



BOOK CLUB

Falling in love with Islam

A *AMERICAN DERVISH* is full of finely drawn and colourful characters. This modern novel is about 11 year old Hayat, who is growing up in the United States with all the usual issues a pre-teen boy has.

And then his mother's oldest friend, Mina, moves in with the family after a nasty divorce back in her homeland of Pakistan. She starts to teach Hayat about the Islamic faith, opening his eyes to a wider world than that of school, baseball and his fighting family.

Hayat falls in love with, and is fascinated by, the faith and Mina equally. But when she in turn falls for Hayat's father's friend, Nathan Wolff, a local Jewish intellectual, problems ensue. Hayat, unable to control his jealousy over losing Mina, takes action, with dramatic and disastrous results.

First time author Ayad Akhtar is American born and a first generation Pakistani American, so there are surely some echoes here of his own story.

The experiences he talks about, and the words he selects to describe and evoke them, mean the reader is instantly and easily immersed in the world of *American Dervish*. The characters

Katherine Hoby



American Dervish,
Ayad Akhtar, Orion

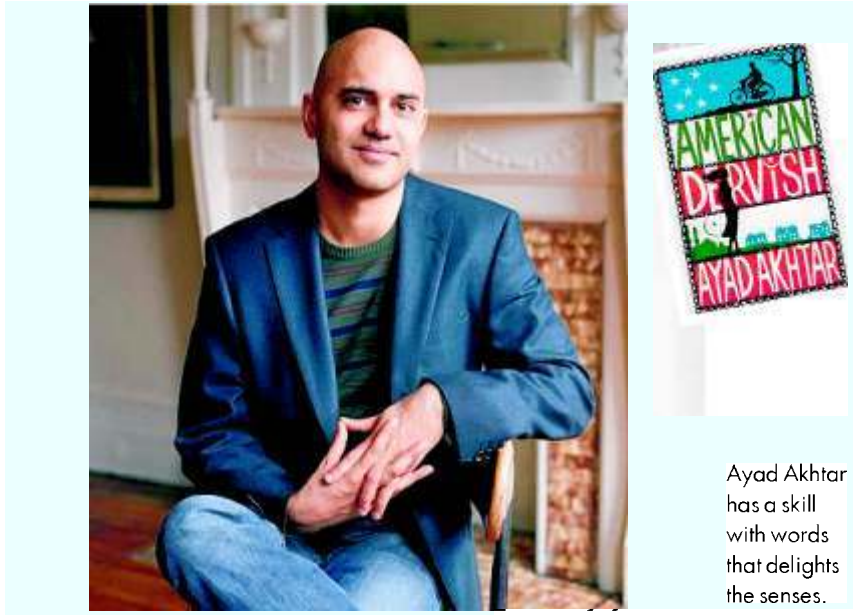
Zen Under Fire: A New Zealand woman's story of love and war in Afghanistan
Marianne Elliott, Penguin

feel like real people with real challenges, who make human decisions in the face of them.

It's a different reality to that experienced by many readers but, thanks to Akhtar's skill and precision with words, it's a story which delights all the senses and has a real ring of authenticity to it.

On a different note, it has a lovely and appropriate cover, with the red, white and blue of the United States flag interspersed with the silhouettes and symbols of Pakistan and the Muslim world





Ayad Akhtar has a skill with words that delights the senses.



Read if: You have a taste for learning, as well as a hunger for a genuinely good story

ALSO NEW out: *Zen Under Fire: A New Zealand woman's story of love and war in*

Afghanistan, by Marianne Elliott, Penguin.
Human rights lawyer Marianne

Elliott was stationed with the United Nations in Herat in 2006.

This book is the story of her time on the world's most notorious battlefield. An excerpt:

"I am about to be left in charge of the office. I'm not sure I am ready for the responsibility, so I double check with my boss.

"He reassures me. 'You'll be fine, Marianne. As long as no one kills Amanullah Khan, you'll be fine.' By midday, Amanullah Khan is dead."