

Reading Comprehension Questions for *Woman at Point Zero* by Nawal El Saadawi

Assignment 1: Annotate the following patterns (and anything else you think will help you understand the book, or that will help you gather quotes to write about)

1. **Basic Pattern: Money**
2. **Advanced Pattern: Responses to Oppression**

Remember: Oppression is when someone with power puts down someone without power. Responses to oppression are how the person without power is affected by the oppression, and it comes in many forms.

3. **A Pattern of YOUR OWN:** (Write it in) _____

Annotate by **underlining directly in the text** where you see the pattern, or putting a sticky note right at that spot, and writing in the name of the pattern, and any other information or explanations you want to put down. Remember, if you did not buy the book, you must use sticky notes or underline lightly in pencil and erase it before returning it.

Target 1	1	2	3	4
I can annotate patterns	I have not demonstrated this skill yet.	Annotate basic patterns of authorial elements in a text given by teacher	Independently annotate patterns OR annotate sophisticated patterns of authorial elements in a text given by teacher	Independently annotate sophisticated patterns of authorial elements in a text.

Assignment 2: Guided Reading Questions

Please read *Woman at Point Zero* and answer the questions briefly (they are chronological).

Both assignments are due MONDAY, October 14th.

Chapter 1
1. Who is the narrator? What does she do for a living?
2. How is the narrator characterized? What is she like?
3. What is strange about the female prisoner the narrator becomes interested in? (2)

4. What does the narrator feel upon meeting this female prisoner for the first time? (7)

5. What is the significance of the line “But this was no dream?” (8)

Chapter 2

6. How does the author develop Firdaus’ narrative voice in the first paragraph of Chapter 2? In other words, what do we learn about Firdaus by the way she talks?

7. How does Firdaus’ father treat her and her mother? (10-11, 16-17)

8. What three important events in Firdaus’ sexual development happen in pages 12-13?

9. How do you interpret the shifts in Firdaus’ description of her mother’s eyes on pages 15-17? If she is the same woman, what has happened to her?

10. What is the symbolic significance of the mirror? (19)

11. What is El Azhar? (14, 20)

12. How does Firdaus' uncle treat her well once she starts living with him? What causes their intimacy to change? (20-22)

13. Describe her uncle's wife.

14. Describe Firdaus' experience at boarding school. (23-25)

15. What does Firdaus learn from books about great rulers? (26-27)

16. How is Firdaus' experience with Miss Iqbal different from all her previous experiences with other people? (28-30)

17. What embarrassing thing happens to Firdaus at her graduation? (32-33)

18. Why do Firdaus' uncle and his wife want to get rid of Firdaus? What do they decide to do? (36-39)

19. What does Firdaus realize when she runs away, when her “third eye” opens? What sends her back to her uncle? (42-44)

20. Describe Firdaus’ married life with Sheikh Mahmoud. Which part would you hate the most if you were in her shoes? (44-46)

21. What does her uncle and his wife say when she tells him Sheikh Mahmoud has been beating her? (46-47)

22. What question does Bayoumi ask Firdaus that changes her view of herself? What is her life like with him (at first)? (49-51)

23. What does Bayoumi eventually do to her? (52-53)

24. What color is a motif in the characterization of Sharifa, the successful prostitute? What do you think that color suggests? (54-55)

25. What does she mean when she says “I know them all.”? What advice and help does she give Firdaus? (56-59)

26. What question do the men who pay for Firdaus’ services often ask her? Why do you think she calls this question “stupid?” (60-61)

27. What happens to Sharifa that shows she is not as invincible as she may have seemed to Firdaus at first? (63-65)

28. When I read this novel for the first time, I thought this scene with the policeman, mostly due to *when* it takes place, was the most brutal in the entire book (i.e. hard to get through, provoked an angry, emotional response in me, tied my stomach into knots, etc.). Do you agree? Why or why not? (66-67)

29. How does the ten pound note change Firdaus' life? Why? (ten pound note = a bill worth roughly \$300 in 2013 US dollars) (68-74)

30. What does her friend say to Firdaus that changes her view of herself? (75-79)

31. Describe Firdaus' time as a "respectably" employed woman. What does she realize about all women? (79-83)

32. Describe her experience with a man named Ibrahim. What does he do that hurts her so badly? (84-93)

33. What does Firdaus understand about life on page 94? Do you agree with her?

34. Justify this statement using evidence from page 3 and page 95: The woman Firdaus has now become is the woman the psychiatrist meets in chapter 1.

35. How did Firdaus become so successful? (96-99)

36. What does Marzouk do to Firdaus that threatens her happiness and success? Why can't she escape from him? (100-103)

37. In a full paragraph, answer the following question: What is the meaning of the murder on page 104?

38. In a full paragraph, answer the following question: What does she do with the money from the Arab prince? Why does she call this tearing off "the last remaining veil" from her eyes? (106-109)

39. What does Firdaus claim that the authorities are afraid of, the reason they are putting her to death? (110-112)