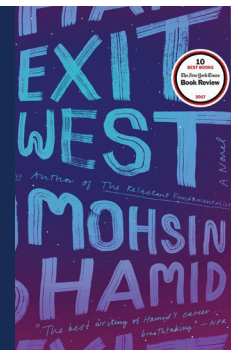


# Exit West by Mohsin Hamid

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS



1. The city where Nadia and Saeed live and from which they flee is unnamed, the only unnamed location in the book.
  - Why do you think that is?
  - What effect does this omission have on the reader?
2. What function do the doors serve, physically and emotionally, in the novel?
  - Why do you think Hamid chose to include this speculative, fantastical element in an otherwise very “realistic” world?
  - Why do you think the migration itself is absent from the narrative?
3. “It might seem odd that in cities teetering at the edge of the abyss young people still go to class...but that is the way of things, with cities as with life,” the narrator states at the beginning of *Exit West*.
  - In what ways do Saeed and Nadia preserve a semblance of a daily routine throughout the novel?
  - Why do you think this—and pleasures like weed, records, sex, the rare hot shower—becomes so important to them?
4. When it becomes clear that Nadia and Saeed will need to flee their city, Saeed is most fearful over leaving behind his family, his friends, the only home he’s ever known, while Nadia is most concerned about the possibility of losing her autonomy, of being forced to rely on the uncertain mercy of others, of being “caged in pens like vermin.”
  - Why do you think their respective fears are so radically different?
  - What do these fears say about them as characters, and in relation to each other?
5. “...and so by making the promise he demanded she make she was in a sense killing him, but that is the way of things, for when we migrate, we murder from our lives those we leave behind” (p. 98).
  - How do you interpret this passage?
6. What role do faith and religion play in the book?
  - How do Nadia, Saeed, and other characters differ in their approaches to faith and religion?
7. What emotional challenges do Nadia, Saeed, and other refugee characters face?
  - To what extent are these challenges tied to the experience of loss?
8. In what ways do access to the electricity, the internet, and technology enable and disable the characters?

9. In what ways is Nadia and Saeed’s relationship shaped by external circumstances?
  - In general, how does their relationship change over time?
10. What is the significance of Marin as the final stop on Nadia and Saeed’s journey?
  - Why don’t they move on from that place?
11. With regard to her changing neighborhood, the old woman in Palo Alto muses, “When she went out it seemed to her that she too had migrated, that everyone migrates, even if we stay in the same houses our whole lives, because we can’t help it. We are all migrants through time.”
  - What do you think she means?
12. The book ends in the city of Nadia and Saeed’s birth, which Hamid writes seems to them both familiar and unfamiliar.
  - How did you feel about this book’s ending?
13. Do you think *Exit West* is a hopeful book?
  - Why or why not?

## SOURCES

**The New York Times:** [www.nytimes.com/2018/03/07/books/discussion-questions-exit-west.html](http://www.nytimes.com/2018/03/07/books/discussion-questions-exit-west.html)

**Penguin Random House Readers Guide:** [www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/549017/exit-west-by-mohsin-hamid/9780735212206/readers-guide](http://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/549017/exit-west-by-mohsin-hamid/9780735212206/readers-guide)

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