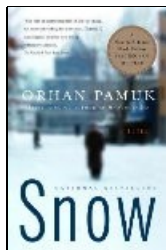


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Book Review
Snow
by [Orhan Pamuk](#)

Reviewer: [Geoff Wisner](#), Staff Reviewer
Posted: October 2, 2006

When a novel like *Snow* becomes a bestseller, it gives you some hope for the reading public. This is an ambitious and serious (though not grim) novel that demands, and rewards, close attention.

Set in a snowed-in Turkish village, *Snow* tells the story of a Turkish poet, named Ka after his initials, who has come to town after several years in Germany. His stated reason is to report on the suicides of some local girls — allegedly because the secular authorities at the local school have forbidden them to wear Islamic head scarfs. His real reason is to see a beautiful woman named Ipek, who has recently divorced her husband.

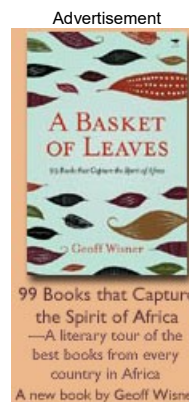
Ka is an agnostic and rather Westernized, but he is almost dangerously open to the ideas and passions of others. During his few days in town, he drinks coffee and raki, talks to shady actors and idealistic boys, kisses the hand of an imam, courts Ipek, holds secret meetings with an Islamic fundamentalist, and witnesses a murder. To his amazement, his poetic gift — lost for years — returns to him, and he is struck by one beautiful new poem after another.

Heartfelt confessions, eruptions of violence, and searching conversations about religion and fate give *Snow* the atmosphere of a Dostoevsky novel like *The Devils*. *Snow* is lighter than this suggests, though, and techniques like flash-forward make it unmistakably modern. As the story progresses, what seemed like an old-fashioned omniscient narrator is revealed as something else. The narrator refers to himself as "I," a little later he mentions knowing Ka, then someone refers to him as Orhan, and it becomes clear that the voice in our head is that of the novelist Orhan Pamuk himself — or at any rate, a character who closely resembles him. In flash-forwards, the narrator even takes action as a kind of detective, ransacking apartments and interviewing witnesses in search of the truth about those few snowy days in the village.

Moving, illuminating, sometimes strange and funny, *Snow* is among the best novels of recent years.

About the Reviewer

Geoff Wisner is a freelance writer and staff member of Indigocafe.com. He is the author of [A Basket of Leaves: 99 Books That Capture the Spirit of Africa](#). Visit his website at www.geoffwisner.com.



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—Mahatma Gandhi

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