



Roses, in the Mouth of a Lion by Bushra Rehman
at Comstock Township Library, Friday 6/21 at 4 PM

Discussion questions

- 1) Throughout the book, we witness several shocking and upsetting incidents with men (the man exposing himself to Samia and Razia (p. 36), the uncles abusing the girls at night (p. 29-30, p. 186), the man accosting Razia and Taslima in the park (p. 176)). How do these events affect Razia?
- 2) Razia states that her mother “never really liked Saima’s mother or the amount of attention my father gave her father, his best friend. But we did not speak of it. In my family, we didn’t speak,” (p. 46). Is it possible that Saima’s father and Razia’s father were lovers?
- 3) What is Razia’s relationship with her mother like? How does Razia test boundaries as she gets older? Do you find her mother to be a sympathetic character?
- 4) “But I knew ‘religious girl’ was code for something that had nothing to do with Allah. It had to do with how a girl did whatever her husband and the community said, how a girl wouldn’t question the way things were set up,” (p. 137). How do marriage, tradition, and conformity work in this Muslim Pakistani community? How is the experience different for men than for women?
- 5) On page 223, Razia wonders, “Is this why I’d always felt different? Was this why I always felt repulsed by the idea of weddings, of being a wife? Things it seemed no one else had a problem with. Things people seemed excited about.” Does Razia’s point of view about marriage differ because she is a lesbian? Is she a free thinker who would question the status quo no matter what?

- 6) Talk about how Aliza, Bahar, and Shahnaaz's attitudes and life paths differ. What might the author be trying to say with these characters?
- 7) What is Razia's relationship to Julio? How is it similar to and different from her relationship with Angela? How does she understand her feelings in both instances?
- 8) When Razia comes out to Taslima, her friend seems accepting, but later shows some discomfort and judgment towards Razia. What do you think changed? Ultimately, Taslima helps Razia leave. Did Taslima get to a point where she fully accepted Razia?
- 9) What do you think about the admission by Taibah Aunty: "Razia, when I was young, in school, we all had friends like this, close friends...Some girls would even write each other letters in blood...These were things we did before marriage. It can't be taken further than school, not for us. You know that, don't you?" (p. 238)
- 10) What did you think about the pacing of the book? Do you think it took too long for Razia to discover her sexuality?
- 11) What did you think of the ending? What do you think the future holds for Razia?

If you are interested, there is a book talk with the author on Youtube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LY9UyPwkCQ8>