

Guantanamo Boy

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TEACHERS' GUIDE

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CHAPTER DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS

The following pages contain discussion questions and prompts using direct quotes from each of the book's thirty chapters.

Chapter 1: Game

p. 4: *"Six months after 9/11 and the world is getting madder by the day," [Khalid's father] says from suddenly behind him.*

How did the world change, especially in the United States, after 9/11?

p. 4–5: Khalid's father to Khalid: *"Things will get worse before they get better," Dad says. "A man came into the restaurant today, pointed his finger at the waiter and said, "You better watch your step round here, mate.' Can you believe it? The boy hasn't done anything wrong. Nothing except wear the shalwar kameez. That's it."*

What is a shalwar kameez?

Discuss the meaning of racial profiling and how it applies in this example.

p. 11: Khalid on his mother: *Mom has never worn the veil and neither did her mother in Turkey, where she was brought up.*

What is the veil?

Why would Muslim women wear the veil? Why would they not wear it?

Chapter 2: Blood's Thicker Than Water

p. 26: *Khalid reads the message written in large black words on*

his flapping white T-shirt: SMALL-MINDED FLAG-WAVING XENOPHOBE. Eh? Khalid stops for a second to wonder at the meaning of the word “xenophobe.”

What is xenophobia? Give an example.

p. 28: Nasir to Khalid: *“I’m thinking you must be careful, lad. My wife’s family have plenty of friends who live there and they say the Americans are paying people big bucks to report anyone suspicious to them.”*

What is the danger in paying for information?

Chapter 3: Karachi

p. 40: *[Khalid] logs on to his e-mail and discovers that Tariq’s game—Bomber One—is ready. A whizz-kid friend of his in Lahore has helped to finish the program and download it. Tariq’s sent him instructions on how to set up his profile so they can all play together soon.*

Discuss what type of game *Bomber One* is. What kinds of computer and video games are popular? Explain.

Chapter 4: Missing

p. 47: Khalid finds himself part of a demonstration in Karachi: *The throng of men is growing by the second. Khalid stops. Turns to go back and find another route to avoid this chaos. But he gets caught in a sudden wave of men surging from a side alley. Pulling him forward in a lawless mass of anger that reminds him of getting caught in the rivers of fans coming out of Old Trafford after Manchester United have lost a game.*

Why was it dangerous for Khalid to become involved in the demonstration?

p. 50: *Jim shakes his head. “Everybody from a Muslim country is*

seen as a threat to the USA right now.”

Discuss why Jim makes the statement above.

p. 52: *“Will you have to marry a Muslim girl?” Niamb asked. “I can marry who I like,” [Khalid] had said. Not wanting to get into this. Thinking, Should I tell her if she isn’t a Muslim she can convert? Loads do.*

Discuss why it would be important for a Muslim to marry a person who is also Muslim?

How does this quote relate to other religions such as Christianity, Judaism, Hinduism, etc.?

Chapter 5: Easter

p. 62: *Blocking the hallway is a gang of fierce-looking men dressed in dark shalwar kameez . . . Confused by the image, [Khalid] staggers, bumping backwards into the wall. Arms up to stop them getting nearer. Too shocked and terrified to react as they shoulder him to the kitchen and close the door before pushing him to his knees and waving a gun at him as if he’s a violent criminal. Then vice-like hands clamp his mouth tight until they plaster it with duct tape. No chance to wonder what the hell is going on, let alone scream out loud.*

Discuss what Khalid may be thinking as this terrifying abduction is taking place.

p. 63: *Paralyzed by fear, Khalid wonders desperately where they are taking him. Who are they? Why him? What for? Questions he can’t even speak out loud.*

Discuss what we know about Khalid and the events of the day that may have contributed to his being kidnapped.

Discuss the following statement: Khalid was innocent.

How can this happen to an innocent person?

Chapter 6: Power

p. 67: *“This is Karachi, not England,” [Khalid’s interrogator] says. “You don’t have any legal rights here. Tell us what you know and you can go home.”*

What rights does Khalid not have while he is in Pakistan?
Discuss what human rights have been violated.

p. 76: *“Do I look like a terrorist?” [Khalid] says aloud, totally confused by the whole thing. His thoughts scatter to consider every possibility.*

Discuss Khalid’s question, “Do I look like a terrorist?”
What (if any) characteristics do terrorists have?

Chapter 7: Bread

p. 84: *Khalid stares into his invisible future and sees nothing worth living for . . .*

Explain why Khalid has given up on his future.

Chapter 8: Masud

p. 91: Masud to Khalid: *“Americans looking everywhere, all time for Bin Laden.”*

Who is Bin Laden? What is he responsible for?
Discuss why Americans are looking for Bin Laden.

p. 92: Masud to Khalid: *“They accuse me of being enemy combatant.”*

Define enemy combatant.
Why is this term used?

p. 94: *The one thing [Khalid] wishes he could change right now is the religion he was born into.*

Discuss why Khalid would want to change his religion.

Chapter 9: To Kandahar

p. 95: *[Khalid] curls into a ball on the floor and cries. He'd always thought of himself as strong.*

Discuss if anyone would be able to be “strong” if they had to go through what Khalid went through.

Chapter 10: Processing

p. 101: *Khalid reacts to the shaving of the prisoners' beards: It ignites a terrible anger in Khalid, who knows the shaving of the man's beard—an important part of his Muslim identity—is the final insult for him.*

Discuss why a man's beard would be an important part of his Muslim identity.

p. 104–5: *[Khalid is mad] at the Americans for seeing them as just that: Muslims. Dangerous foreigners whom they can't even tell apart. Angry too at the Muslim religion for getting him into this mess. He once heard a newsreader say it was the fastest-growing religion in the world. Khalid remembers wishing the media wouldn't say stuff like that. People don't want to hear those facts, and he doesn't particularly want to be lumped together with loads of people he doesn't know, Muslim or not. And Muslims aren't all the same, just like Christians aren't all the same. He's Khalid—himself, not a result of any religion. He hasn't even done anything with his life yet.*

What stereotypes exist about Muslims?

Explain how Muslims are not all the same.

Chapter 11: Red Cross

p. 120: *A Red Cross worker approaches Khalid with a question: “I'm with the Red Cross. Do you want to write a letter to anyone?” “A letter?” It's the first time Khalid's thought about it.*

“Just one letter? Can’t I do more?” “However many you want!”
The soldier opens the cell and hands Khalid three pieces of paper and a black pen. Plus a cup which holds a card with a number. His is 256.

Why was a member of the Red Cross allowed to speak with Khalid?

Why is Khalid referred to by a number instead of by his name?

Define dehumanization. Is Khalid being referred to as a number an example of dehumanization?

Chapter 12: Wade

p. 129: Khalid’s reaction when being allowed to see the sky: *Khalid gazes at the sky as if for the first time and the sudden, searing light makes him feel drunk as anything. It’s so wonderful and perfect.*

What ordinary things would you miss if they were taken from you?

p. 132: Khalid on his solitary confinement: *It’s a room Khalid gets to know well, because every single half-hour over the next three days the soldiers barge in to wake him. He fades in and out of the most disturbed sleep ever conceived as his mind wanders to thoughts and images he had no idea were even stored there.*

How is this an example of torture?

Is torture an effective way to find out important information from someone who does not want to cooperate?

Chapter 13: Lights

p. 139: . . . *If [Khalid] can close his brain down for a bit, then maybe he can forget? Perhaps if the guards stay away, he can fall into a long, timeless sleep instead of the half hour here and there*

before another bitter wake-up . . .

Why did the guards not allow Khalid to sleep?

p. 145: *Footsteps down the corridor sound inside a mind of shadows so dark, [Khalid] can hardly remember what day it is any more . . .*

How did Khalid survive the torture?

Chapter 14: Water Tricks

p. 150: *Eyes closed, [Khalid's captors'] hands pressing down on his shoulders, Khalid hears the jug being filled with water at high velocity. A cloth lands on his face. More hands hold it down, so that he breathes in the smell of gauze bandages, and at the same time a trickle of cold water pours through the cloth and down his nose and mouth.*

Explain if this is an example of torture.

What is the purpose of this type of interrogation?

p. 152: *The suited man to Khalid: "This procedure will continue until you confess your part in the worldwide bombing campaign you planned with known accomplices," the man says firmly.*

Discuss why Khalid would confess to doing things he never did.

Do you think there would be people who might think Khalid is guilty even if they are aware of how the confession was obtained?

Discuss the consequences of his signed confession.

Chapter 15: Sleep

p. 167: *On torture: "It's a stupid way of finding anything out. Whenever my brother twists my arm up my back, it hurts so bad I say anything he wants me to just to get him to stop. So what's*

the point in torturing someone if all you get is lies?"

Answer Khalid's question: "So what's the point in torturing someone if all you get is lies?"

Chapter 16: Guantanamo

p. 176: *Since he arrived in Guantanamo, Khalid hasn't really seen anyone. Just the food trolley man and the soldiers. The only sounds that keep him company day and night are terrifying screams from the other end of the building and then someone who coughs and coughs—he doesn't know which is worse. Plus the constant slamming of metal flaps gives him a headache, like a pneumatic drill in the side of his skull.*

Discuss what it would be like if you had to go months with almost no contact with other people.

Chapter 17: Sweat

p. 190: Masud to Khalid on his imprisonment: *"This I'm knowing for sure is against the law they set in Geneva. Certainly. No one here has received a trial. They cannot keep a child like you on your own. This is cruel torture.*

What were the laws that were set at Geneva?

What has happened to Khalid that could be against the law?

Chapter 18: Every Shred

p. 197: *"I want a lawyer," Khalid says.*

Discuss why and how Khalid can be held for this amount of time without access to a lawyer.

Why has Khalid not had a trial?

Discuss the demands Khalid is making, and explain if these are valid demands.

p. 198: An interrogator to Khalid: “*You will tell us what you know about al-Qaeda!*” Bruce says menacingly. “*If not now, then tomorrow or the next day. I hope you’ll think about how your actions are harming innocent people.*”

Define irony.

Discuss how the statement made by Bruce is ironic.

Chapter 19: The Jinn

p. 204: *Khalid hears the sounds of Ramadan start up again.*

What is Ramadan?

Discuss how fulfilling Ramadan is difficult for the Muslim prisoners.

Chapter 20: Exercise

p. 222: Ali to Khalid: “*Islam is not a medieval culture.*”

Discuss how the culture of Islam is relevant in modern-day times.

Why would someone assume that Islam is a “medieval culture”?

Chapter 21: Hair

p. 232: Khalid after seeing his face in a mirror while getting his hair cut: *Was that really his face?*

Describe how Khalid reacts to seeing his face.

Chapter 22: News

p. 241: *Khalid says he feels deep-seated hatred and contempt . . . for his cousin.*

Explain why Khalid has feelings of hatred toward his cousin.

Are these feelings justified?

Chapter 23: Lee-Andy

p. 254: Tariq to Khalid: *“I said your father is a fund-raiser for extremists. I lied to stop them beating and driving me to insanity. Told them many lies about everyone. I’m asking for your forgiveness, cuz.”*

Discuss if Khalid should forgive Tariq for his lies against his father.

Chapter 24: Harry

p. 266: *“Hi, Khalid, I’m your new lawyer. Name’s Harry Peterson.”*

Describe how Khalid might feel when he realizes that he finally has a lawyer.

Discuss who is supporting Khalid’s release.

p. 275: *From now on, Khalid wants to be seen as honest and sincere, brave, forgiving and kind, so he thinks hard. Knowing once his words are taken down, they’re written in stone and he never wants to be caught out again.*

Discuss if Khalid has been brave since he was kidnapped.

Chapter 25: Echoes

p. 281: *The religion [Khalid] once ignored and avoided because he thought it was uncool has become a major source of comfort, giving him something to turn to.*

Discuss how religion has become an important part of Khalid’s life.

Discuss how and/or if religion can help people when they are in desperate situations.

Chapter 26: Hot Shots

p. 292: *“I’m going to sue you for all of this. Just so you know,” Khalid says. “I think you’ll find you were never arrested,” Major*

Leeth tells him, smirking. “No, that’s right, I was kidnapped, wasn’t I? You suckers better apologize for torturing me.”

Discuss what the major means when he tells Khalid that he was never arrested.

Discuss what type of compensation (if any) Khalid should receive for being kidnapped.

p. 297: *But not only does Khalid find this Rochdale stuff hard to believe; it seems incredible that from now on people will think he’s special, though not for anything positive, just for spending time in that prison.*

Explain why Khalid is not excited about being seen as special.

Chapter 27: Touchdown

p. 306: *“Your dad’s on the phone!” Khalid freezes in shock. “Dad! Dad!” Khalid grabs the cell phone. Holding it close, he turns away from Harry as Dad’s soft, gentle voice passes through him in a wave of longed-for pure pleasure.*

Discuss what Khalid and his father would talk about on the phone after not seeing one another for two years.

What would you talk about with your family?

p. 307: *“Sorry to keep you waiting. I’m Professor Wolfson. My job is to help you settle back into normal life as soon as possible.”*

Give examples of the difficulties Khalid might have adjusting to normal life.

Chapter 28: Home

p. 315: *Then there’s all the people knocking on the door, day and night. The local imams, Muslim leaders, journalists, friends and neighbors—even the guy who owns the restaurant where Dad*

works. Their constant voices, welcomes, and polite enquiries cause exhaustion and pounding headaches for Khalid.

Discuss how Khalid reacts to all of the attention.

How would you react in his situation?

p. 322: Mr. Tagg to Khalid: *“There’s only one thing I ask, Khalid. Will you come and help me do an assembly on that awful place you’ve been? There’s a lot of anti-Muslim feeling building at the moment and we want to keep the school and Rochdale free from that kind of sentiment.”*

Explain why it could be difficult for Khalid to tell about what happened to him while imprisoned.

Chapter 29: Assembly

p. 326: Khalid on preventing violence: *“I’d say the only way to prevent violence is to stop being violent, stop thinking nasty thoughts about other people. Stop hurting other people. Stop lying and cheating. How come the world doesn’t get that?”*

Explain if you agree with what Khalid says about preventing violence.

Chapter 30: Gul

p. 338: Khalid’s letter to Tariq: *There’s not much more I can tell you, cuz, Khalid writes quickly. I don’t think that feeling of total misery will ever really go away. Soon, I promise, you’ll get home.*

Discuss the possibility of Khalid’s cousin being released.

p. 340: *Khalid’s heart lifts and the past collapses into a little burst of happiness. The kind of happiness that a loving family brings.*

Discuss how this statement means more to Khalid at seventeen than it did when he was fifteen.

GUANTANAMO BAY TIMELINE*

2001

September 11, 2001

Operatives of Al-Qaeda, an international terrorist group, attack the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.

October 7, 2001

The War in Afghanistan begins. The US military targets the Taliban, the ruling militia in Afghanistan, which refuses to hand over Al-Qaeda leader Osama Bin Laden.

December 2001

Osama Bin Laden escapes from Afghanistan.

2002

January 11, 2002

Twenty suspected terrorists are detained at Camp X-Ray at Guantanamo Bay. They are the first detainees to arrive.

January 17, 2002

The US military allows the Red Cross to establish permanent residence at the Guantanamo Bay prison.

January 18, 2002

President George W. Bush declares that Guantanamo Bay detainees are not protected under the Geneva Conventions, which requires that certain rights are given to prisoners of war.

February 27, 2002

Detainees go on a hunger strike to protest a rule against wearing turbans, which are a common part of Muslim religious life and are often used during prayer.

April 25, 2002

Camp Delta is built to house 410 prisoners.

(continued on next page)

2003

April 23, 2003

The US military admits children sixteen and younger, many of whom have been held for a year, are among the detainees. Three boys from Afghanistan, ages thirteen to fifteen, are among the inmates and are held in a dedicated juvenile facility; they are released in 2004.

May 9, 2003

Guantanamo Bay prison reaches 680 detainees, the most it has held at one time.

October 9, 2003

The Red Cross says there is “deterioration in the psychological health of a large number of detainees.”

2004

October 16, 2004

According to the *New York Times*, detainee abuse is more pervasive than the Pentagon has let on.

2006

February 15, 2006

A report from the United Nations recommends the closure of Guantanamo Bay prison.

May 28, 2006

According to London lawyers, dozens of children as young as fourteen years old have been sent to Guantanamo Bay prison, and they estimate that more than sixty detainees were under eighteen when they were captured.

June 29, 2006

The US Supreme Court rules Guantanamo Bay detainees are protected under the Geneva Conventions.

2007

February 7, 2007

According to a Pentagon inquiry, there is no evidence of abuse at the Guantanamo Bay prison.

2009

January 14, 2009

A senior Bush administration official releases a public statement detailing the torture of one of the Guantanamo Bay detainees.

January 22, 2009

President Barack Obama issues executive orders to close Guantanamo Bay within one year, to ban CIA interrogation techniques that might be considered torture, and to review the prison's detention policies.

2011

January 22, 2011

Two years after President Obama's executive order to close Guantanamo Bay, the prison remains open with 174 prisoners. Many have called for its closure, including General Colin Powell, General David Petraeus, and General Wesley Clark of the US armed forces; former FBI Director William Sessions; and Defense Secretary Robert Gates.

*For sources, please see last page.

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