

# BOOK CLUB DISCUSSION GUIDE



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**SALMA HUSSAIN** grew up in the UAE to parents from Pakistan, and immigrated to Canada when she was thirteen years old. She has a BA (Hon.) in English Literature from the University of Calgary, and a Master's in Law from McGill University. Her short stories and poems have appeared in various Canadian literary magazines. She lives in Toronto.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

### DUBAI SECTION:

- 1) Mona doesn't know what feminism is, so she looks for clues in magazines and movies. Do you think magazines and movies can help us to discover what feminism means? Think of some specific magazines and movies you've seen. Do they have positive representation of female and non-binary characters? If not, how could they improve?
- 2) Mona is Muslim and celebrates two different types of Eid. Food is an important part of the celebrations. However, during Chooti Eid, Mona also likes going to Neighbor Auntie's and trying the different recipes that were passed down from Neighbor Auntie's mother. Do you have a favorite food from a different country or culture? Can you find its recipe and list the ingredients?
- 3) Mona writes in her May 17 entry (p.98), "When a bad thing is happening, parents think that the best thing to do is not talk about it." Do you agree or disagree? When a bad thing is happening, who are some people you can talk to?

### PAKISTAN SECTION:

- 4) Write a short essay describing your best summer vacation (real or imagined).
- 5) Write a short essay describing your worst summer vacation (real or imagined).
- 6) In her June 26 entry (p. 132), Mona lists (1) slurping on mango seeds; (2) skipping downhill with her cousins; and (3) sleeping on the rooftop under the stars as the important things in life that grownups seem to have forgotten. Can you make your own list of 3-5 things that you think are important in life that grown-ups seem to have forgotten?

### CANADA SECTION:

- 7) Ross is bullied at school. Have you ever witnessed or experienced bullying at your school? What did you do? When you think back on it, what do you think you should or could have done differently?
- 8) In the Oct. 22 entry (p.225), Mona's father tells Mona that "We have improvement only because of failed experiments.... That there is no shame in the TRY." What does this mean? Do you agree? Why or why not?
- 9) Pick a different hero from the novel and rewrite Mona's assignment. Who would you pick and why?

### WORLD:

- 10) What are the names of some of the countries that you frequently hear about on the news? Can you locate them on the map? Have you read stories written by children living in those countries? If not, would you like to? Where could you look for such stories?
- 11) This novel describes the year that Mona immigrated to Canada. Have you yourself immigrated to the country you live in, or do you know anyone who has? If you have, can you describe your journey, or if not, can you imagine what an immigrant's journey may have been like? What do you miss about your home country, or what do you imagine someone would miss about their home country? What are some things that are (or would seem) new and exciting about your current country?

**THE SECRET DIARY OF MONA HASAN BY SALMA HUSSAIN**

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