



# WHITED OUT CONDITIONS

A NOVEL BY  
TARIQ SHAH

## Reader Guide: Questions and Topics for Discussion

1. The principal characters in this book are all challenged by their inability to avert the tragedies that befall them, and yet many of their choices are attempts to do just this, or to right irrevocable wrongs. How would you go about coping with similar traumas?
2. It could be interpreted that Bullets is a representation of death itself. In what ways is this true? False? What does this say about the characters' relationships to death in this book?
3. How do you view Ant, the main character in the book, at the beginning, and how does that view change as the book progresses?
4. The Midwest, in the middle of winter, is often a bleak place. Have you ever experienced this region during this time, and if so, how does your experience track with those of these characters, and the book's portrayal of this time/place?
5. This book examines addiction in a number of different ways. Have you ever been addicted to something that was not a drug (e.g. potato chips/golfing/comic books/etc)? What was it, how did this addiction develop, and what is your view of this behavioral phenomenon in light of this? When does a hobby become an obsession? When does an obsession become an addiction?
6. Many characters in this book get into all kinds of fantastic trouble, and commit terrible deeds, while their elders/parents/peers are near, at times even in the next room, and yet they may as well be invisible, and these younger characters do not suffer any real consequences. Have you ever gotten away with anything similar? Do you feel there are any societal implications to this?



# WHITED OUT CONDITIONS

A NOVEL BY

TARIQ SHAH

## Reader Guide: Questions and Topics for Discussion

7. In this book, the past informs and interweaves itself with the present, in ways both subtle and bold. The characters choose to define themselves by specific moments of their pasts, and thus, construct narratives of the lives they lead. This is something all people do, often without thinking about it. And yet, these are choices. What are some of the choices you have made that define you, and why?
8. Many characters in this book end up driven into a kind of madness by their grief, and commit acts that, logically, do not help their situation. What does this say about man's nature, as a creature supposedly above acting from a place of raw emotion? In other words, do we ever really grow up, or do we simply learn ways to mask the children we really are?
9. About halfway through the book, Ant says, "You're a good father, Vince." Is he? What makes one a good father? How would you describe/judge Vince's moral character?
10. How do the epigraphs at the beginning of the book relate to the story?