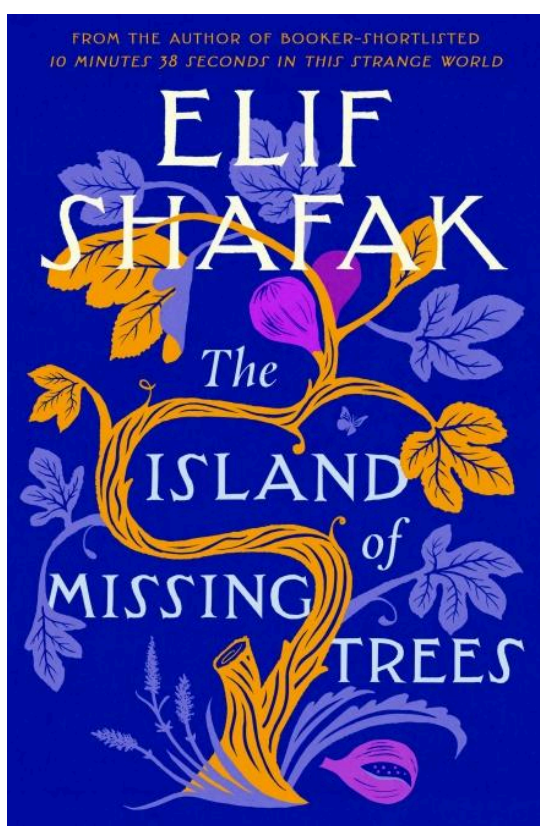


July 2025

The Island of Missing Trees is a 2021 [novel](#) by Turkish writer [Elif Shafak](#). Set in [Cyprus](#) and [London](#), it follows a romantic relationship between a [Greek](#) Cypriot and [Turkish Cypriot](#).

The story has two timelines, one set in 2010s London following 16-year old Ada Kazantzakis, and the other mainly in 1970s Cyprus, following Defne and Kostas, Ada's parents. A third narrative voice is a fig tree, who lived in the middle of a tavern in Cyprus, before a cutting was taken by Kostas and planted in his and Defne's English garden.



Ada's story looks at her grief with the loss of her mother, and her exploration of her cultural history, through her aunt Meryem's visit. The past follows the Turkish Cypriot Defne and Greek Cypriot Kostas falling in love on a divided island. Kostas is sent to London to live with his uncle, whilst Defne is left behind, with a secret.

Through it all, the fig tree watches, offering insight into the characters' past, the natural world, and the history of Cyprus. This tree in her London garden is Ada's only connection to an island she has never visited -- her only connection to her family's troubled history and her complex identity.

Shafak has published 21 books, both fiction and nonfiction. She has been awarded numerous literary awards, and has also been involved in both political investigations and

accusations of plagiarism. Born in France, she returned to Ankara, Turkey following her parent's divorce and was raised by her mother and maternal grandmother. Shafak had lived in [Istanbul](#), and in the United States before moving to the [UK](#). Shafak has lived in [London](#) since 2013, but speaks of "carrying Istanbul in her soul". As of 2019, Shafak had been in self-imposed [exile](#) from Turkey due to fear of prosecution.

Ratings: Nicola DNF, Margie 2.5, Viv 4, Hetta 4, Kim 4, Veronica 3.5, David 3.5, Sandy 3, Pauline 3, Di 3, Dianne 3, Janet 3

Other Books We Read

There are Rivers in the Sky by Elif Shafak, 5

Death of a River Guide by Richard Flanagan, 4.5
A Ladder to the Sky by John Boyne, 4
Wanting by Richard Flanagan, 3
Bridge of Clay by Markus Zusak, 3
Britt-Marie Was Here by Fredrik Backman, 3
We Do Not Part by Han Kang, 3
Love Unedited by Caro Llewellyn. 3
Always Home, Always Homesick by Hannah Kent, 3
The Safe Keep by Yael van der Wouden, 3
Eurotrash by Christian Kracht, 3.5
The SafeKeep, by Yael Van Der Wouden, 3.5
All the broken places by John Bode, 3
Always home, always homesick by Hannah Kent, 2.5
Accabadora by Michela Murgia, 4.5
A beautiful family by Jennifer Trevelyan, 3.5