

# Discussion

## Randa Abdel-Fattah

1. What do you think the author meant by the title, 'Where the Streets Had a Name?' Why do you think she chose it?
2. *"I look in the mirror and I'm startled by my reflection. It always seems as though a stranger is looking back at me. I stare at the twisted, contorted skin around my right cheek, the scarring that zigzags across my forehead. I raise a hand and cover the right side of my face. The left is mostly smooth. Normal. Slowly, I lower my hand and I am a stranger to myself again."* (Page 3)

What impact does Hayaat's disfigurement, and the circumstances that caused it, have on her life? The author does not reveal the reason for Hayaat's disfigurement until one of the final scenes in the novel. What effect does this have on the narrative?

3. *"If I could have one wish, Hayaat, it would be to touch the soil of my home one last before I die. Land, ya Hayaat. There is nothing so important. The deeper your roots, the taller and stronger you grow..."* (page 46)

Why do you think Hayaat believes that a handful of soil from her grandmother's ancestral home in Jerusalem will have the power to save Sitti Zeynab's life?

What is the author trying to say about the connection between Palestinian refugees and the land stolen from them?

4. *"The tent was our new home. Eventually, when we realised we would never be allowed to return or even be compensated, we understood that the camp was permanent."* (page 47)

What do you know about the Palestinian refugees of 1948 and their struggle to achieve the 'right of return'? How does Sitti Zeynab's story of the loss of her home illuminate this struggle for you?

5. *"My skin prickles as David speaks....I'm momentarily overcome with mixed emotions. It's less complicated to think of all Israelis as my oppressors. It's less complicated to resent them all..."*(page 103)

Describe the development of Hayaat's relationship with David and Molly, Israeli peace activists. Why do you think the author chose to include the characters of David and Molly?

6. *"It's just the way it is with Samy. He infuriates adults even without saying word."* (page 132)

Describe the character of Samy. Why do you think he shares a bond with Hayaat? How does this bond sustain both of them? Why does Samy have so much hope in Wasim's soccer promises and what impact does it have on him to realise it was all a lie?

7. What did you think of the novel's ending?
8. Although this is a novel set in the tragedy of occupation and loss, the author's writing style uses a great deal of humour. Why do you think the author uses humour? What effect does the use of humour have on you, the reader?

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9. Describe the character of Sitti Zeynab. To what extent has the loss of her ancestral Jerusalem home impacted on her life and the life of her family members?
10. How does the confiscation of Hayaat's family land impact on:
  - a. Hayaat's mother
  - b. Hayaat's father

Analyse how each responds to the confiscation of their land and their move to Bethlehem. Does Hayaat's journey to Jerusalem change their perspective on life?

11. *"I would rather the Zionists than that old hag!" she whispers in my ear.* (page 13)

What is the significance of Jihan's wedding plans to the narrative? Why do you think the author included Jihan's story? How does the occupation impact on Jihan's wedding plans? What does Jihan's story tell us about the impact of the occupation on the lives of Palestinians?

12. *"No more than four metres across from the gates stands the Wall, cutting the once wide street into half."* (page 54)

How does the presence of the Wall impinge on Hayaat and Samy's plan to reach Jerusalem? What impact does the Wall have on Palestinians? Research some of the artwork and graffiti on the Wall. What do the various pieces of artwork and graffiti represent? What messages do they convey?

13. Hayaat and Samy must pass through numerous checkpoints to reach Jerusalem. Whether they are allowed through is not certain.

Write a creative piece in which you are a Palestinian from the West Bank seeking to visit another West Bank village and are waiting at a checkpoint. What emotions would you experience as you waited for a soldier to check your papers? How would you feel, knowing whether you are allowed to pass through is at the discretion of a soldier?