

Further Reading

The Namesake
Jhumpa Lahiri (2003)
BIOGRAPHY POWELL
LAHIRI

A portrait of the immigrant experience follows the Ganguli family from their traditional life in India through their arrival in Massachusetts in the late 1960s and their difficulty melding into an American way of life.

Family Life
Akhil Sharma (2014)
SHARMA

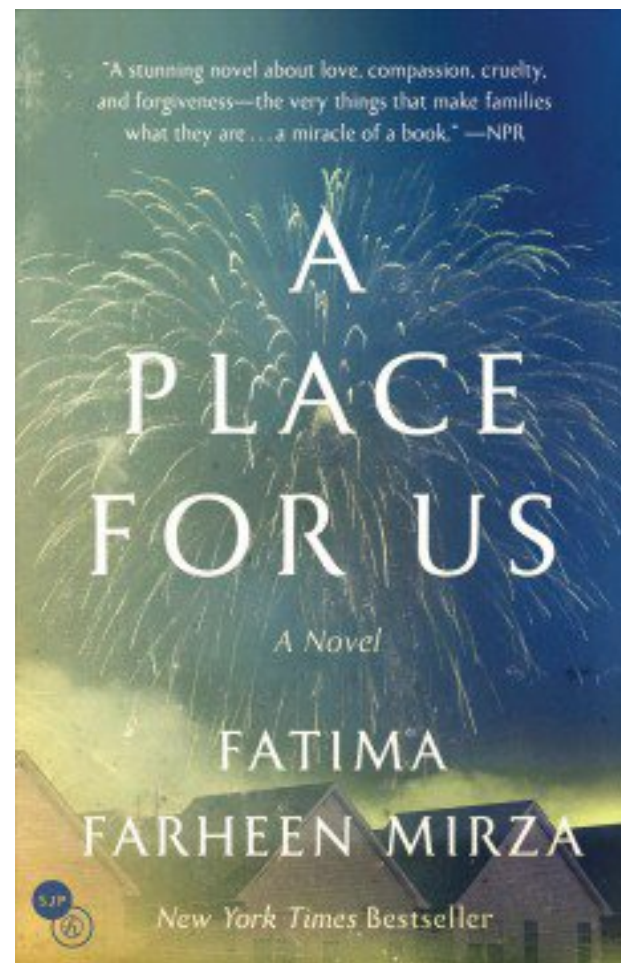
Finally joining their father in America, Ajay and Birju enjoy their new, extraordinary life until tragedy strikes, leaving one brother incapacitated and the other practically orphaned in a strange land.

And the Mountains Echoed
Khaled Hosseini (2013)
SOCSCI CIVRTS BAL

This novel presents a story inspired by human love, how people take care of one another, and how choices resonate through subsequent generations.

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Book Discussion Guide



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About the Book

A Place for Us unfolds the lives of an Indian-American Muslim family, gathered together in their Californian hometown to celebrate the wedding of their eldest daughter Hadia—a match of love rather than tradition. It is here, on this momentous day, that Amar, the youngest of the siblings, reunites with his family for the first time in three years. Rafiq and Layla must now contend with the choices and betrayals that lead to their son's estrangement, the reckoning of parents who strove to pass on their cultures and traditions to their children, and of children who in turn struggle to balance authenticity in themselves with loyalty to the home they came from.

Discussion Questions

1. How did you interpret the title of *A Place for Us*? Does this "place" refer to family, culture, community, or religion?
2. Did your opinion of Rafiq change or develop as the narrative progressed? Did you become more sympathetic or understanding of the father portrayed early on in the novel when, in the final section, the novel switches to his first-person perspective?
3. From a young age, Amar fears that he has a "black stain" on his soul. What do you think was the root cause of this fear? Why do you think he questions his own inherent goodness, and how does self-doubt affect his behavior?
4. Hadia comes to see the watch she received from Rafiq, an heirloom that was her grandfather's, as a symbol of the competition between herself and Amar. How might the watch also be symbolic of their complex relationships with their father?
5. In his late teenage years, Amar strives to prove himself as a worthy partner for Amira Ali, deserving of her parents' approval. Where else did you see characters behave in certain ways, compromising their desires and making major life decisions, to please their family and community? How did this affect their personal happiness?
6. When her children speak English instead of Urdu, Layla fears that they will gradually lose touch with their heritage. As they moved toward adulthood, how did Hadia and Huda depart from certain aspects of their culture? What others did they uphold? (You might consider rituals, customs, or gender roles.)
7. At Hadia's wedding, Amira mentions that her brother, Abbas, had been a "moral compass" for her parents. What lessons did you see children teach their parents (and grandparents) in *A Place for Us*?
8. Toward the end of the novel, Rafiq admits with regret that, as a result of his rigid religious practice and strict adherence to rules, he had failed to impart to his family an understanding of God's kindness and mercy. How do you think his relationship with Amar would have changed or improved if he had come to this realization when his children were young?
9. In the final section, Rafiq expresses his fear that his grandchildren will experience the effects of racist hate and violence, which Amar had been exposed to in school. Do you think that *A Place for Us*, depicting the personal lives of a Muslim family in America, has an important social message?

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