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