Questions for Discussion

 

1. Friendship and family . . . commitments to others are at the heart of this story. We see Sofia battle with her loyalties to her family and dearest friend when she takes on the role of caretaker to baby Natalie. We see Maya’s concern and duty to the success of her community when she takes on a principal role in the economic future of her kibbutz. Both women sacrifice a bit of their selves in order to live up to the unspoken responsibility for others. Have you ever had a friendship or relationship you felt the need to nurture or support, even if it would change your whole life?
2. Maya and Sofia come from completely different backgrounds, yet they come together at the end of this story with shared commonalities and experiences. Do you have a friendship with someone you initially thought you had nothing in common with and then found you had cultivated a strong bond of friendship?
3. Even if you have never taken a dance class or attended a ballet performance, can you relate to the experiences and decisions that Maya and Sofia face in this story?
4. At the beginning of the novel, Maya seems to struggle with her obvious role as a loving and nurturing mother, despite having a supportive and caring mother as a role model. At the same time, Sofia’s last desire in life is to become a mother, maybe due to the abandonment she experiences with her mother. What do you think changes for Maya and for Sofia that allow them each to grow as strong, loving, and nurturing women? What influences each woman to think beyond their own passions and consider something bigger than their personal desires?
5. It takes Sofia years to discover the truth about her father’s disappearance and her mother’s apparent desertion. She seems to develop a coldness, a resentment, towards the people around her, even those that support and love her. Do you think she would have grown to be a different person if she had learned the truth about her parents earlier?
6. What do you think of Sofia’s relationship with Ben? What about Maya’s marriage to Danny? Both women love their partners but grow hesitant about their bonds to them. What do you think about Sofia leaving Ben and Maya staying with Danny? Did you ever love someone with all your heart, yet still feel a “pull” toward something else?
7. Sometimes people need to see things from an outside perspective in order to make sense of it. Maya develops an unspoken kinship with a mysterious stranger that comes to the kibbutz. Were you ever expecting or hoping that Maya and Jim would eventually get together and become more than supportive friends?
8. Sofia often seems like she carries a childish, brash, and insecure attitude throughout her evolution as a successful dancer. Do you find her schemes and reactions harmless and understandable or annoying and immature?
9. Maya gives the impression that she is weak, constantly giving in to the limitations of her life on the kibbutz; growing up on Gan Notzah, she goes along with the expected flow of her community and her responsibilities. Are you surprised when she unveils her individual passions through her ballet and finally pushes herself beyond her limits and doubts?
10. The coincidence of finding her biological mother on a kibbutz in the middle of a desert (literally) just after losing her adoptive family in a fire in Brooklyn is completely timely and just the thing Sofia needs to restore her faith and sense of security in love. Do you think she was right in having ultimately forgiven her mother for the secrets and deceit she felt after being sent away to New York?
11. Families and friendships can be very complicated and demanding. Can you relate to Sofia’s or Maya’s experiences? Have you ever been in a situation where family or a friend’s needs came before your own? What have you had to give up in order to help someone you love?
12. Do you believe a single person can make enough of a difference and change the course of the future? Do you believe that Sofia and Maya (either or both) deserve the title of “heroine”?
13. What personality traits do you admire most in Maya? In Sofia?
14. Both Maya and Sofia come from very different backgrounds, but they find themselves facing similar decisions. How did their families and early experiences create the women they became and the roles they chose to play in their communities?

