

## BOOK CLUB QUESTIONS

### *I Hid My Voice* by Parinoush Saniee, translated by Sanam Kalantari

1. Parinoush Saniee uses two narrative points of view in her novel: that of Shahaab and that of his mother, Maryam. Does this work effectively?
2. How accurately does Maryam interpret what her son is experiencing? How difficult is it for her to understand what Shahaab is going through?
3. Once Shahaab is labelled as “dumb,” do you think he begins to act differently? How does predetermination affect both Shahaab and the other characters?
4. What purpose do Shahaab’s imaginary friends, Asi and Babi, serve? In what ways do they help and/or hinder Shahaab?
5. When the brick falls from the terrace and hits Grandmother, why is everyone quick to assume that it was Shahaab’s fault?
6. Shahaab feels compelled to speak after the incident with Fereshteh: “My entire being was filled with rage” (p. 97). What are your thoughts about the subsequent event on the rooftop? How is it possible that Shahaab and his parents can interpret these events differently? What are the consequences?
7. In what way do Nasser and Shahaab each feel misunderstood? How do these misunderstandings damage their relationship? Could either Nasser or Shahaab be said to be right or wrong?
8. What do you make of the fact that when Shahaab learns to write, he experiences what is called synesthesia — seeing words and numbers in different colours?
9. At one point Shahaab says, “All the joyful self-expression I’d developed during those two weeks in the South simply disappeared” (p. 147). How much does the title of the book reflect not only what is happening to Shahaab but also what is taking place in Iran?
10. Maryam says, “You don’t have to be dressed improperly for the morality police to find fault” (p. 82). What role does the notion of finding fault play in the novel?
11. How effective is the voice of the child, Shahaab, in this novel? Is it true to life?

12. Bibi says, "The story of love is written on your heart, it's not something you'll find in a book" (p. 174). How accurate is this sentiment within the context of the novel?