

SONORA by Hannah Lillith Assadi

Discussion questions:

How do Ahlam's 'visions' function in relation to the deaths that occur in each chapter? And why do you think she never talks about them to anyone?

Both Laura and the narrator Ahlam go by two names. This is one of several ways that they act as foils to one another. What are some of the other ways Laura is contrasted to Ahlam?

The father in the novel remains obsessed with finding unlikely forms of transportation. Over the course of the book, this obsession becomes more tragic and isolating—beginning with his animation over the Phoenix Lights and culminating in the ship he hallucinates in the desert after the night in the hospital. How is this search related to his being a refugee?

There are two central triangles in this book: one between Ahlam, her mother, and father and the other between she, Laura, and Dylan. Are there any echoes between the two?

How does 'the curse' Laura and Ahlam fear escalate throughout the book? In what ways does it change once they get to New York?

What is the significance of Laura's Native American origin on her mother's side vis-a-vis Ahlam's background? What historical parallels can be drawn?

Much of Ahlam's story, except for the very end, is recounted over the course of a single night, the eve of Yom Kippur, or the Jewish Day of Atonement. What is Ahlam atoning for?

What is the significance of the repetitions of months in the chapter titles? How is time working in the novel? And what is its relationship to memory?

From the Phoenix Lights to the planes hitting the World Trade Centers, there is a motif of structures flying in the air which bring about dramatic changes for the girls and their world. How do these images correspond to the falling/ trapped birds that also appear throughout the book?