

A HUNDRED SUNS



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The opening scene of the novel—in which Jessie has lost her family in the train station—launches the narrative with a heightened element of suspense. How else does this scene lay the groundwork for the way the story unfolds?
2. We know throughout most of the novel that Marcelle and Khoi are seeking revenge against the Michelin family. How did knowing their plot and learning their motivations impact your reading experience?
3. Jessie has lived in several very different environments in her life: Blacksburg, New York City, Paris, Switzerland, and now, Indochine. How do you each of these places (and her experiences there) shape who she is?
4. What do you think of the Lesages' decision to remain in Indochine at the end of the novel? Were you surprised?
5. Discuss the depictions of marriage and love in the novel. How are they represented in the different relationships of the central characters?
6. Each of the female characters in *A Hundred Suns* tells us something important about the time and place in which she was living. Discuss their various strengths and limitations (whether personal or societal) and how those are revealed over the course of the novel.
7. *A Hundred Suns* is told through Jessie's and Marcelle's points of view. What are your thoughts on the structure of the novel? Did you enjoy reading both of their perspectives?
8. Jessie and Marcelle are dynamic and complex women with a relationship that reflects this fact. What did you think of them as individuals, and what did you think about their friendship?
9. What did the novel illuminate for you about the history of colonization and political struggle in Southeast Asia, specifically Vietnam? Did the story affect your existing perspectives on the rise of communism in the region or the Vietnam War?



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DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

CONTINUED

10. While both Trieu and Khoi are anti-colonial, they have very different approaches when it comes to the fight for independence. Why do you think Tanabe made Trieu the communist infiltrator while Khoi remained an economic nationalist?
11. Did you notice any foreshadowing that Trieu was the one administering the *langdang*? Are there any moments in the novel that hint at the truth of what is being done to Jessie?
12. At the end of the novel, on pg. 373, Victor says, "...our success has to come first. For Michelin, and the colony." Jessie privately reflects that her family must come first as well. As a result of these priorities, Victor and Jessie have made some challenging life decisions. What do you make of their choices, and how do they affect your opinions of them?
13. Discuss the epilogue. Why do you think Tanabe chose to end the novel on this note? Did it leave you with a different perspective on Marcelle than you would have had without this glimpse into her future?

