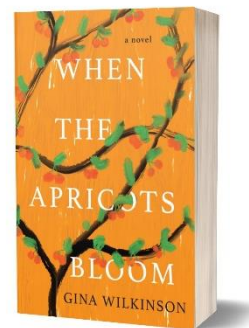


Discussion Questions

When the Apricots Bloom by Gina Wilkinson

These suggested questions are to spark conversation and enhance your reading of *When the Apricots Bloom*.



1. *When the Apricots Bloom* was partly inspired by the author's own experiences living in Baghdad under Saddam Hussein, at a time when Western sanctions kept Iraq virtually cut off from the outside world. During that period, her closest Iraqi friend worked as a secret police informant and reported on her every move. Did her portrayal of life in Baghdad seem realistic to you? What did you learn about life for ordinary Iraqis that surprised you?
2. If you were in Huda's situation, how would you have responded to the orders from the secret police? Should Huda have felt guilty about any of her actions?
3. Compared to Huda, how does Rania handle pressure from the regime? Does her family's status protect her, or is that just an illusion?
4. Rania is an artist—a respected role in Iraqi society. How does this compare to prevailing attitudes toward artists in your own culture?
5. Ally is desperate to find a connection with her mother. Given the restrictions she's under, do you think her subterfuge is justified, or is her search for clues to her mother's past irresponsible? What would you have done differently?
6. Huda's husband, Abdul Amir, plays a key role in the book. To what extent does he influence Huda's decisions? Did your perception of him alter over time? If so, how?
7. The novel alternates between Huda's, Rania's, and Ally's points of view. How are their worldviews and attitudes reflected in their narrative styles? Do you prefer one to the other? How would the novel have differed if it had been told from only one perspective?
8. The daily lives of Huda, Rania, and Ali are very different from our own, but in some ways they may feel very familiar. While reading this novel, were there any day-to-day details, activities, or concerns that you found surprisingly similar to your own? Did you find any parallels between the lives of these women and your own life?
9. In the acknowledgments, the author references the debate over #OwnVoices. To what extent do you agree or disagree with her statements? Do you think it was appropriate for her to write from an Iraqi woman's point of view?

**If you are interested in scheduling a virtual event or book club visit
with Gina Wilkinson, please contact:**

Vida Engstrand, Kensington Publishing / VEngstrand@KensingtonBooks.com
Crystal McCoy, Kensington Publishing / CMcCoy@KensingtonBooks.com