

Dave Eggers' conversational tone and well-placed imagery creates a sense of calm during a time of unbearable natural disaster. Eggers' memoir highlights the struggle of Abdulrahman Zeitoun, a Syrian-born businessman living in New Orleans, in the days immediately following Hurricane Katrina. Unlike many of the harsh media images and vitriolic rants that filled televisions and social media, Eggers' account of one man's journey remains conversational and largely sympathetic.

Instead of using SAT-level vocabulary and complex sentence structures, Eggers keeps his narrative friendly and easy to follow. He also fills his pages with imagery that tells the tale not only of Zeitoun himself, but also of America in a post-9/11 world of suspicion and fear. Eggers opens with an image of fishing in quiet boats on a moonless night off the coast of Syria. The ubiquity of water in Zeitoun's life proves to be an interesting touchstone throughout the text. Eggers' nod to Zeitoun's patience at sea foreshadows Zeitoun's stealthy treks through the flooded streets of New Orleans in the days after the hurricane. One of the most moving images comes when Eggers shares Zeitoun's realization that the quietness of the canoe is what allowed Zeitoun to be such an effective rescuer. Zeitoun could glide quietly through the neighborhood and actually hear cries for help. Eggers' juxtaposition of the canoe and the fan boats demonstrates the importance of the individual in a time of disaster, a point that would become painfully relevant only a few days later.

Along with the when's and where's of Zeitoun's journey, Eggers also constructs an underlying message of tolerance in this memoir. From recounting Kathy's conversion to Islam to explaining the rainbow on the Zeitoun's painting slogan to laying bare the anti-Muslim sentiment that pervaded the post-hurricane New Orleans, Eggers seems intent upon conveying

a “love thy neighbor” narrative. Though Eggers retrospectively shares Zeitoun’s epiphanies of overconfidence and bullheadedness, the overall authorial arc paints the harried father, husband, business owner, and American Muslim in a sympathetic light. Whether or not Eggers’ portrayal of Zeitoun as the unfortunate victim of circumstance and racial profiling is fair is up for debate. What is certain, however, is that Dave Eggers’ memoir, *Zeitoun*, is a well-written text that invites us to explore a dark side of a dark event in our collective history. Hurricane Katrina damaged not only the infrastructure of a great American city, but it also tore apart the human bonds that tie a community together. Eggers’ deft handling of language as he weaves a tale that spans multiple decades and continents is worth a read.