

Skokie Public Library's Book Discussion Guide

Motherland by Vineeta Vijayaraghavan

- Do you feel Maya's parents were right to worry about their daughter's "Americanness"?
- How does Maya react to the sights, sounds and customs when she arrives in India?
- One critic discusses Maya's arrival at the airport where she's greeted by government intelligence officials who accuse her of associating with Tamil rebels: "The interrogation scene, with its accusations of collaboration and threats of violence, locates Maya's story within the realm of politics and history, eliminating the possibility of sentimentalized and idealized readings of her text." What do you think of this scene? Did it add to the story or to your understanding of Maya's character?
- The story is told only from Maya's point of view. How might it be different if it were told with the viewpoints of other characters?
- Maya develops a very close relationship with her grandmother. How would you characterize this relationship? How does it change in the course of the novel?
- Should parents be more forthcoming with family secrets to their children?
- How is Maya changed by her trip to India?
- How can new immigrants best balance old and new cultures in their family life?
- How would you describe the relationship between Maya and Rupa? How is it affected by the caste system?
- Is the story a realistic portrayal of an immigrant teen?
- Why do you think Maya's Aunt and Uncle are less strict with Maya's cousin, Madhu, than with Maya? How has Madhu's upbringing differed from that of Maya's? How is her attitude different from that of her cousin's?
- Besides the cultural gap that exists between Western and Asian Indian values, there is a generational gap. How does this gap affect immigrant families?
- How well does this book exemplify the immigrant experience in America?
- Which is Maya's motherland?



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