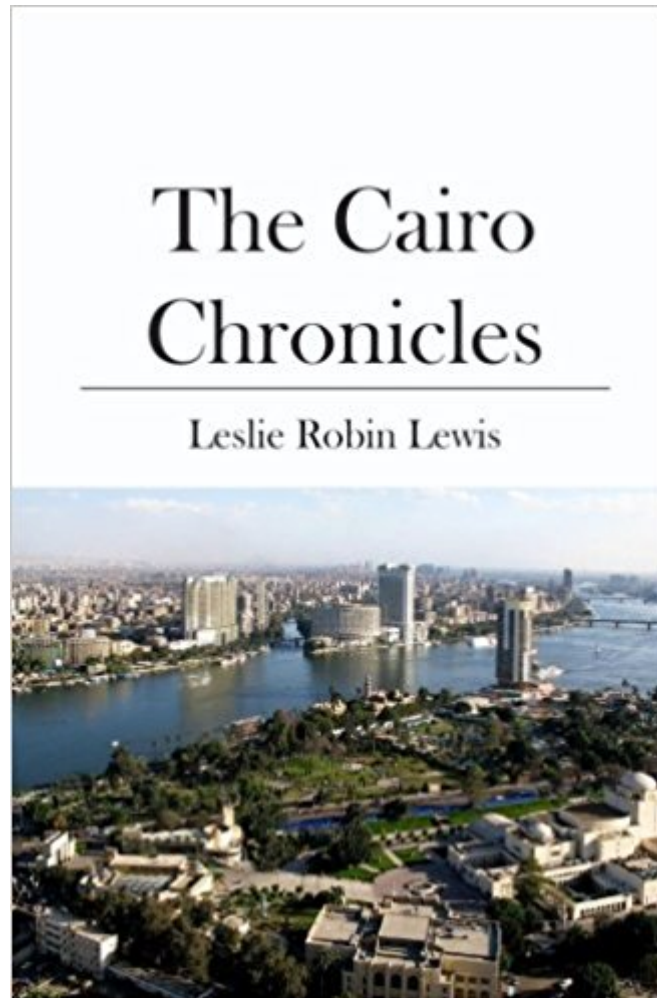




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The Cairo Chronicles



Synopsis

In January, 2005, a young anthropologist boards a plane in Los Angeles with her husband and two young children, and flies to Egypt, a world both ancient and modern. So begins a year and a half sojourn in the most populous city in the Middle East. In these “reports from the field” the author dons the hijab, trips over Arabic, and interacts with the bemused citizenry, evoking laughter, tears and reflection. Readers will feel the heat of a Cairo summer, mingle with in-laws and ex-patriots, chafe under strict social norms, bow in resignation to a maddening bureaucracy, delight to the devastating wit of Cairenes, weep at the suffering of a struggling underclass, and open their eyes and hearts to the warmth, resilience and humor of ordinary Egyptians.

Book Information

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: BookSurge Publishing (September 9, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1439208948

ISBN-13: 978-1439208946

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.4 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 11 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #3,072,759 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #41 in Books > Travel >

Africa > Egypt > Cairo #448 in Books > Travel > Africa > Egypt > General #2048

in Books > Travel > Middle East

Customer Reviews

Leslie R. Lewis is a doctoral candidate in anthropology at the University of California at San Diego, a former research fellow at the Institute for Gender and Women's Studies at the American University in Cairo, and a recipient of a National Science Foundation grant for her ethnographic research in Egypt. In addition to her work in the Middle East, Ms. Lewis has traveled and undertaken fieldwork in Mexico, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, and the Dominican Republic. She is now living in La Jolla, California where she juggles writing, teaching, academic work and family life, all on a unicycle.

I never thought that I would be really interested in reading books like this. I never have been exposed to this type of journal writing type. It is fun read that not only entertains you, but provide knowledgeable information that I have never learned about a place and a group of people.

Absolutely one of the wittiest, most insightful, and humorous books I have read in quite a while. This book is an insider's view of living in Egypt and may help the reader understand why there is so much unrest in Egypt today. Leslie Lewis is an intelligent and articulate writer and takes the reader on a journey that is not only educational but downright rip-roaring fun!! I would give this book six stars if I could.

My teacher wrote this book, she made me buy it for her class. I thought that was a little pretentious but then I started reading it and couldn't put it down. I really loved this book.

This is the perfect book: well-written, insightful, educational and easy to read...you just won't be able to put it down! 5+ stars. Leslie Lewis is adventurous, witty, open-minded and compassionate...read her book, laugh, learn and be inspired!

This book is one of the best books I have ever read. I have read it three times and every time I read it, I catch something new. Its very entertaining and very funny!!! highly recommend this book to everyone!!! give it 10 gold stars!!!!

As someone who has very little background knowledge or experience about this part of the world, I appreciated the author's down-to-earth (but not naive!), thoughtful observations and anecdotes that brought this world to life. Her commentary and reflections are intelligent without being over-analytic/jargony, and although she is frank about her political view, she doesn't linger or try to make the story a statement about them. What she does give is a beautifully written, touching and hilarious account of how we try to live with each other, as men and women, as families, as faith communities, as real people with our own individual stories. This is not a story of a woman and her family confront otherness (with adventures/enlightenment ensuing a la eat,pray,love), it is more about the way the author begins as the other herself and gradually learns to be part of a larger human experience through her relationships. I'd recommend this to anyone who has lived, traveled or worked abroad and who knows that every cultural "adventure" also has a deep and meaningful human side- a wonderful read! (profits go to charity!)

The Cairo Chronicles is an adventurous tale of the Egyptian culture as seen through the eyes of an American anthropologist in which readers are engaged through humor and provided an (easy)

introduction to the key concepts of anthropology. The reader is immediately drawn into the story via a hilarious dialogue in which the author attempts to explain to her in-laws she is a vegetarian. The author uses humor to lighten the mood and ultimately find some common ground between the two varying cultures. This dialogue assists in educating the reader on what it is like entering a new, or not-so-familiar, country. The book serves as an example of what an anthropologist may come across during fieldwork and expands on the various elements of anthropology: culture, religion, politics, marriage... the list is endless. What is most unique about this book is the author's ability to incorporate English, Spanish, and Arabic into the chapters. Some of the English words were outside my realm of knowledge and forced me to pick up my Merriam-Webster Dictionary. Spanish and Arabic words woven through the book allows the reader to think further outside the English box and learn a new language. Titles intrigue the reader with clever little phrases you don't understand until you've completed the chapter; for example, Chapter Eight: Nursing 20 Years Olds and Prophets with Beards. Unbeknownst to the reader by merely skimming the title, this chapter is about removing barriers, immersing yourself in the culture, overcoming language obstacles, and ultimately getting people to talk to you. I read *The Cairo Chronicles* in conjunction with weekly readings from our course text, *Introducing Cultural Anthropology*, and was delighted to find the book explained in "Lehman's terms" what the text was attempting (and failing) at. We discussed gender roles and sexuality for about three weeks in class, and thus, the readings went along with the topics accordingly. Although a common theme throughout the book, Chapter 13, Gender, Public Space and Muntaqiba Police Chases, assisted me the most in better understanding these subjects. A discussion of the varying ways of women in Egypt was used to understand gender roles, while examining the abaya and niqab (gown and face covering) gave insight into sexuality (and sexual harassment) in the country. Comparisons throughout the book assist in comprehending not just the differences between our culture and others, but also the similarities that are often found. Chapter Six, Sex, Love, Marriage and Family, compares polygamy in Egypt and the East to monogamy in the United States and the West. The chapter also identifies the stresses of getting married for women in both countries. In the U.S., although women have careers, they are identified as a wife first. Similarly, in Egypt, marriage is seen as an adult rite of passage and women are thus defined by their marital status. Religion in Cairo, predominately Islam, has a significant influence on not just marriage, but many aspects of the Egyptian culture; the book identifies such aspects and offers different points of view. The text teaches us about various points of view, known as emic and etic, but *The Cairo Chronicles* expands on this by analyzing the religious influence in the country. Spoken throughout various chapters in the book, Islam influences the way many Muslims eat, what

they wear, and who they marry. The author also goes beyond Muslim ways of life in Egypt and discusses how many religions dictate cultural norms in other countries. Personal family stories, such as Chapter 12: (Actual) Announcement when Alexandra is born, allow the reader to connect with the author and her family. These chapters show us the real person behind the writing. In my opinion, using this book as an introduction to a cultural anthropology course will help students better understand what they are learning. For those who would be intimidated by another assigned reading, the chapters are short and the book itself is less than 140 pages; not to mention, it's an easy read. The Cairo Chronicles is sarcastic and funny, as well as intriguing and educating. The author captures your attention from page one and doesn't release it until the final chapter.

Entertaining & Thought Provoking ~ I had the pleasure of reading this book recently and was amazed at how smoothly it ran me through foreign customs and ideas. I am enlightened and amused at the same time and that is a gift. I highly recommend this book to ALL but especially moms, foreigners (yes that means all of you), dads, multi racial married couples and in-laws! I read a book a week and belong to a strong book club and we will be reading this next! ~ Erika

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