



Discussion Questions for Ayad Akhtar's *HOMELAND ELEGIES*

1. The narrator of *Homeland Elegies* is Ayad Akhtar, a playwright who shares the same name as the author. How did this affect your experience of reading the novel?
2. How does Akhtar's choice of part titles ("Overture," "Coda," etc.) bring additional meaning to the story? Are you familiar with these terms as they relate to musical works?
3. In the Overture, the narrator's professor describes America as "a place still defined by its plunder, where enrichment was paramount and civil order always an afterthought." Do you agree with this criticism? When the characters in the novel are focused on becoming rich, does this striving make them happy?
4. How would you describe the difference between Ayad's parents, in terms of their views on being in America? Is the narrator's own view a synthesis of these ideas? Or its own thing?

5. Many Americans can easily recall where they were when they first learned of the events of September 11, 2001. Can you? Does that day stand out to you in your memory as one marking the end of one era and the beginning of another?
6. Ayad tells a story about wearing a cross necklace in New York post-9/11 as an attempt to assimilate. Asha has a strong reaction to this story – What was your own reaction?
7. The narrator wonders if what his father sees in President Trump is “a vision of himself impossibly enhanced, improbably enlarged, released from the pull of debt or truth or history.” Do you think this assessment accurately describes why so many Americans turned to the unlikely candidate in 2016?
8. Akhtar opens and closes the novel in the same setting: the college campus. Why do you think he did this?
9. In the novel, Ayad’s father returns to Pakistan. Ayad says the words, “America is my home.” An elegy is a song or poem for the dead. Which “homelands” in the novel are the characters mourning?

Akhtar = the author

Ayad = the character in *Homeland Elegies*