# In your groups, choose 2-3 questions to explore.

# Educated

1. In what ways did both Lisa’s father and brother Shawn use religion as a way to manipulate the women of the family, especially Tara?
2. Many of Tara’s father’s choices have an obvious impact on Tara’s life, but how did her mother’s choices influence her? How did that change over time?
3. By Chapter 22, Westover writes that her life was often “narrated for me by others. Their voices were forceful, emphatic, absolute. It had never occurred to me that my voice might be as strong as theirs.” Westover eventually finds her voice and realizes it’s just as powerful as the people who have influenced her life. What is voice, and how important is it that every child be encouraged to find their own?
4. 7. Why is it significant that Westover didn’t know the word “holocaust” and had no knowledge of race issues in the United States? How does her view/awareness of racism evolve throughout the book?
5. At one point, Tara’s father makes the case that his form of homeschooling couldn’t have been that bad since three of his children went on to receive their PhDs. What do you make of this? Did his children succeed in spite of their education, or were there some inherent lessons about how to learn imparted by this non-traditional form of education?
6. Do you think Mariam’s stories are true? How reliable of a narrator is she? If you were to read it from the mother’s perspective, what would be different?

# Ready Player One

1. The OASIS becomes a part of daily life for users around the globe. What virtual realms (Google, Facebook, iCloud) do you depend on? What is at stake in the war against IOI, the internet service provider that wants to overturn Halliday’s affordable, open-source approach? Is it dangerous to mix profit and dependence on technology?

How is the novel shaped by the 1980s backdrop, featuring John Hughes films, suburban shows like Family Ties, a techno-beat soundtrack, and of course, a slew of early video games? Did Halliday grow up in a utopia?

1. Explore the question of identity raised in the novel. What do the characters’ avatars tell us about their desires and their insecurities? In reality, does our physical appearance give false clues about who we really are? How does Parzival, transformed into a celebrity gunter, become Wade’s true self?
2. 10. Wade doesn’t depend on religion to make moral decisions or overcome life-threatening challenges. What does the novel say about humanity’s relationship to religion? What sort of god is Halliday, creator of the OASIS universe?
3. Does this story reinforce stereotypes or not? What is the power of story telling in books and movies to young adults?

# Red Rising

1. Darrow makes strategic decisions regarding his relationship with the members of House Mars and the houses they conquer. Based on your reading of the novel, who do you think makes a better leader: someone who is loved or someone who is feared? Use evidence from *Red Rising* in addition to any other texts to support your response.
2. Near the end of the novel, the ArchGovernor cautions Darrow, “But of all the things in all the worlds, words are power.” Consider Darrow’s speeches, his native dialect, and the words that the author has created for the book. Which words are most important? Why?
3. There are two more books in the trilogy. Predict what will happen to Darrow.
4. Although this book is fiction, there are elements of truth about our society within the cover. What are they?
5. This book is a dystopia. Compare it to other dystopias you have read in the past.

# A Thousand Splendid Suns

1. What did *A Thousand Splendid Suns* teach you about the history of Afghanistan? Did anything surprise you?
2. Mariam’s mother says: "Women like us. We endure. It’s all we have." In what ways is this true? How do Mariam and Laila endure? How is their endurance different from the ways their mothers faced their trials?
3. Several times Mariam passes herself off as Laila's mother. In what way is their relationship like mother-daughter? How did their own relationships with their mothers shape how they treated each other and their family?
4. The Taliban forbid "writing books, watching films, and painting pictures;" yet the film *Titanic* becomes a sensation on the black market. Why would people risk the Taliban’s violence to watch the film? Why do you think this particular film became so popular? How does Hosseini use films throughout the novel to symbolize relationships between people and the state of the country (i.e. Jalil's theater, Tariq & Laila's outings to the movies)?

# American Dirt

* 1. Throughout the novel, Lydia thinks back on how, when she was living a middle-class existence, she viewed migrants with pity: “All her life she’s pitied those poor people. She’s donated money. She’s wondered with the sort of detached fascination of the comfortable elite how dire the conditions of their lives must be wherever they come from, that this is the better option. That these people would leave their homes, their cultures, their families, even their languages, and venture into tremendous peril, risking their very lives, all for the chance to get to the dream of some faraway country that doesn’t even want them” (chapter 10, page 94). Do you think the author chose to make Lydia a middle-class woman as her protagonist for a reason? Do you think the reader would have had a different entry point to the novel if Lydia started out as a poor migrant? Would you have viewed Lydia differently if she had come from poor origins? How much do you identify with Lydia?
  2. **5.**When Lydia, Luca, Soledad and Rebeca are at the Casa del Migrante, the priest warns them to turn back: “If it’s only a better life you seek, seek it elsewhere.... This path is only for people who have no choice, no other option, only violence and misery behind you” (chapter 17, page 168). Were you surprised that he would be issuing such a dire warning when he must know how desperate they are to be there in the first place? Under what conditions might you decide to leave your homeland?
  3. What did you think of Sebastian and his decision to expose the truth about Javier and the cartel? What would you do in his position? Do you think he was selfish or did you admire him?
  4. Lydia, Luca, Soledad and Rebeca make it to el norte. Did you like the ending? What did you think their life would be like in the USA?
  5. Do you think Cummins had a right to write this book despite not being an immigrant OR a person of Mexican descent? Why or why not?