



CSFP Reads Discussion Questions

Book: *The Turtle of Oman* by Naomi Shihab Nye

Meeting Date: January 23rd, 2021

Directions: Use these discussion questions (found in the back of the book; slightly edited) to help you understand the themes and context of the book. This isn't a test! Feel free to use the book to find the answers.

1. Why are turtles important to Aref? What do they represent for him? What does he learn about the turtles by himself, and what does he learn from his grandfather? Why do you think the book is called *The Turtle of Oman*?
2. Why is Aref reluctant to share his room and his cat with his cousins who will be staying in their house while he is away? What makes him change his mind about sharing?
3. Compare Aref's feelings about moving to his father's and mother's feelings. What does the move to Michigan mean to each of them? Why does his mother become impatient with his reluctance to pack?
4. Aref wonders, "What makes a place your own? What makes a home a home?" (p. 116). How does his grandfather help him to answer these questions as they spend their week together?
5. Describe the journey Aref and Sidi take to the desert camp. Why does Sidi take his grandson to that place? What are the most important parts of the journey for Aref? What does he learn that will help him get ready to leave home?
6. What does Aref learn from the falcon, Fil-Fil, and his handler, Jamal, at the desert camp? What does Sidi mean when he says to Aref, "You will be like my falcon" (p.182)? How does this experience help Aref prepare for his move away from home?
7. Discuss the meaning of the word "contagious" to Aref (p. 275). How does he use this word to help him turn his mind around about leaving home? How many meanings can you think of for the word "contagious"? How can you apply it to your own life?
8. Discuss the importance of the stones Aref's grandfather gives him throughout the story. Why does his grandfather give him stones from different places around the country? What does each stone mean to Aref?

Extra Activities

Directions: Pick one of these extra activities to try and share with the group when we meet virtually (activities also found in the back of the book; slightly edited).

1. Look for pictures on the Internet that will help you understand Aref's home country. Look up the place names he mentions: Musandam Peninsula, Masirah Island, Wadi Shab, Jebel Shams, Al-Hajar Mountains. Find images of these sites in Oman: Jabrin Castle, Al-Hazem Fort, Mutrah Souq. Which of these exciting places in Oman would you want to visit?
2. Prepare an imaginary (or real!) feast to include the foods that Aref mentions in this book: zaatar bread, curried vegetables, kousa mahshi, maktoubi, falafel, rice pudding. How are these dishes similar to foods that you eat? How are they different? If you draw a picture, you are welcome to share it at our virtual meeting!
3. In addition to the turtles, Aref encounters many other animals on his journey with his grandfather. Look for pictures of them so you can imagine what they look like in the wild: hyena, crane, falcon, oryx, camel, gecko, flesh-footed shearwater, Indian roller, black-bellied storm petrel. Choose a favorite and draw it, or draw your own favorite animal that you might miss if you had to move away from home. If you draw a picture, you are welcome to share it at our virtual meeting!