

# Words in the Dust

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Words in the Dust is set in Afghanistan in a small village called An Daral. Zulaikha, the main character, is a young girl who has a cleft lip. She wished to be normal all her life. All her life she has been doing chores to take care of her family. When she goes into the village to buy food she gets bullied by some boys in her village. One day on a trip to the market she finds a woman named Meena who teaches her to read and write. Meena was also her mother's friend. Her mother was killed by the Taliban because she had books.

The American military were in Afghanistan to help rebuild the An Daral village. Some of the soldiers see Zulaikha and offer her surgery on her lip. After much trouble she goes to the American base in Kandahar to lip and teeth fixed. This was her dream. Zulaikha was a nice person but she was always worried about how others thought about her lip.

I have a friend at school who is a bit like Zulaikha because he cares about what other people think he look like. I think in this book I learned that it doesn't matter what you look like, it matters what your personality is like. I think that if you are a nice person but you are ugly more people will like you than if you are mean and beautiful. I also liked how the story showed how different the two cultures were. Like how Captain Mindy was so blind in that she wanted to hug Zulaikha and shake her hand when this is inappropriate to that culture. The Americans also searched her dad and she thought that was strange.

I would give this book 9.5 out of ten because it was a wonderful story and the characters were interesting and real, especially if you read the author's note. However, it was the tiniest bit hard to get interested in the story. It was a good read and I encourage others a bit older than me to read it because it was very sad and a little bit too descriptive for my age group.