



Book Club Guide

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Fire is a multifaceted metaphor throughout the book. What are the associations that Noor has with fire, and how do they play a role throughout the story?
2. Ms. Clayton speaks of using creative strategies to address discriminatory policies (pp. 30-31), while Noor often takes a more direct route when confronting the principal. Do you think there's a time and place for both? When should they be used?
3. Noor plays with her burn scar throughout the book when she faces difficult emotional situations. What does the scar represent for her? What role does scarring play in healing?
4. In an attempt to understand the book banning policy, Noor declares that "reading is dangerous because it shows us the truth" (p. 87). What is the truth she's talking about? Why is it dangerous and to whom?
5. Anger is both a powerful tool and a force for destruction in the book. How is anger used by Noor and the other characters? How does their relationship to anger evolve over the course of the book?
6. Throughout the story, Noor and the other characters struggle with telling half-truths and lies of omission to other people and themselves. What are some of these lies? How do they impact the people in the story? Are these types of lies ever justified?

7. While growing their banned book reading movement, Noor and her friends decide that sometimes “chaos is the point” (p. 105). What role does chaos play in rebellion and revolution? How can organization and chaos work together to foster change?
8. Noor spends a lot of time considering the similarities between her and her father but concludes that “we’re not our parents” (p. 135). How are Noor, Amal, Andrew, and others in the story impacted by their parents’ choices? How do they display their own agency in the face of those choices?
9. Noor’s mother claims that “there is a time and a place for speaking out” (p. 232). Do you agree with her? Why or why not? What is the price of speaking up, and who must pay it? How does this struggle evolve throughout the book?
10. Noor’s heart and head are in conflict about being drawn to Andrew, and she ultimately decides that though he doesn’t “deserve cookies,” she doesn’t want to “bury” him either (p. 360). Do you agree with Noor that Andrew can change? What would you have done about their relationship in Noor’s shoes? In Andrew’s shoes?
11. After Noor speaks up at the town hall, Ms. Clayton says she’s shown everyone that “Hope is a verb” (p. 345). What does she mean by that? What is the role of hope and optimism in the book and in the real-world fight for change?
12. Have you experienced book banning in your own life? What strategies from the book you could implement to promote reading freely in your community?

READ BANNED BOOKS

This is a list of all the books Noor and her friends and family mention throughout the text. Support the movement against banned books by reading and sharing them yourself!

Shout by Laurie Halse Anderson

Vampires Never Get Old edited by Zoraida Córdova and Natalie C. Parker

New Kid by Jerry Craft

Legendary Alston Boys Adventures by Lamar Giles

The Hill We Climb by Amanda Gorman

Monday’s Not Coming by Tiffany D. Jackson

All Boys Aren’t Blue by George M. Johnson

Ash by Malinda Lo

When the Moon Was Ours by Anna-Marie McLemore

Anger Is a Gift by Mark Oshiro

All American Boys by Jason Reynolds and Brendan Kiely

They Both Die at the End by Adam Silvera

All My Rage by Sabaa Tahir

I Am Malala by Malala Yousafzai

MORE RESOURCES

American Library Association: <https://www.ala.org>

Brooklyn Public Library's Books Unbanned initiative:

<https://www.bklynlibrary.org/books-unbanned>

EveryLibrary: <https://www.everylibrary.org>

Freedom to Read Foundation: <https://www.ftrf.org>

PEN America: <https://pen.org>

Unite Against Book Bans: <https://uniteagainstbookbans.org>

We Need Diverse Books: <https://diversebooks.org/>

Register to vote: <https://vote.gov>

Find your federal, state, and local elected officials:

<https://www.usa.gov/elected-officials>