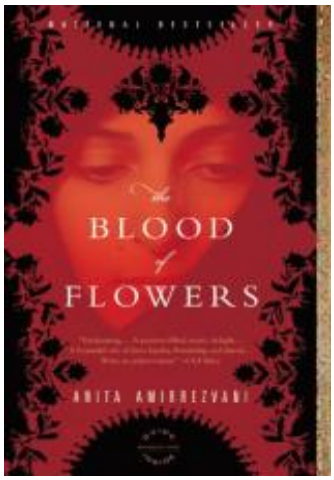
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The Blood of Flowers

by Anita Amirrezvani



About the Book

In 17th-century Persia, a 14-year-old woman believes she will be married within the year. But when her beloved father dies, she and her mother find themselves alone and without a dowry. With nowhere else to go, they are forced to sell the brilliant turquoise rug the young woman has woven to pay for their journey to Isfahan, where they will work as servants for her uncle, a rich rug designer in the court of the legendary Shah Abbas the Great.

Despite her lowly station, the young woman blossoms as a brilliant designer of carpets, a rarity in a craft dominated by men. But while her talent flourishes, her prospects for a happy marriage grow dim. Forced into a secret marriage to a wealthy man, the young woman finds herself faced with a daunting decision: forsake her own dignity, or risk everything she has in an effort to create a new life.

Discussion Guide

1. What is the significance of the novel?s title? What does it mean in terms of both the narrator and the story itself?

2. How would you describe the author?s writing style, and what do you think this style brings to the novel? Did you find anything striking or unusual about the way the story unfolds? Did it remind you of anything you have read before?

3. How much did you know about Iranian history and culture before reading this book? Did anything in the story strike you as completely unlike - or surprisingly reminiscent of - our lives today? What do you think you gain from reading a novel about a period in history, as opposed to a nonfiction historical account?

4. The author decided to leave the narrator anonymous, as is the tradition in many folktales. When, if ever, did you realize that you didn?t know the narrator?s name? What effect did the anonymity have on you as a reader? Does it matter whether or not we know a character?s name?

5. Why do you think the author chose to include a number of Iranian tales throughout the novel? What did these stories add to your understanding of the book and of Iranian culture as a whole? Do you have a favorite story?

6. Though The Blood of Flowers is set in a time and place that may be very foreign to most readers, it is a universal story about a girl reclaiming her life and coming into her own. In what ways is this a familiar story? In what ways does this story differ from your own experience or from other coming-of-age novels you have read?

7. The Blood of Flowers explores many different relationships in the narrator?s life ? with her mother, her father, her uncle, her friend, and her husband, to name a few ? all bringing out different sides of the narrator. Which relationship did you find the most compelling? Which did you find the most perplexing?

8. What is the meaning of the final tale, and why do you think the author chose to end the novel with this one? Is this the future you see for the narrator?

9. The intricate art of rugmaking is incredibly important to the story, and to the narrator herself. What do you think rugmaking represents with regard to the narrator aside from monetary benefit? What does it represent in the story itself?

Author Bio

Anita Amirrezvani was born in Tehran and grew up in the United States. When she was fourteen years old her father let her choose a carpet for herself, and the old and beautiful rug she selected led her to imagine the lives of the people who might have designed and created it. Out of that experience comes her first novel.

Critical Praise

"This story of one woman?s struggle to establish her own life in 17th-century Iran is as complex, intricate, and beautiful as the exquisite rugs she designs. Setting her story against the background of the dynamic city of Isfahan, Anita Amirrezvani has written a novel with a great stylistic touch that is so lush and magical in its plot and telling, it will conjure images of Scheherazade."

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