

Terrorist: A Novel

By John Updike

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The terrorist of John Updike's title is eighteen-year-old Ahmad Ashmawy Mulloy, the son of an Irish American mother and an Egyptian father who disappeared when he was three. Devoted to Allah and to the Qur'an as expounded by the imam of his neighborhood mosque, Ahmad feels his faith threatened by the materialistic, hedonistic society he sees around him in the slumping New Jersey factory town of New Prospect. Neither Jack Levy, his life-weary guidance counselor at Central High, nor Joryleen Grant, his seductive black classmate, succeeds in diverting Ahmad from what the Qur'an calls the Straight Path. Now driving a truck for a local Lebanese furniture store—a job arranged through his imam—Ahmad thinks he has discovered God's purpose for him. But to quote the Qur'an: *Of those who plot, God is the best.*

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Terrorist: A Novel By John Updike Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly
Starred Review. Ripped from the headlines doesn't begin to describe Updike's latest, a by-the-numbers novelization of the last five years' news reports on the dangers of home-grown terror that packs a gut punch. Ahmad Mulloy Ashmawy is 18 and attends Central High School in the New York metro area working class city of New Prospect, N.J. He is the son of an Egyptian exchange student who married a working-class Irish-American girl and then disappeared when Ahmad was three. Ahmad, disgusted by his mother's inability to get it together, is in the thrall of Shaikh Rashid, who runs a storefront mosque and preaches divine retribution for "devils," including the "Zionist dominated federal government." The list of devils is long: it includes Joryleen Grant, the wayward African-American girl with a heart of gold; Tylenol Jones, a black tough guy with whom Ahmad obliquely competes for Joryleen's attentions (which Ahmad eventually pays for); Jack Levy, a Central High guidance counselor who at 63 has seen enough failure, including his own, to last him a lifetime (and whose Jewishness plays a part in a manner unthinkable before 9/11); Jack's wife, Beth, as ineffectual and overweight (Updike is merciless on this) as she is oblivious; and Teresa Mulloy, a nurse's aide and Sunday painter as desperate for Jack's attention, when he takes on Ahmad's case, as Jack is for hers. Updike has distilled all their flaws to a caustic, crystalline essence; he dwells on their poor bodies and the debased world in which they move unrelentingly, and with a dispassionate cruelty that verges on shocking. Ahmad's revulsion for American culture doesn't seem to displease Updike one iota. But Updike has also thoroughly digested all of the discursive pap surrounding the post-9/11 threat of terrorism, and that is the real story here. Mullahs, botched CIA gambits, race and class shame (that leads to poor self-worth that leads to vulnerability that leads to extremism), half-baked plots that just might work-all are here, and dispatched with an elegance that highlights their banality and how very real they may be. So smooth is Updike in putting his grotesques through their paces-effortlessly putting them in each others' orbits-that his contempt for them enhances rather than spoils the novel.
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From Bookmarks Magazine
Not only does John Updike write tales of suburban angst; he also has a long history of ruminating on faith. Critics compare his latest novel to *In the Beauty of the Lilies* and *The Coup* except that *Terrorist* has an intensely contemporary flare. It's almost scandalous to see one of America's literary lions toying with such an inflammatory topic—and in the guise of a thriller, no less. The litmus test of his success with *Terrorist* is whether he answers the central question: What drives someone to become a terrorist? *Terrorist* is exceedingly well researched, and Updike writes beautifully. Still, many reviewers criticize Updike for creating Ahmad as a puppet rather than a character. That a puppet is exactly what his Imam wishes him to be begs the question whether Ahmad is a successful creation or just a thin caricature.

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From Booklist
Starred Review Updike is never static; over the course of his long career, he has not only mastered various literary forms but also tackled a wide variety of subjects as material for his fiction. His new novel, swift, sinewy, and stylish, represents another big leap. In the hands of a lesser writer, such a risky topic and premise easily could have come across as presumptuous. Ahmad, an 18-year-old high school student, is the son of an Irish American mother and an Egyptian father. He has taken up the Islamic faith of his father so completely that he is obsessed with distancing himself from the unclean infidel, which is how he views the New Jersey community in which he lives. The high-school guidance counselor, who attempts to steer young

Ahmad in a direction he feels is more suitable and productive, is a compelling and oddly attractive supporting character, who, as it turns out, plays a vital role in a deadly plot into which Ahmad tumbles like the naive, easily manipulated adolescent he is. This marvelous novel can be accurately labeled as a 9/11 novel, but it deserves also the label of masterpiece for its carefully nuanced building up of the psychology of those who traffic in terrorism. Timely and topical, poised and passionate, it is a high mark in Updike's career.
Brad Hooper
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Frances Norman:

Here thing why this kind of Terrorist: A Novel are different and trustworthy to be yours. First of all reading through a book is good but it really depends in the content of it which is the content is as yummy as food or not. Terrorist: A Novel giving you information deeper since different ways, you can find any guide out there but there is no reserve that similar with Terrorist: A Novel. It gives you thrill examining journey, its open up your own eyes about the thing this happened in the world which is probably can be happened around you. You can easily bring everywhere like in area, café, or even in your means home by train. When you are having difficulties in bringing the published book maybe the form of Terrorist: A Novel in e-book can be your option.

Michael Walsh:

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Brian Rankins:

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Rafael Perez:

Many people spending their time frame by playing outside using friends, fun activity using family or just watching TV 24 hours a day. You can have new activity to shell out your whole day by looking at a book. Ugh, think reading a book can actually hard because you have to bring the book everywhere? It fine you can have the e-book, taking everywhere you want in your Smart phone. Like Terrorist: A Novel which is keeping the e-book version. So , try out this book? Let's view.

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