



Reading Group Discussion Questions for *Behind the Veil* by Debra Johanyak

1. Based on the author's family background and time period, what are possible factors that led to her making a semi-arranged marriage with Nas?
2. Debra was forced to make many adjustments to her new life in Iran. What are possible difficulties for Iranian people who come to the U.S.? What are some ways that Americans might help them adjust?
3. The Iran crisis led Debra to question many of her personal beliefs and values. How did she arrive at some of her conclusions? Have you been confronted by circumstances that caused you to question your beliefs? What happened as a result?
4. Debra learned that being physically "different" (unveiled) in Iran could bring serious consequences and threats to her safety. What are similar challenges and threats faced by non-Caucasians (or any group that is physically different from the majority) in the United States?
5. The author's experiences in Iran forged a life-long relationship with her husband's family that remains strong beyond their divorce many years ago. What are possible reasons for the ongoing warm relations with her ex-husband's family? Why has she found it possible to remain cordial with Nas and connected to his family when so many divorced couples in the U.S. fight bitterly long after their divorce?
6. Compare Debra's experiences in Iran with those of other American and Iranian female authors who have written about their relationship with Iran in differing ways (*Not Without My Daughter*, *My Name is Iran*, *Reading Lolita in Tehran*, *Jumping Over Fire*, etc.). What are some possible reasons these authors have different views of Iran's people and culture? Is it possible to bring these views into some type of common understanding? Which of these views do you most closely endorse, and why?
7. If you decided to spend a year in a country on the other side of the world where you knew no one but your spouse and his or her family, what are possible adjustments you might face? How would you deal with these? Where might you find sources of support or guidance?

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