Discussion Questions

Funny in Farsi
by Firoozeh Dumas

Source: Madison Public Library

1. Dumas’ family moved to the United States for the first time in the early 1970s. She mentions that Americans didn’t know much about Iran back then. Do you think, as a country, we know more about Iran today? How much do you feel you know? Can you locate it on a map? How much of our knowledge about Iran is shaded by the “War on Terror?”

2. Dumas mentions (page 36) how warm, kind and generous the people in Whittier, California were to her family back in the 1970s. Do you think immigrants from Iran today get the same treatment?

3. Dumas encountered problems as a result of her unusual name (page 66). Do you think given the pervasiveness of names from other countries in the media and on television today, that she would find the same issue now?

4. On page 103, she says “Without my relatives, I am but a thread; together, we form a colorful and elaborate Persian carpet.” Compare your family relationships to those of Dumas’ family. She tells us that Iran has more words for family relationships than English does. Is it because we value our families less than the Iranians? If not, what explains that difference?

5. Dumas’ father experienced much discrimination here in the United States while looking for a job during the hostage crisis (page 116-121). Given today’s political climate, do you think that he would find the same discrimination today?

6. Did you enjoy the book and find it funny? What makes a memoir funny to you: content, writing style, approach to characters? Are there other memoirs you’ve read that are similar in tone or content?
7. Book groups often mention they like to learn about other places and cultures through memoirs and novels rather than pure nonfiction. Is that true for you and your group? Was that true of *Funny in Farsi*? What did you learn about Iran and Iranians through this memoir?