Some topics to consider while reading *Ali Abdul v The King*:
- Immigration
- Religious and racial discrimination
- Social and political injustice
- Australian history
- Overcoming adversity

Hanifa Deen enters the wonderful world of the archives and discovers a tribe of men with a hidden history – men whose stories are rarely told: the ‘Ghans’, cameleers, ‘sepoys’, hawkers, herbalists, and pearl divers, known collectively as ‘Mohammedans’ in early Australian history.

This fascinating collection of narratives combines Deen’s gift for storytelling with history and nostalgia as she takes the reader back into Australia’s past. These stories may even help explain some of the moral ambiguities and strange ironies that trouble us today.

**About Hanifa Deen**

Hanifa Deen is a Melbourne based author of Pakistani-Muslim ancestry, and a third-generation Australian, who was born in Kalgoorlie, Western Australia. Specialising in narrative non-fiction, she has written five books including the best-selling *Broken Bangles*, which was short-listed for the WA Premier’s Book Award in 1998, and *The Jihad Seminar* (UWA Press, 2008), which was shortlisted for the 2008 Human Rights Medals and Awards.
Discussion questions

1. Many of the early cultural traditions of ‘Mohammedans’ died out with the first generation of immigrants. Deen suggests that this may be because the early immigrants weren’t allowed to bring their wives to Australia to continue on their lineage and cultural traditions. Or was it because these men felt a necessity to be trusted by their settler employers that saw them only practice their religious beliefs in private and live out their lives alone?

2. Deen puts forward the theory that the majority of the white colonial population believed that ‘Social Darwinism’ meant that competitive selection put minorities at the bottom of the genetic period. Is it acceptable to misappropriate scientific or religious beliefs in order to maintain social prejudices?

3. Discuss the incident at Afghan Rock. Was this a serious miscarriage of justice?

4. The Dictation Test was often set in a foreign language and used to deter non-English speaking migrants from entering Australia, or to deport ‘undesirables’. Are there any parallels between the Dictation Test and the contemporary Australian Citizenship test, set in English, used to gain Australian citizenship?

5. Sam, the pearl diver, was weeks away from having his naturalisation approved when he began to rally the Malay divers to fight for equal rights, higher pay and better living conditions. Was Sam right in standing up for his democratic beliefs, or should he have waited until he became naturalised, thus allowing him to stay and continue to work in Australia?

6. Should Muslims be included in Australian folklore? Do the ‘Ghans’, cameleers, hawkers, herbalists and pearl divers have a place alongside traditional Australian icons like the drover, shearer, the Aussie digger and others?

7. What legacy, if any, did the first generation of ‘Mohammedans’ leave for future generations of Muslim migrants in Australia?

8. Did any of the stories or the Muslim men resonate with you strongly?

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