

Some questions on the whole novel

Discuss the following questions and prepare notes for each one before choosing ONE for an essay:

1. Anne Tyler's novel purports to be about shattering stereotypes but ultimately the novelist merely upholds them. Explore this statement and explain whether you agree or disagree with it.
2. Explore the suggestion that Tyler's female characters are interesting and rounded individuals whereas the male characters are one dimensional and shallow.
3. *Digging to America* is about belonging. Explore this statement and, with close reference to the text, discuss to what extent you agree or disagree with the statement.
4. Explore the suggestion that the novel has an unsatisfactory ending because it all ends happily.
5. Tyler's desire to give many characters a voice detracts from the cohesion of the novel and makes it seem like lots of small stories stuck awkwardly together. Explore this idea and explain whether you agree or disagree with it.
6. It has been said that, 'Anne Tyler manages to make the ordinary extraordinary'. Explore this statement.
7. 'A magnificent piece of character drawing,' (*The Observer*); do you agree or disagree? Explain your opinions, with close reference to the novel.
8. The novel is more about the relationship between Maryam and America than anything else. Explore this statement and, with close reference to the novel, give your opinion.
9. 'Wise and funny ... a multidimensional exploration of what it means to belong, not only to a family but also to a nation' (*The Sunday Times*); do you agree or disagree? Explain your opinions, with close reference to the novel.
10. 'For all of Tyler's writerly gifts — and she has many — it's hard to enjoy *Digging to America*: The characters are just that unlikeable.'*(Entertainment Weekly)* Explore this review and, with close reference to the novel, discuss to what extent you agree or disagree with the statement.