



## THE PICKUP: Study Questions

1. How do social class, economic status, and the global inequalities that affect immigration shape the interaction between Julie and Abdu (Ibrahim) during their time together in Julie's homeland?
2. Do Julie and Abdu (Ibrahim) genuinely love each other, or should we conclude that one or both of them has purely instrumental designs on the relationship?
3. At an important moment in the novel, Julie quotes a richly suggestive passage from South African poet William Plomer: "Let us go to another country / not yours or mine / and start again." (p. 88) How does the looming presence of Julie's "beautiful suitcase" and Ibrahim's "canvas bag standing ready" (p. 218) affect the couple's chances of really "starting again"?
4. When Julie arrives in Ibrahim's country, her initial encounters with his family and other local citizens lead her to feel "somehow as strange to herself as she was to them" (p. 117). How does Julie become able, in this "strange" land, to let go of the sense of alienation and separateness that she felt at home?
5. Ibrahim seems to care very deeply about his mother. Does his resistance to so many of the cultural practices that his mother values, or his determination to immigrate (legally) to a wealthy Western country, call into question the genuineness of his love for his mother?
6. What, if anything, does Julie's relationship with Ibrahim's mother tell us about the cultural role of women in Ibrahim's homeland?
7. The desert sometimes seems to attain the status of an additional character in The Pickup. How do the main characters' experiences of, and interactions with, the desert influence the events of the novel?
8. What should we make of the fact that that Julie's day-to-day life in Ibrahim's homeland seems to be profoundly shaped by, and intertwined with, religious commitments that she does not seem ready to make?
9. Ibrahim's friends debate the possibility of introducing certain elements of Western life in their country without allowing themselves to be "taken over" by Western ideals. (pp.176-9). Ibrahim appears to think that his friends "are living on hopes that couldn't be realized--even for themselves" (p. 175). What is Ibrahim hoping for, and are his personal goals any more likely to be realized than the political ends his friends might be seeking for their homeland?
10. Ibrahim seems to retain a conception of himself as a "penniless illegal" (p. 173) long after he and Julie have arrived in his home country. Does this element of his self-conception affect his capacity to behave responsibly towards Julie?