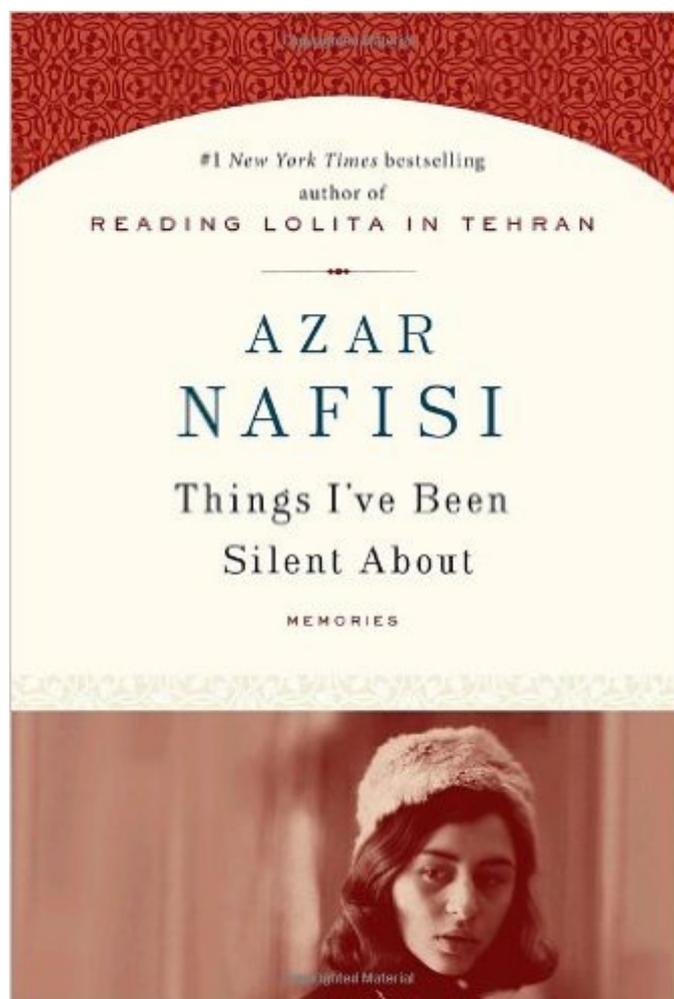


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# Things I've Been Silent About: Memories



## Synopsis

I started making a list in my diary entitled "Things I Have Been Silent About." Under it I wrote: "Falling in Love in Tehran. Going to Parties in Tehran. Watching the Marx Brothers in Tehran. Reading Lolita in Tehran." I wrote about repressive laws and executions, about public and political abominations. Eventually I drifted into writing about private betrayals, implicating myself and those close to me in ways I had never imagined.--From *Things I Have Been Silent About* Azar Nafisi, author of the beloved international bestseller *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, now gives us a stunning personal story of growing up in Iran, memories of her life lived in thrall to a powerful and complex mother, against the background of a country's political revolution. A girl's pain over family secrets; a young woman's discovery of the power of sensuality in literature; the price a family pays for freedom in a country beset by political upheaval--these and other threads are woven together in this beautiful memoir, as a gifted storyteller once again transforms the way we see the world and reminds us of why we read in the first place. (Newsday). Nafisi's intelligent and complicated mother, disappointed in her dreams of leading an important and romantic life, created mesmerizing fictions about herself, her family, and her past. But her daughter soon learned that these narratives of triumph hid as much as they revealed. Nafisi's father escaped into narratives of another kind, enchanting his children with the classic tales like the *Shahnamah*, the Persian Book of Kings. When her father started seeing other women, young Azar began to keep his secrets from her mother. Nafisi's complicity in these childhood dramas ultimately led her to resist remaining silent about other personal, as well as political, cultural, and social, injustices. Reaching back in time to reflect on other generations in the Nafisi family, *Things I've Been Silent About* is also a powerful historical portrait of a family that spans many periods of change leading up to the Islamic Revolution of 1978-79, which turned Azar Nafisi's beloved Iran into a religious dictatorship. Writing of her mother's historic term in Parliament, even while her father, once mayor of Tehran, was in jail, Nafisi explores the remarkable "coffee hours" her mother presided over, where at first women came together to gossip, to tell fortunes, and to give silent acknowledgment of things never spoken about, and which then evolved into gatherings where men and women would meet to openly discuss the unfolding revolution. *Things I've Been Silent About* is, finally, a deeply personal reflection on women's choices, and on how Azar Nafisi found the inspiration for a different kind of life. This unforgettable portrait of a woman, a family, and a troubled homeland is a stunning book that readers will embrace, a new triumph from an author who is a modern master of the memoir.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

I really enjoyed "Reading Lolita in Tehran," and was excited that she has written another book. I have been reading about the Middle Eastern cultures and couldn't wait to read Nafisi's book ... but I must confess, I am slightly disappointed with it. Oh, don't get me wrong as it is chock-full of politics, history and everything that could spark my interest in learning more about Iran. But I wasn't counting on this book to be of a love-hate relationship she has with her mother. That overshadowed everything I wanted to learn about Iran as that issue dragged on throughout the entire book ... and frankly, by the time I was finished with this book, I was really glad to be done with it. I love memoirs but this one really dragged. It starts off strong ... with Nafisi describing her childhood in Tehran, visiting the chocolate, the toy and the book shops with her mother. It sounded like paradise; the descriptions were beautiful and lyrical that I could "see" in my imagination of what it must have been like for Nafisi as a young child. Then the battles with her mother intensified and carried on throughout the entire book (about 314 pages of it) and it got really tiresome. Her mother was emotionally abandoned by her father when she was a young child and though she lived in his house, her half-siblings were favored over her. She married young and when her husband died, she never got over it even after marrying Nafisi's father. She claimed to be a dancer though no one has ever seen her dance. The stories pile up and Nafisi spent years trying to get from under her mother's oppressive shadow. Nafisi went overseas to school, married young and finished school before divorcing her first husband. Headstrong, Nafisi grew into the woman that we first meet in her book, "Reading Lolita in Tehran."

Azar Nafisi, who will be best-known for the runaway success of her last book, *Reading Lolita in Tehran: A Memoir in Books* has produced that marvel, a flawless, crisply-written and meaningful memoir that more than accomplishes her stated goal, that of telling the recounting "those fragile intersections -- the places where moments in an individual's private life and personality resonate with and reflect a larger, more universal story." Nafisi is born into the Teheran of the 1940s and 50s, a world in which women such as her mother can receive an education and run for Parliament -- even as her father, a former mayor of Teheran, is imprisoned for unknown reasons and confined for years to a cell. But Nafisi, educated in Europe and the United States, where she joins the student movement of the 1960s and 1970s and becomes a vociferous opponent of the Shah's regime, returns to Iran after the revolution only to discover the existence of a new kind of "black" totalitarianism -- clerical rule by Ayatollah Khomeini and his successors. It is against the backdrop of the dramatic events of these times -- coups, revolutions, civil war and war -- that Nafisi tells deeply personal stories of her life and those of her parents, two deeply incompatible people who damaged each other and, in their different ways, damaged their daughter.

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