

READING GROUP QUESTIONS



Author's note: I would be *thrilled* if your book club or reading group would like to read this book! Below are a bunch of sample discussion questions and topics— feel free to pick and choose (or make up your own!). And contact me at crslate@gmail.com if you would like to discuss me making a virtual appearance at your group!

1) What was your favorite part of the book? Your least favorite? Were there any scenes that really stuck with you? Any parts of the book that were slow for you?

2) How did the book make you feel? What emotions did it evoke for you?

3) “Home” and “belonging” are big themes throughout the book. What are some ways that Callie and Dina each found a sense of home and belonging in Sureti? What are some things that they missed from their former lives? Think back to big moves that you have made— what are some things that you’ve missed from your former home, and what are some things that helped you feel a sense of belonging in your new home?

4) Callie and Dina both wrestle with adjusting to a new culture that is so different from the one they came from. What are some of the things that were hard for each of them to adjust to? What are some of the things they eventually came to appreciate? How did Marta, Hava, and Abdullah serve as bridges/guides for Dina and Callie respectively into their new cultures?

5) How is Ramazi culture different from the culture in your home country? Have you ever come in close contact with a culture that was different from your own? And if so, how have you adjusted? Think too about refugees and immigrants moving to your home culture— what do you think is hard for them to adjust to?

6) At first, Ramazi culture really rubs Callie the wrong way. Abdullah tells her that it’s “just different, not wrong.” But she’s not sure if she agrees, especially in the area of women’s rights. Do you agree with Abdullah or not? Where is the line between respecting another culture and standing up for human rights?

7) Georgia in the 1990s was a completely different world than it is today. Did you know much about the former Soviet Union before reading this book? What stood out to you as unique or interesting or new?

8) Callie struggles with sensory processing issues. Were there any parts of her struggle that were relatable to you or someone you love?

9) Throughout the book (and particularly once she starts interacting with Abdullah, Rob, and Pat), Callie wrestles with questions of faith and what she believes. Callie is agnostic for most of the book, Rob and Pat are Christians, and Abdullah is Muslim. What stood out to you (good or bad) about each of their faiths?

10) How does nature play a role in Dina's sanity? Do you connect with nature? Has there been a time or place or season in your life where it was particularly healing for you?

11) Dina/Leila's character changes a lot from the spunky, vivacious 20-year-old girl that we meet in the beginning of the book to the aloof, private, capable woman at the end of the book. How has she still maintained the core of who she is? Nika in particular notices the changes in her, as well as reminds her of who she used to be. How do you think you have changed since the time you were 20? What are some major ways you've changed, and what are some ways that you've stayed the same?

12) What did you think of Lucas? Abdullah? Was there a particular one of them that you were rooting for Callie to end up with? If so, why? The end of the book doesn't tie Callie's story up in a neat bow— it kind of leaves you hanging, unsure which guy she will choose (if either!). Were you ok with that ending or did you wish there was more clarity? How did you feel about Dina/Leila's ending?