

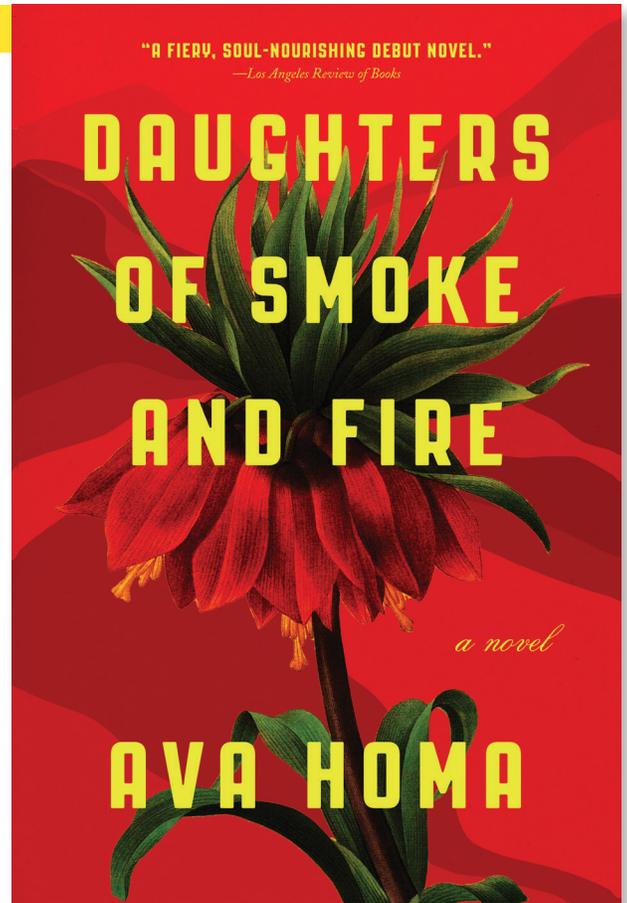
THE OVERLOOK PRESS • READERS DISCUSSION GUIDE

INTRODUCTION

Daughters of Smoke and Fire is an evocative portrait of the lives and stakes faced by forty million stateless Kurds. This unforgettable, haunting story focuses on a young woman's perilous fight for justice for her brother and brilliantly illuminates the meaning of identity and the complex bonds of family. The first novel published in English by a female Kurdish writer, this extraordinary debut novel takes readers into the everyday trials and triumphs of Kurdish lives in Iran.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Traveling through books is a rewarding experience—inexpensive, convenient, and heart-opening. *Daughters of Smoke and Fire* takes you to Kurdistan, Iran, Iraq, and Canada. How was your experience following characters across the globe?
2. Readers often like to see what they have in common with people in various parts of the world. Did you see parts of yourself reflected back to you in *Daughters of Smoke and Fire*? What were they? Did you relate to one character more than others? Who were they and what made that character most relatable?
3. *Daughters of Smoke and Fire* opens a window into the challenging lives of a stateless people who have been robbed of their right to live, or to live in peace. It's a difficult novel to write and to read. Why is it important for us to read untold stories? What did you gain from reading this novel in particular?
4. Which character in *Daughters of Smoke and Fire* would you like to speak to and what would you say to them? What would you say to Leila if you ran into her at a café?
5. Has this book changed anything about how you see immigrants? What will reading this book make you more aware of xenophobia and rethink how you confront it in your community?



6. How does *Daughters of Smoke and Fire* compare with other novels that discuss the struggles and triumphs of Middle Eastern people?
7. What did you learn about Kurdish culture through this book that you found interesting? Are there any new foods you'd like to try? New music? Would you like to read Sherko Bekas's poetry?
8. Leila says, "It's not only our homeland that's colonized. Our self-worth is hijacked too. Tyranny can stimulate unwitting self-sabotage. Our self-worth is hijacked. Pain needs to be managed—perhaps, in a sense, outsourced" (page 296). What do these sentences mean to you?
9. What do you think about how mainstream media often distorts the image of underrepresented groups? How is that destructive to not one group of people but to humanity as a whole? What do you think needs to change in our media to stop valuing some lives over others?
10. Leila thinks the world needs to stop looking down upon or, on the contrary, romanticizing and fetishizing Kurds and instead should accept them as a nation with strengths and weaknesses, just like any other group of humans. What does she mean by that and how can you as a reader make that shift within yourself?
11. If *Daughters of Smoke and Fire* were made into a movie, which actor should play the role of Leila? Chia? Shiler? Karo?
12. Are there specific people to whom you'd recommend this book? Who would enjoy reading it, and who should read it?

