

# Three cups of tea



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Omar Feddersen Professor Bahgat QU 301 21 February 2011 Memorable Quotes from Greg Mortenson Throughout the novel “ Three Cups of Tea,” the author Greg Mortenson learns several significant lessons about the Middle East during his time spent in the area. Greg Mortenson is one of only a handful of Americans who believes we need to have patience when dealing with the Middle East especially combating terrorism.

He believes that the best way to do this is to establish an education system where Middle Eastern adolescents can attend school and give themselves the potential for a bright future instead of being recruited into a fundamentalist Islamic group such as Al Qaeda. Mortenson emphasizes these points throughout “ Three Cups of Tea” that can drastically change the lives of not only the poor Middle Easterners but also the world’s citizens as well. Greg Mortenson believes the best way to combat terrorism is through education particularly the education of girls.

In “ Three Cups of Tea,” he states, “ You can hand out condoms, drop bombs, build roads, or put in electricity, but until the girls are educated a society won’t change” (Mortenson, Three Cups of Tea). This statement is extremely accurate because women are so much more disadvantaged than men in the Middle East and to create a prominent society it is more important to educate women than men. He reinforces this philosophy by stating “ if you really want to change a culture, to empower women, improve basic hygiene and health care, and fight high rates of immortality, the answer is to educate girls” (Mortenson, page 209).

The girls are the ones that stay in their communities once they're educated and are the foundation of a better society because once men finish their education they leave their own communities and go off to work. If disadvantaged girls can receive an education a society develops a sense of hope that anything is possible in time. Greg Mortenson learns another valuable lesson during his time overseas besides the education of women. He learns patience is the bridge to common ground between different cultures from one of his good friends Haji Ali.

When speaking about his time with the leader of Korphe, Mortenson says “Haji Ali taught me the most important lesson I've ever learned in my life...We Americans think you have to accomplish everything quickly. We're the country of minute power lunches and two-minute football drills. Haji Ali taught me to share three cups of tea, to slow down and make building relationships as important as building projects” (Mortenson). Haji Ali, the wise village leader, advises him that patience is the key to changing an established culture especially if the one trying to conduct the change is an outsider.

Americans want everything to be fast and convenient and in the Middle East patience is the key to completing a task correctly. After taking the time to get to know the village lifestyle, Mortenson understands that Haji Ali is correct and says about his friend “here was this illiterate man, who'd hardly ever left his little village in the Karakoram, yet he was the wisest man I've ever met” (153). Mortenson experiences a culture clash for the better when he can't do everything in a westernized way and realizes building a successful school will take time.

Along with education and patience, Greg Mortenson comes to the conclusion that it doesn't take much to change a society for the better. Greg Mortenson built schools in the Middle East for roughly \$12, 000 apiece. In America, this may not seem like much but in a depressed area such as Pakistan where formal education of people is rare it can mean all the difference in the world especially for young boys being recruited into madrassas, fundamentalist Islamic schools.

Money goes so much farther in poorer countries according to Mortenson who says “ And they did it with something that is basically worthless in our society-pennies. But overseas, pennies can move mountains” (Mortenson, Three Cups of Tea). Boys were being recruited into madrassas because they had no other viable option and by reversing this trend it can have a major impact on world relations. Mortenson states “ For \$840, 000, you could build dozens of schools that could provide students with a balanced nonextremist education over the course of a generation.

Which do you think will make us more secure” (294)? If building affordable schools is the difference between future wars and peace in the world than America and other developed countries should try and establish schools wherever possible so the threat of terrorism can diminished. The experiences had and lessons learned by Greg Mortenson are things that a person can only hope to have in a life time. After his failed journey to reach the summit of K2 he set out on a new journey, one that has impacted many more people than Mortenson could have possibly fathomed.

Even as he was trying to bring in an educational system to help people, he learned some valuable lessons about life along the way as well. He took the time to understand a complex culture and has been told by Congresswoman Mary Bono “ he represents the best of America” (290) as he tried to change this region of the world almost single handedly. Greg Mortenson gives people reason to believe that if you have an incredible drive and a great amount of patience than nothing is impossible. Bibliography Mortenson, Greg and David Oliver Relin. *Three Cups of Tea*. London: Penguin Books, 2006.