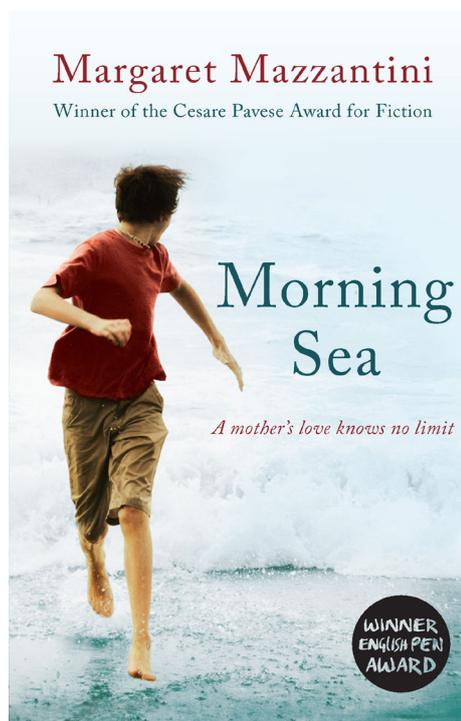




Oneworld Readers' Guide

Morning Sea



Morning Sea

Margaret Mazzantini

Libya, 2010. As Gaddafi clings desperately to power, and chaos and violence flood the streets of Tripoli, Farid and his mother, Jamila, face two stark choices: flee to the border and risk capture by mercenaries, or trek to the coast and chance their luck on the hazardous crossing to Sicily. But hunkering down in a trafficker's battered old boat, the vastness of the Mediterranean – and their journey – begins to dawn.

Sicily, 2010. Vito wanders the desolate beaches recalling his mother's stories of her idyllic childhood in Libya. Forced to leave the country years earlier, Angelina has never forgotten – nor forgiven – the forces that tore her from her childhood love, a young Arab boy whose fate was very different from her own. And as she yearns for her past life in Africa, Jamila dreams of building a future for herself and Farid in Europe.

Moving back and forth between the continents, this deeply moving portrait focuses on two families and one stretch of water, and in terse, lyrical language, captures perfectly the dark, uncertain quality of our times.

Questions for Discussion

1. If you had to categorise *Morning Sea*, would you call it a novel or a novella? Explain your decision. Consider the differences between the two forms, strengths and weaknesses.
2. Mazzantini's prose style has been described as 'poetic and lyrical'. Do you agree? Do you feel Mazzantini's prose style is well suited to the subject matter?
3. The sea is the central metaphor in the novel: it stands for life and death, enemy and friend, bridge and border. Do any of these interpretations carry more weight and significance than the others?
4. 'Vito has gathered memory ... someone will need this someday. Someday, a black Italian man will want to look back at the sea of his ancestors and find something. A trace of their passage...' (p. 127-128). How important is the past for the characters? How important is the past generally in helping us understand identity?



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5. Farid remembers a gazelle shortly before dying. What might the gazelle represent?
6. How do the two families differ? What are their similarities?
7. Jamila and Angelina's paths only cross right at the end of the novel when Vito finds debris washed up on the beach. How satisfying an ending did you find this?
8. News stories of immigrants travelling from North Africa to Italy occur with tragic frequency. After reading *Morning Sea*, do you feel your view of this situation has changed and/or altered in any way?
9. 'Real joy always contains some fear?' (p. 38). To what extent do you agree with this statement?
10. Of the four principle characters, who do you identify with most and why?
11. Angelina is always swimming and appears to be most content when in the sea. How might the landscapes reflect the characters' inner lives?
12. Silence can be more important than words. In *Morning Sea*, there are many situations where characters choose not to speak, in particular Angelina. What might this silence symbolise?

Suggested Further Reading

The Other Hand by Chris Cleave

And the Mountains Echoed by Khaled Hosseini

Maya's Notebook by Isabel Allende

The Boat by Nam Le

About the Author

Margaret Mazzantini was born in Dublin and lives in Rome with her husband and four children. She has written seven novels, all international bestsellers, which have won numerous awards and been translated into over 30 languages. *Twice Born*, (also published by Oneworld) won the Premio Campiello award, sold over 1 million copies, and was made into a film starring Penelope Cruz.