

Yasmine

Manuscript synopsis

The novel tells the story of Yasmine, a young Tunisian woman who spends her formative years sojourning between her home country and France. Her personal experiences mirror the struggle of Tunisia following decolonialization, and through this lens, *Yasmine* explores questions of language and cultural identity.

As a child, Yasmine resents her strict upbringing: Her mother wishes for her to study mathematics and become an accountant, but Yasmine is a daydreamer with a passion for poetry. A brief visit to Paris inspires her, and for many years, the city exists in her imagination as an exotic memory. As a teenager, Yasmine attends boarding school in Tunis and works hard so she can return to France one day. She is eventually accepted at a renowned school in Paris.

Life in the city is much different than her fanciful memories. Like Yasmine, her Algerian friend Nadia questions her cultural identity and grapples with racism from other students. Though Yasmine struggles with her studies, one of her professors, Jean Dumont, becomes a mentor and a love interest. However, when he leaves for Germany, she is devastated. Feeling isolated and unable to support herself financially in Paris, she is forced to return to Tunisia and accept a job working for her uncle as a bookkeeper.

Feeling trapped in her hometown of Sfax, Yasmine begins to use poetry as an escape once again. Eventually, she understands that her mother has simply wanted the best for her, and they come to a newfound understanding of each other. Yasmine returns to school with her mother's blessing and earns a degree in translation, which opens the door for her to go back to Paris and work with Henri Bouchard, a colleague of her former professor. He encourages her to pursue

poetry more seriously. She also takes a job working with new immigrants, which forces her to ask herself challenging questions about her place in France.

The sudden death of her mother brings her back to Tunisia, but this time she is accompanied by Bouchard and realizes that she has fallen in love with him. In her hometown, she is flooded by memories of her childhood. The time she spends there with her family allows her to come to a better understanding of her identity, and though she knows her true home will always be in Tunisia and she will return some day, she goes back to Paris feeling independent and capable of pursuing her creative dreams.