

## HOME Book Discussion Group, Lynden Sculpture Garden

<https://www.home-at-lynden.org/book-discussion-group>

Dina Nayeri, *The Ungrateful Refugee: What Immigrants Never Tell You* January/February 2021

### READING GUIDE & DISCUSSION

#### Thematic points

1. What are the **themes** in Nayeri's *The Ungrateful Refugee*?
2. What is the underlying **message and purpose** of the author's writing? What compelled the author to write this book?
3. What are conflicting themes and **dichotomies or opposites** that are addressed by the author? How are they explored? For example, we've covered these and here's more:
  - Ungrateful and grateful, unlucky/fate/destiny and luck, chance and opportunity, hope and hopelessness, uncertainty and certainty, refugee and citizen, survival and sustenance
  - Family/collective story and independence/individual story, truth telling and storytelling, truth and memory, proof and believability, frontline/firsthand/testimony and reporting/observing/secondhand, simplicity and complexity, identity and belonging, flexible/changeable and fixed, fixed identity and flexible/changeable identities, stories as unfolding/multiple layers and stories as linear
  - Welcome and charity, advocacy and charity, tragedy and being saved, tragedy and beauty/resilience, forced displacement and migration/movement, friendship and paternalism, giving/serving and receiving/accepting, East and West

#### Writing and style

1. Why is a **firsthand account** important in this work or when talking about refugee issues? Is this work purely a writing of firsthand account? Why and why not?
2. As Nayeri's first work in nonfiction and as a refugee herself, what is the writing style in terms of the **story progression** (staggering style) that she chose to use in writing her personal story and other refugee's personal stories?
3. What are **conflicts or contradictions** that may possibly arise in a firsthand account stories? What are instances that the author explores this?

#### Perspectives

1. What are the differing **points of view** between her story and her brother Daniel's story and their family's experience as refugees? How does her story contrast with the stories that she covers?
2. How are **memories** reliable? Why is **storytelling** necessary? How does the author convey these concepts?
3. What are instances and experiences in the book that we can draw from other sources, authors and **happenings in the world**? From her message, how might other sources support or understate/minimize/devalue her message?