



LEYLA K. KING



DAUGHTERS
of
PALESTINE

A MEMOIR IN FIVE
GENERATIONS

DISCUSSION GUIDE





1. The personal events that occur in **Daughters of Palestine** take place in the context of a series of events in Levantine history: the Nakba in Palestine, the Pan-Arabism movement, the Lebanese civil war. Were any of these events surprising to you? How was regional history woven into the plot? How did the personal narrative provide you with new insights into these historical events?
2. Almost every chapter begins with, “In those days . . .” Other recurring phrases include “They did it that way then” or “This is how it was.” What effect do these phrases have on the story and our understanding of the characters and the themes? In what ways do “those days” differ from today? In what ways are they the same? How do cultural changes over time and across contexts affect the book’s female characters?
3. The intersections of race and religion are explored throughout the book, with some characters making assumptions based on skin color or accent or faith tradition. What examples of cultural or religious bias did you notice? See, for example, the beginning of the first chapter narrated by “Aniiseh - the Sociable One,” and the last chapter, “Leyla - The Dark, Beautiful Night, Austin, 2024.” How do these instances of bias affect your understanding of the characters and the societies they live in?
4. How effective is the changing point of view used in the book: three women from three generations, plus third-person narrated “stories”? Which of the three narrators was your favorite? Why?



5. In telling their stories, the characters tell us about some traditions, which in some cases are still observed in the Arabic culture. One of them is the naming of the firstborn after the grandfather or grandmother. Another one is the candy-coated nuts shared at special occasions. Discuss any other traditions in the book and how similar or different these traditions are from your own.

6. In the chapter “Bahi, The Shining One, Damascus 1952,” the narrator says, “In those days, we didn’t know what we were doing. Not really. We were well-educated and well-read, and we were grown; we had our own family. But we were naïve. I was so naïve. I didn’t know anything really.” What does she mean? Why does she say that at the beginning of the story that tells the death of her first son? Where else does she express a sense of her own naivete? Do you think she has become wiser in her old age? Discuss the interplay of innocence and enlightenment throughout the book.

7. One of the major themes of the book is the persistence of love in every context. For example, Bahi says, “And in the end, what does it matter, the language we use to communicate, so long as we address each other, call to each other with the names of love.” And again, referring to her father, she says, “He had always—and would always, until the end of his life—put his faith in love. He trusted that love was never an emotion to be entered into hesitantly, even if it was risky.” Discuss this theme in the book. Where and how does love prove its power?



8. Another theme of the book is the role of faith in women's lives. How important is each of the daughters' faith to her self-identity? How can you tell? How does the role and importance of faith change from one generation to the next? What about within each woman's own life?

9. Misery, hardship, and difficulty abound in the lives of the **Daughters of Palestine**. What difficulty stood out to you the most, and why? Where did you find glimmers of hope? The book starts with Bahi and Leyla "laughing." Where did you find yourself laughing during your reading?

10. In the first chapter, as she sits down with Leyla, Bahi says, "Better to pass the stories on, to let her keep them, to retain them, for whoever comes after me. My legacy, passed down from generation to generation." And in the last chapter, Leyla shares her own perspective: "And here we are now, to remember it all together. To keep it for my own children some day, and for their children, too. To retain it." How successful has the book been in "retaining" these stories? What's the most important insight **Daughters of Palestine** has passed on to you?



Meet the Author

Leyla K. King is a Palestinian American Episcopal priest and writer. She is a founding member of Palestinian Anglicans and Clergy Allies (Palestiniananglicans.org) and The Small Churches Big Impact Collective (smallchurchesbigimpact.org). Currently, she serves as the Canon for Mission in Small Congregations for the Episcopal Diocese of West Texas.