

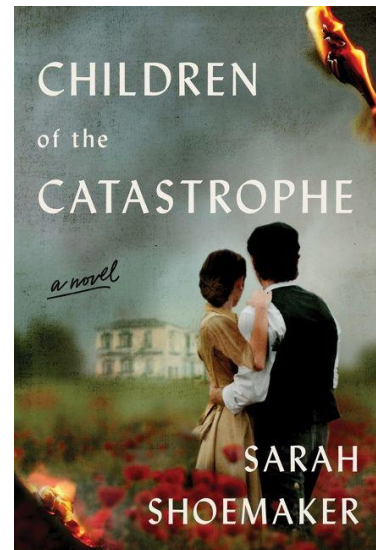
## Children of the Catastrophe

Harper Paperbacks

By Sarah Shoemaker  
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### Introduction

It is 1908 and Smyrna is the most cosmopolitan city on the Mediterranean Sea. Though long a part of the Ottoman Empire, Smyrna has always been Greek, and its citizens honor the traditions of previous generations. The Demirigis and Melopoulos families are no different, and now Liana Demirigis will wed the only Melopoulos son, Vassili—a marriage arranged by her parents.



After the wedding, Liana and Vassili build an idyllic life for themselves and their children outside of the city, safe from rising political tensions roiling the region and the world. But less than a decade later, the growing divisions between the Greeks and Turks threaten to boil over. When each country chooses a different side with the outbreak of the Great War, a hunger to reclaim Izmir consumes Greece. Suddenly Liana and her family, like thousands of others like them, are thrust into danger . . . and many will not survive.

*Children of the Catastrophe* is a beautifully told story that unfolds through the experiences of the Melopoulos family—their loves and quarrels, their hopes and disappointments, played out against a world on fire. Sarah Shoemaker artfully draws us into her characters' rich lives and evocatively captures all that was lost as hostilities mount and innocent men, women, and children find themselves caught up in forces beyond their control.

### Questions for Discussion

1. Liana and Vasili grew up in two quite different families. How do you think this affected them as adults and parents?
2. How much did you know about the burning of Smyrna before you read this book?
3. Liana's father, Emmanuel Demirigis, warned that the Greeks were making a mistake in killing Turkish residents of the outlying areas and destroying their crops. Do you think that the outcome might have been different if they had acted differently?
4. What role did the Allied Nations (Great Britain, France, Italy, and the United States) play in the Catastrophe? Why do you think that was?
5. What parallels do you see between Liana's world in 1922 and our world today?

6. What do you know about any reasons or difficulties that your own family/ancestors had when coming to America?