

1. How do you interpret the book's title? How does the Shiva Bandit story evolve over the course of the story? Which of the book's characters might also qualify as "shiva bandits"?
2. Why do you think Devora has such a difficult time relating to her daughters? What are her strengths and weaknesses as a mother?
3. Survival in this book comes at an often terrible price. What choices do the different characters make in order to survive? Which choices might you have made?
4. Consider the various writers and artists we meet in the story, like Shimon and Sonya Barofsky, Alexei Tolstoy, Anna Akhmatova, Faina Ranevskaya, Maryam-otin, and Usto Mumin. What role does art play in the struggle to survive? What compromises do these artists make to continue to create under harsh conditions?
5. What did you think of Devora's friendship with Maryam-otin? What did they learn from each other?
6. Examine the relationship between the two sisters, Leah and Talia, and how that changed during the novel. What do you imagine their lives will be like in the future?
7. Aaron Hamburger's previous novel *Hotel Cuba* also began in the imagined village of "Turya," and he has said that he sees the character of Sandy as the nephew of Pearl, the protagonist of *Hotel Cuba*. If you've read *Hotel Cuba*, what connections can you draw between the two books? Imagine the differences between the people who emigrated from Eastern Europe before World War II and those who stayed and had to struggle to survive.
8. How much did you know about the experiences of World War II refugees within the Soviet Union and Central Asia before reading this book? What surprised you?
9. Stories of refugees and resettlement continue to impact the news. How do the stories of war and displacement in *The Shiva Bandit* compare to current events? How can we extend the spirit of cooperation across cultural divides that flickers throughout this novel in our own lives?