A Thousand Splendid Suns
Discussion Questions

1. Before (or even after) reading *A Thousand Splendid Suns*, you might find it helpful to visit the CIA World Factbook website for an overview of the geography, history, and cultural traditions of Afghanistan. In what ways does a greater understanding of the characters’ country and culture influence your understanding of the characters’ conflicts and decisions?

2. Similarities abound in Laila’s and Mariam’s relationships with their mothers, their fathers, and their husbands. What are some of these similarities? As you make note of the similarities, what differences in their relationships emerge as particularly meaningful or significant?

3. Khaled Hosseini’s novel draws its name from the Josephine Davis translation of the 17th century poem “Kabul,” a poem that is quoted twice in the book. Read the poem (below) and consider the ways in which its representation of Kabul aligns with and conflicts with those of the book; consider the ways in which it speaks to Laila’s decision to leave the security of life in Pakistan and return to the uncertainties of life in Kabul.

   Translation of Saib-e-Tabrizi’s poem “Kabul”
   by Dr. Josephine Barry Davis

   Ah! How beautiful is Kabul encircled by her arid mountains
   And Rose, of the trails of thorns she envies
   Her gusts of powdered soil, slightly sting my eyes
   But I love her, for knowing and loving are born of this same
dust

   My song exalts her dazzling tulips
   And at the beauty of her trees, I blush
   How sparkling the water flows from Pul-I-Mastaan!
   May Allah protect such beauty from the evil eye of man!

   Khizr chose the path to Kabul in order to reach Paradise
   For her mountains brought him close to the delights of heaven
From the fort with sprawling walls, A Dragon of protection
Each stone is there more precious than the treasure of Shayagan

Every street of Kabul is enthralling to the eye
Through the bazaars, caravans of Egypt pass
One could not count the moons that shimmer on her roofs
And the thousand splendid suns that hide behind her walls

Her laughter of mornings has the gaiety of flowers
Her nights of darkness, the reflections of lustrous hair
Her melodious nightingales, with passion sing their songs
Ardent tunes, as leaves enflamed, cascading from their throats

And I, I sing in the gardens of Jahanara, of Sharbara
And even the trumpets of heaven envy their green pastures

4. How do you feel about Laila's determination to withhold from her son from the truth about his father's disappearance?

5. For all of the scenes of great violence, both physical and emotional, wrought upon or by the characters of the novel, there are, too, many scenes of tenderness, both physical and emotional. What are some of these scenes, and what is it about them that makes them linger with you after you have finished the book?