The Space Between Us
Zoya Pirzad

In a small town on the edge of the Caspian Sea, Edmond Lazarian and his best friend Tahereh pass their days playing together, drifting between the delights of beachcombing and the joys of the sherbet shop. Although Edmond is Armenian and Tahereh is the Muslim daughter of the school's janitor, they remain blissfully unaware of the disquiet that ripples the surface calm of their close-knit community. Yet years later, when Edmond's daughter chooses a Muslim to marry, tensions inevitably build. Unable to keep sidestepping the prejudices around him, Edmond is finally forced to make a choice, and one that will haunt him for years to come.

Questions for Discussion

1. Edmond’s Father often criticizes his wife for allowing their child to be a ‘sissy’ or a ‘baby’. Is this a fair judgement? What notions of masculinity does Pirzad bring to the novel?

2. Tahereh and her family appear to be very central to the novel, yet from Part 2 are only mentioned again once and disappear from the storyline. Why do you think this is?

3. How does The Space Between Us depict the tensions between Islam and Christianity in Iran?

4. Grandmother refuses to talk about death. In what way does the narrative itself acknowledge, or not acknowledge, death?

5. Who, in your opinion, is the most moral character in the novel?

6. What is the significance of Edmond’s mother’s room? Does this change your perspective of her as a character?

7. Do you think there is a discussion of class in the novel?

8. There is a lot of mention of food and cooking in this novel. What is the significance of this?

9. Why do you think that the story revolves around Easter?
10. How is patriotism a factor in the novel? Is it bound with the religious aspect or is it an independent factor altogether?

11. Who is the more important figure, the mother or the father? How do mothers fare in a patriarchal society such as this?

12. The title *The Space Between Us* refers to what exactly?

13. How does the change of narrative tense and the concept of time contribute to the meaning of the novel?

14. Do you feel that there is a sense of peace and reconciliation at the end of the novel?

**About the Author**

Zoya Pirzad is a renowned Iranian–Armenian writer and novelist. She has written two novels and three collections of short stories, all of which have enjoyed international success. *Things We Left Unsaid* has been awarded multiple prizes, including the prestigious Hooshang Golshiri award for Best Novel of the Year, and her most recent collection of stories, *The Bitter Taste of Persimmon*, won the prize for Best Foreign Book of 2009 in France. She was born in Abadan, Iran, grew up in Tehran, Iran and now lives in Yerevan, Armenia.