

Home Fire

Discussion Questions



Author: Kamila Shamsie
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Genre: Novel, Romance
novel, Political fiction,
Domestic Fiction

1. The opening section begins with Isma Pasha nearly missing her flight. Talk about her treatment at the hands of "immigration" officials at Heathrow. How did the indignities she suffered make you feel?
2. Isma's voice is one of compromise and accommodation: how else might you describe her?
3. Talk about Parvaiz Pasha and his quest to honor his father, Adil. What kind of man, husband, and father was Adil, and what did his faith mean to him? When Parvaiz's eyes are opened to the caliphate and its atrocities, did you wonder how he could have been so misled?
4. What do you think of Isma and Eamon Lone's relationship? Do they have a genuine connection? Why doesn't Isma let on that she knows who Eamon's father is?
5. What do you think about Aneeka? How does she define herself in relation to her faith, and how does her attitude toward Islam differ from her sister's?
6. Talk about the vast differences between the Pashas and the Lones.
7. Consider Aneeka's relationship with Eamonn — she is clearly manipulating him, but does she have a higher purpose? As she puts it: "Why shouldn't I admit it? What would you stop at to help the people you love most?"
8. After Isma informs the police that Parvaiz has left for Syria, Aneeka is appalled: "You betrayed us, both of us. Don't...expect me to ever agree to see your face again. We have no sister." Is Aneeka's anger justified? Would it have been better directed at her brother who betrayed them both?
9. Where should Isma's loyalty lie: with her brother or her country? By informing the police of Parvaiz's intentions, did she make the right decision? Can there be a correct moral decision when faced with the impossible choice between family loyalty and duty to society?
10. What is meant by the title, "*Home Fire*." How does it differ from the World War I meaning, "keep the home fires burning."
11. Talk about the relevance of *Home Fire* to today's world. What do you see in the novel that illuminates and/or resonates with current concerns.
12. Kamila Shamsie has drawn inspiration from the ancient playwright Sophocles and his drama *Antigone*. *Antigone*, the daughter of Oedipus, was prohibited by law from burying her brother. You may wish to do a little research to better understand Shamsie's conception – her modern take on the Sophoclean tragedy.

Author Bio

- Birth: August 13, 1973; Karachi, Pakistan
- Education: B.A., Hamilton College; M.F.A., University of Massachusetts
- Currently: Lives in London, England

Kamila Naheed Shamsie is a Pakistani-British novelist who is the author of seven books. Born in Karachi, Shamsie comes by writing naturally: she is the daughter of journalist and editor Muneeza Shamsie, the niece of Indian novelist Attia Hosain, and the granddaughter of author Begum Jahanara Habibullah, who wrote of her life under the British Raj.

Though raised in Karachi, Shamsie left her home country for college in the U.S. She earned a BA from Hamilton College, as well as an MFA from the University of Massachusetts, both degrees in creative writing. In 2007, Shamsie moved to London and now has dual citizenship in the UK and Pakistan. Initially traveling back and forth between the two countries, she now lives primarily in London.

Writing and awards

Shamsie began her career while still in college when she wrote her first novel *In the City by the Sea*. The novel was published in 1998 when she was only 25, but even at that age her talent attracted attention. The debut was shortlisted for the UK's prestigious John Llewellyn Rhys Prize, and in 1999, it received the Prime Minister's Award for Literature in Pakistan.

She followed her first novel with *Salt and Saffron* in 2000, a book which earned her still more recognition: she was named one of Orange's "21 Writers of the 21st century." Next came *Kartography*, shortlisted again for the John Llewellyn Rhys award. That novel, along with Shamsie's fourth, *Broken Verses*, won the Patras Bokhari Award from the Academy of Letters in Pakistan.

Novel six, *Burnt Shadows* won Shamsie the Anisfield-Wolf Book Award, and the book was shortlisted for the Orange Prize. *A God in Every Stone* was shortlisted for two prizes — the Walter Scott Prize and Baileys Women's Prize. *Home Fire*, Shamsie's seventh novel, was longlisted for the 2017 Man Booker Prize.

Shamsie is a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature and in 2013 was included in *Granta's* list of 20 best young British writers. (From Wikipedia. Retrieved on 8/18/2017.)