



Discussion Questions

Your War, Our Lives: Short Stories from Afghanistan By Mina Sharif

Thank you for reading *Your War, Our Lives*. If you'd like to explore the themes and characters more deeply, here are some questions to guide reflection, classroom discussion, or book club conversation.

Seeing Afghanistan Differently

1. How does experiencing Afghanistan through the eyes of the everyday population (rather than soldiers, politicians, or headlines) shift your understanding of the country?
2. Many stories suggest that there is no single story of Afghanistan. What different “truths” emerge across the collection?
3. In what ways do the characters carve out moments of joy, ambition, and connection within the backdrop of conflict?
4. How did the depiction of foreigners impact your views on international presence in Afghanistan? What responsibilities do outsiders hold in such contexts?

Themes of Identity, Gender, and Community

5. How do the stories challenge common stereotypes about Afghan men, particularly in their roles as fathers, brothers, and husbands?
6. How are women portrayed navigating layered social expectations - within family, tradition, and larger political structures?
7. Which story or character most effectively illustrates the tension between tradition and change?
8. How are children and youth used to highlight lost potential, or resilience?
9. What defines “home” for different characters throughout the collection? Is it a place, a feeling, a relationship?

Storytelling and Representation

10. Some stories, such as those told through the perspective of street dogs, use whimsy and humor to highlight serious social divides. How does this affect your engagement with the deeper themes?
11. While war and politics are present in the background, they are rarely the central focus. How does that storytelling choice affect your experience as a reader?
12. What role does silence play in the lives of the characters?
13. Afghan stories are often told by outsiders. Through foreign media, aid narratives, or political agendas. Why do you think this happens? How does it affect global

understanding of Afghanistan, and what responsibility do readers and storytellers have in shifting that dynamic?

Emotional and Ethical Reflections

14. What aspects of Afghan daily life surprised you the most? Were there moments that challenged your assumptions?
15. Was there a character whose choices you deeply understood, even if you didn't agree with them?
16. Which character or moment stayed with you long after reading, and why?
17. Did reading the collection shift how you perceive the terms "conflict zone," "war survivor," or "developing country"? If so, how?
18. How does the collection invite readers not to look away, but to look closer?

Application and Action

19. What questions did the book leave you with about Afghanistan, diaspora identity, or your own relationship to global stories?
20. How can stories like these contribute to more compassionate and informed international dialogue? What does responsible storytelling look like when writing about other people's suffering?