

Book Club Discussion Guide



Hotline by Dimitri Nasrallah), Page 1 (November 2023)

Hotline

By Dimitri Nasrallah

About the author:

Dimitri Nasrallah is the author of four novels. His most recent, 2022's *Hotline*, was a national bestseller that was nominated for the Scotiabank Giller Prize and shortlisted for CBC's Canada Reads. He was born in Lebanon in 1977, and moved to Canada in 1988. His previous books include *The Bleeds*, *Niko*, and *Blackbodying*. He lives in Montreal, where he serves as fiction editor for Véhicule Press's Esplanade Fiction imprint and teaches creative writing at Concordia University.

Source: Concordia University: (<https://www.concordia.ca/faculty/dimitri-nasrallah.html>)

About this book:

A vivid love letter to the 1980s and one woman's struggle to overcome the challenges of immigration

It's 1986, and Muna Heddad is in a bind. She and her son have moved to Montreal, leaving behind a civil war filled with bad memories in Lebanon. She had plans to find work as a French teacher, but no one in Quebec trusts her to teach the language. She needs to start making money, and fast. The only work Muna can find is at a weight-loss center as a hotline operator.

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All day, she takes calls from people responding to ads seen in magazines or on TV. On the phone, she's Mona, and she's good at listening. These strangers all have so much to say once someone shows interest in their lives--marriages gone bad, parents dying, isolation, personal inadequacies. Even as her daily life in Canada is filled with invisible barriers at every turn, at the office Muna is privy to her clients' deepest secrets.

Source: Goodreads: (<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/60524292-hotline>)

Discussion Questions:

1. How did you experience the book? Were you engaged immediately, or did it take you a while to get into it? What elements captivated or discouraged you when reading the novel?
2. How did you feel as you followed Muna's journey—sad, confused, bored?
3. Which characters did you like least? How did Muna's interactions/relationships with these characters influence your feeling about them?
4. Has this novel changed you or broadened your perspective about a difficult issue? Muna comes from a different country as a single mother and has experienced war personally. Have you learned something new or been exposed to different ideas about people or a certain part of the world?
5. Consider the theme of identity in Hotline. What factors led to Muna changing her name to Mona? When or if does her identity change throughout the novel?
6. Muna finds it difficult to balance her new career and her role as a mother. Do you see any chance of Muna rebuilding her relationship with Omar?

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7. Muna is a determined woman, but also has weaknesses. Many of her clients have deep insecurities and emotional issues. Which character in the book would you most like to meet? Did you find anyone's story particularly fascinating?

8. Muna's experience is not unique. If these setbacks and barriers happened to Muna, an educated, hardworking woman, consider the experience of other immigrants to Canada. How does that make you feel about Canada? What supports could we offer new immigrants?

Source: Clarington Library, Museums & Archives

(<https://www.cplma.ca/catalogue-collections/library-of-things/book-club-in-a-bag/>)