

# A Tender Struggle

Questions for Discussion



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1. How does the author's definition of *jihad* (page 95) differ from its common usage in the media—and what does jihad have to do with her love story?
2. How does the author's understanding of the hijab (head covering) change when she is in Libya? What benefits and drawbacks does she discover in modest Muslim clothing—and what benefits and drawbacks does she identify from the physical exposure she experienced growing up in Southern California?
3. When she first arrives in Libya, the author pities her female Muslim relatives—but she is surprised to discover that they pity her as well. Which aspects of her Western life might they pity, and how does her time in Libya make her rethink notions of freedom and oppression?
4. How does the author's understanding of feminism and surrender change over the course of the book? Is surrender at odds with feminism? Is surrender synonymous with defeat?

5. In what ways does the author's marriage change her opinions about diversity and tolerance?
6. The author encounters a dying grandmother during a family gathering in Libya. How does this woman's experience differ from aging and dying in the United States? What benefits and drawbacks can you identify in her experience?
7. What are specific examples of Islamophobia in the book? What does the author's experience convey about intolerance and the perception of otherness in the West?
8. In many ways, this book is about the search for home. What does the author convey about home in the final chapter—and do you agree with her definition?
9. Would you call this a strong marriage? Why or why not?
10. In what ways does the author's husband affirm or contradict common stereotypes about Muslim men?
11. Do you agree or disagree with the author's assertion that every relationship is bicultural? Which aspects of the author's struggle are particular to her marriage, and which aspects are universal?

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