when a gentle white giant rides into town bearing the light of knowledge, all their problems are lifted. There are also typical themes, such as the "noble savage" (the simple, gentle people of Korphe who have such little contact with Westerners that Mortenson fears for them becoming "corrupted" by being "exposed" to Westerners) and the "violent savage" (only through bringing the civilization of Western-style secular education can we overcome the extremism of "radical Islam" and thereby fight Terrorism). I'm sure that Mortenson's intentions at least at first were basically good. He was raised in a missionary family among Tanzanians around Mt. Kilimanjaro. He was raised to

believe in helping the "less fortunate" as a way of life. In fact, as a life-long outsider, I'd guess that giving to others is an unconscious way of trying to fit in and be accepted. But at some point the myth of Mortenson as savior took over the reality of Mortenson the fallible human being, both in his own mind and the minds of his followers. Mortenson's human failings - his lack of time sense, his disorganization and lack of concern for safety, for example - ceased being foibles that needed to be checked and balanced, but rather endearing personality traits of a true independent trail-blazer who can't be held back by such bureaucratic annoyances. Mortenson's story, like that of James Frey, couldn't be told as fiction - it wouldn't be believable. But somehow by telling it as "truth", the very unbelievableness of it all is what makes it believable, at least for those who want to believe. If I learned anything from my parents it was, if it seems too good to be true, it probably is.

This book has been revealed to have invented stories, including the first story about K2. 60 minutes recently had a damning expose that Greg's stories are fabricated and his charity is used to enrich himself. Google 'Three cups of tea 60 minutes' to see the episode. As someone who works in Afghanistan and puts his butt on the line there, I find this reprehensible. The publisher needs to issue refunds to people who bought this book.

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