

## BOOK-CLUB DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR STELLA'S CARPET

All of us have a story, and our stories are often informed by family history. Families are frequently messy and there may be multiple ways of understanding experiences and narratives within a single family unit. The influence of the past upon the present is something that continues to be manifested in all of us. *Stella's Carpet* endeavours to chronicle the complexities of a family, and to demonstrate the connections between individuals who are attempting to reconcile the past with the conscious decisions made about how they choose to live.

1. The structure of this novel consists of short chapters or vignettes. They were intended to very simply suggest pictures and voices. This snapshot approach was used as a deliberate technique. Discuss the effectiveness of the structure of the novel. Did it enhance or frustrate your reading of the story?
2. The intergenerational impact of trauma is touched upon in the novel. The effects of Iranian regime change and of the Holocaust in particular, cast dark shadows over people's lives. Each refugee, and many immigrants to this country, have likely experienced traumatic events. Discuss this novel with respect to our current refugee or immigrant situation.
3. William's childhood bedroom "heals itself" when he disrupts its carefully curated order. What does this description tell you about the dynamics in his family home?
4. There are a number of characters in the novel. Is there one character that you wish you had heard from more often? Can you think of a reason why their voice was not as pronounced?
5. There are many times of silence in the novel. Discuss key moments when silence was significant to the story.
6. Secrecy is often an important feature of the story in ways that are significant to the relationships between characters. Share some of the moments where secrecy played a considerable role.
7. Forgiveness and reconciliation are important to the characters' journeys and yet formal apologies and discourse about these things are not explicit. Share your impressions of how forgiveness takes place in the novel.
8. If you had to describe the theme of the novel to someone who has not read it, what would you select as a key theme?
9. Historical events are integral to the underpinning of the novel. Do you believe that these are treated respectfully and in enough detail to create a sense of verisimilitude (the appearance of being true or real)?
10. As we mature, we assimilate and accumulate life experience and wisdom. Did any of the characters say or act in ways which resonated with you as helpful, true or wise?
11. The bond between William and the Lipinskis is unusual, and one that may not initially make sense. How do you understand the relationship?
12. Discuss the carpets and their importance to the story.

