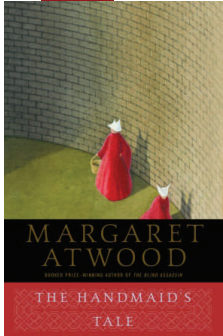
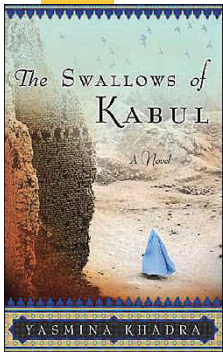


Readers Guide for the APU/UAA Books of the Year



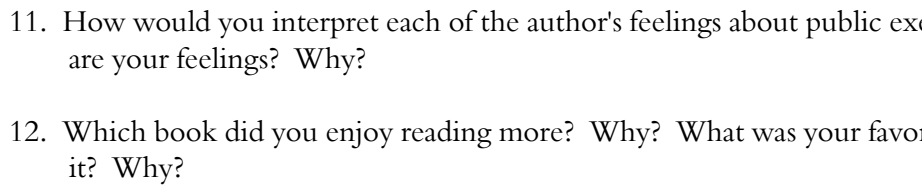
Discussion Questions for *The Handmaid's Tale* and *Swallows of Kabul*

What are the books about?

1. Women's clothing plays a big role in each of the books. How are the functions of the clothing the similar and different in each of the stories?
2. Social class is evident in each of the books. Describe the social classes of the main characters in each of the books before and after the takeover of the religious authorities. How does social class affect the life chances of women?
3. What are the ways in which public life is controlled in each of the stories? How much of the control is internal to the characters and how much comes from external authorities? How have the rules for public life changed before and after the takeover of the religious authorities?
4. Both books present public executions. How are the executions similar? How are they different?
5. Both books present life in situations with limited resources, such as food and energy. How does limited access to basic necessities impact the lives of the characters?

What do you think?

6. Which characters did you like the most in each story? Why? Which were your least favorite characters? Why?
7. What similarities do you find between the narrator of *The Handmaid's Tale* and Zunaira from *The Swallows of Kabul*? What differences?
8. What similarities do you find between the Commander in *The Handmaid's Tale* and Atiq from *The Swallows of Kabul*? What differences?
9. What similarities do you find between Serena Joy in *The Handmaid's Tale* and Musarrat from *The Swallows of Kabul*? What differences?
10. What similarities do you find between the narrator's husband, Luke, in *The Handmaid's Tale* and Mohsen from *The Swallows of Kabul*? What differences?

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11. How would you interpret each of the author's feelings about public executions? What are your feelings? Why?
 12. Which book did you enjoy reading more? Why? What was your favorite scene from it? Why?

What connections can you make?

13. Why do you think each of these books was chosen to be a Book of the Year? Why do you think they were selected to be Books of the Year *together*?
14. Both books show extreme examples of religion and politics interacting, but they interact in various ways all the time. In what ways do you find it acceptable, or even advantageous, for religion and politics to interact? Why? In what ways do you find it unacceptable, or even harmful, for religion and politics to interact? Why?
15. Both books show societies that have undergone dramatic changes and show the tension between the old ways and the new ways. What tensions between old ways of doing things and new ways of doing things do you notice in your own society? In what ways is this tension similar to the books? In what ways is it different?
16. Both books present life in situations with limited resources, such as food and energy. How do you think our society would change if food and energy became much more limited? Explain.