

A Flood of Memories by Nadia Mikail

Discussion Questions

Key Guidance

These questions are designed for use with an older YA book club (16+) or an adult book club. This book contains depictions of alcoholism, emotional abuse, loss of a parent, and anxiety. The questions below cover these themes. Be aware that some young readers may have personal experience of the issues. Support is always available. Please see page 301 in the book for details of support available.

Questions

1. When they meet after the school play, Arthur tells Leila, *“Something awful can often be hidden inside something very tender.”* How does the novel use the idea that danger can hide in plain sight? Where do you see this most clearly?
2. What is it about the way Arthur portrays the character of Geroge that gets under Leila's skin?
3. *Arthur was too busy adding a tongue-out emoji, a key emoji and, bizarrely, a blue-waves emoji.* Why do you think he choose a blue wave emoji? What might a wave symbolise?
4. What is the significance of Pak’s passion for swimming?
5. In what ways is water presented as a powerful force in the story?
6. How would it feel to live somewhere that is in danger of extreme flooding?
7. In what ways does the ‘king tide’ reflect the events of the story and the characters’ emotions?
8. *“It would be good to see you. I miss you lots,” her mother said, instead of How are you feeling about coming back?* Why do you think Mak did not ask Leila about her feelings?
9. *The house, the house, the house. The pit in Leila’s stomach widened.* Why do certain places hold such emotional power?
10. Leila loved Pak reading her *The Hobbit* by J.R.R Tolkien. Two key themes from *The Hobbit* are self-discovery and longing for home. How do these themes connect to the events and emotions of this novel?
11. When Leila learns to swim with Pak, she feels scared but she perseveres because she does not want to disappoint him. Can the desire not to disappoint someone be more powerful than fear? How does the story explore this idea?



12. *The walls were closing in around her, for the first time in her life.* How does the incident with her Primary Four report card change things irrevocably for Leila?
13. *One bump, two bumps, three bumps. She just needed to count the key's ridges over and over and over again.* How are keys used in the story and what might they symbolise?
14. *The memories had almost overwhelmed her, which was always what happened when the dam in her head felt threatened.* How does the story explore the idea of memories being like a flood? How does it further explore the idea of memories being healing?
15. *Everything Mak did was exasperating to Leila or showed exactly how much she was exasperated with Leila.* Why do people who love each other sometimes exasperate each other the most?
16. *You're braver than Mak; she was too scared to go today. You're more like me. You're so much like me." The pride thrilled through her. She loved the idea.* How does the idea of being like her father impact Leila as she grows up?
17. How is Leila's complex relationship with food explored in the story?
18. What concerns Leila about Poppy's boyfriend?
19. *Watching the house like this, it all felt fairly unreal, a scene from a play.* Have you ever felt as though you were watching your own life like a scene from a play? How does the story explore this feeling of standing outside yourself?
20. *He would wash his hands of her once he found out how messy it was in her head.* How does the fear of rejection influence Leila's thoughts and actions?
21. The story explores how love and gratitude can exist alongside pain. Why might someone still care deeply for a person who has hurt them – and how does the author portray this honestly?
22. *This is what she could do – make sure eyes were on the harm.* How will becoming a journalist help Leila to fulfil this? Why do you think it is so important to her to do this?
23. *"My birthday is . . . it's hard for me."* Arthur told her that not knowing was fine. Why are birthdays hard for Leila? How does Arthur provide comfort and support for Leila?
24. Leila and Mak's relationship is tainted with regret, guilt and resentment. Do you think they will be able to move past what happened?
25. Does this story leave you with hope, or something more complicated?

