



# BOOK ANALYSIS

## *Women of Deh Koh: Lives in an Iranian Village*

### **Basic book information:**

---

Friedl, Erika. *Women of Deh Koh: Lives in an Iranian Village*. Penguin 1991.

### **Author's bio:**

---

Erika Friedl wrote *Women of Deh Koh* after spending five years, along with her two daughters, living side by side with women in the small village of Deh Koh. She is a cultural anthropologist and was a professor of anthropology at Western Michigan University.

### **Synopsis:**

---

In *Women of Deh Koh*, Erika Friedl artfully weaves together short stories that together give the reader a clear picture of rural life in Iran immediately preceding and following the Iranian Revolution of 1979. Not only does Friedl show the physical conditions of these women, but she also gives the reader an intimate picture of family life and shows the hierarchical nature of the village's social structure. This book is masterfully written to draw readers into the stories while teaching about the social construct of rural Iran before and after the Revolution.

### **Perspective / Angle:**

---

Erika Friedl seeks to recount in detail the stories she heard and observed while living in Iran. She tells even the most intimate details of each woman's story, showing the trust she was able to gain while living in Deh Koh. While Friedl depicts the difficulties of Iranian rural life, especially for women, she avoids sounding ethnocentric. By simply telling stories, Friedl is able to share the lives of these women without condemning their way of life, instead creating greater understanding.

### **How it relates to or supports mutual understanding:**

---

Although these stories took place nearly thirty years ago, *Women of Deh Koh* shows a Western reader both the incredible differences between our cultures and the striking similarity between human emotion regardless of physical surroundings and cultures. These women fought with their husbands, grieved over their children, took pride in their homes, and cared for their families in

the same way a typical American woman does. *Women of Deh Koh* serves to humanize individual people who are so often placed under a single grouping as “foreign.” *Women of Deh Koh* also shows that humans at their very core share many similarities, but that different ways of life often act as dividers between people.

### ***Study guide questions:***

---

1. There are several passages that deal with “strangers”; how are these strangers viewed and what impact, if any, did they have on the actions of Iranians in Deh Koh?
2. From where do the women in Deh Koh gain their greatest sense of pride and accomplishment?
3. What are some of the cultural values the people of Deh Koh take pride in which are less apparent in typical American society?
4. Did increased contact with strangers in Deh Koh foster mutual understanding? Were these

strangers ever accepted?