

Grains Of Sand: The Fall Of Neve Dekalim by Shifra Shomron

Visit Shifra Shomron's website: <http://grainsofsand.insightonthenews.net/>

Reading Group Questions and Topics for Discussion

(Suitable for Book Clubs)

1. Why did the author feel it necessary to write this novel? What issues troubled her?
2. Where did the events in the book take place? Why is the location controversial? To what degree does one's homeland define one's identity? How does "where you live" help you understand "who you are" as a person? Why doesn't the protagonist contemplate leaving Israel after the expulsion?
3. Discuss why you think the author chose to write a novel and not a diary? Why didn't she just write a factual description of the events instead of a fictionalized version? How do composite characters and fictional conversations allow the author to generalize the story?
4. Discuss the title. How does it relate to a particular passage in the story or as a whole? Why do you think the author chose this title?
5. How does the "Grains Of Sand" poem at the beginning of the book influence your understanding of the plot?
6. What are the universal themes in the book? What are the recurring themes in the book? How do they evolve throughout the story?
7. In what way are the characters real and believable? How can you relate to the situations the characters find themselves in? How do we see the inner turmoil, growth and development of different characters? How might the story be different if told through another character?
8. In what ways do the characters give you a better understanding of the diversity of the people of Gush Katif? To which character would you like to write and what would you say? Do you recognize in them aspects of yourself or someone you know?
9. How was the protagonist, Efrat, able to concentrate on matriculation exams during not only terror attacks, but with uncertainty about her community's future existence? What gave her the strength? How does life continue as usual in such circumstances – or does it?
10. How much can young people affect political events? Did young people have any chance to change the government's decision in this case? Are there actual examples of young people affecting political events in history? What factors can make this influence possible or pointless?
11. Did certain parts of the book make you feel uneasy? Why or why not? Did you find yourself rethinking these scenes? Do you wonder how or why an event happened or what you would have felt or done had you been there? Did this lead to a new appreciation or awareness of things in your life that you might not have otherwise considered?
12. What was an overall message in Grains Of Sand: The Fall Of Neve Dekalim?
13. What did you learn that was new from this book?
14. What influence does language have? The book has a lot to do with the beauty of Israel where the native language is Hebrew yet the book is written in English. Do you think something is linguistically or culturally lost when English is used instead of a country's native language?
15. What did you like most/least about the book?