

**Discussion Questions for  
Monsieur Lazhar (2011) Directed by Philippe Falardeau and starring  
Mohamed Saïd Fellag, Sophie Nélisse and Danielle Proulx**

1. On his first day as the new teacher, Monsieur Lazhar tells the students that Bachir means “bearer of good news” and Lazhar means “lucky”. Do you think he is lucky and that he brought good news to the students? Why or why not?
2. M. Lazhar has the students complete a dictation from *La Peau de Chagrin* by Balzac. The book is a philosophical tale about the excesses of bourgeois materialism and the conflict between desire and longevity. Do you think focusing on this particular novel reflected his struggle as an immigrant seeking political asylum?
3. Alice is a bright and perceptive student who makes several gestures to help M. Lazhar. Why do you think Alice tries to help him?
4. Alice presents her composition about the death of Martine. In her presentation, she wonders if Martine was sending a message about violence. She comments that Martine cannot get a detention for what she did which is unlike the students who get a detention for being violent or unruly. What is Alice communicating with this statement?
5. A parent comments to M. Lazhar that his job is to teach their daughter and not raise her. Is this a fair statement? Does this comment reflect the levity of a teacher’s responsibility?
6. The children seem to rely on each other and their families to process their grief. Do the adults and the school administrators understand where the children are with their grief and how to help them?
7. There are parallels between M. Lazhar’s grief and that of the children. Despite his lack of formal training and the cultural differences, do his experiences that caused him to come to Montreal make him a good fit for teaching this class?
8. What do you think motivated M. Lazhar to “fudge” his credentials and apply for the position?
9. The ending of the film was indeterminate. Overall, the film raised many issues about the complex and multi-faceted role of teachers and how school administrators can become disconnected from the day-to-day needs of both students and teachers. Was this ending the best way to leave this story and was there anything in the film that made you feel hopeful?