

Thought Questions for Woman at Point Zero

1. Is it possible for a man to become part of the upper class in Egypt if he was not born into it? If so, how? Is it possible for a woman? If so, does a woman improve her class in the same way as a man does?
2. Firdaus dresses and wears make-up like an upper class woman. Does she ever really consider herself a part of the upper class?
3. Firdaus learns on pages 66-67 that money is very powerful, yet on page 98 she tears up three thousand pounds. Why does she do this?
4. Discuss how the men in the book exert their control over Firdaus and how Firdaus gradually changes her response as she learns from them?
5. What are some of the general assumptions about the men's and women's power that Firdaus fights against?
6. What makes Firdaus realize in the end that she has no more fear for killing a man?
7. How is Firdaus' miserable life indirectly caused by the men's behavior? How could it have been different if she was treated differently?
8. Compare how certain repeating passages change their significance as the story progresses. What changes in Firdaus' outlook do they indicate?
9. What do the people in the book fear? Is there something that everybody fears or do the fears differ depending on wealth and social status?
10. What is the final truth that Firdaus learn—the truth that frightens and kills?
11. What is a prostitute, slut, whore, "ruined woman", according to society's definition? According to Firdaus?
12. What correlations are drawn between woman as a prostitute and woman as a wife and woman as a slave? What are the correlations drawn between man as a pimp, man as a husband, and as a master? Do you think they are, as presented in Woman at Point Zero, true, false, or exaggerated?
13. What does the existence of the prostitute/good wife, whore/virgin dichotomy say about the status and condition of women in society? How does Firdaus see both sides of this dichotomy as one and the same?
14. What is a free prostitute? What is a free woman?

MIT OpenCourseWare
<http://ocw.mit.edu>

21G.022J / WGS.141J International Women's Voices
Spring 2004

For information about citing these materials or our Terms of Use, visit: <http://ocw.mit.edu/terms>.