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Study Guide

for

**Shabanu:
Daughter of
the Wind**

by Suzanne Fisher Staples



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New York, New York Columbus, Ohio Woodland Hills, California Peoria, Illinois

Meet Suzanne Fisher Staples



My hope for *Shabanu* and *Haveli* and all good books about people who are different from us is that they will inspire us to grow beyond our limits to learn understanding. And that this understanding will foster peace in the world by teaching us not to fear differences but to become more compassionate people.

—from “Different Is Just Different”

Suzanne Fisher Staples, born on August 27, 1945, in northeastern Pennsylvania, has lived a life as active and colorful and as that of many fictional heroines. She grew up a tomboy, playing with animals in the fields of Pennsylvania and reading such books as *The Hardy Boys*, *Treasure Island*, and *The Catcher in the Rye*. She loved reading in particular. She says

Among my happiest memories are of rainy summer days tucked up under the eaves of our family's rustic lake cottage, a gentle patter overhead, reading a book. . . . I was allowed to read what I liked. It helped me to learn who I was and where I fit into the world.

Staples's love of books led her to major in literature and political science at Cedar Crest College, from which she graduated in 1967. That same year, she married and became a journalist.

Staples began her career by working on a contract basis for newspapers. Those jobs led to a full-time position with an international publishing company. What she really wanted, though, was to be a foreign correspondent. In 1974 she got the chance to become her company's Asian marketing director and left for Hong Kong.

In Hong Kong, Staples met the head of United Press International (UPI) and so impressed him that, in 1975, he offered her a job as foreign correspondent. In that role, Staples reported on news from many fascinating places. By 1980 she had become UPI bureau chief in New Delhi, India.

In 1983, Staples accepted a part-time position at the foreign news desk of the *Washington Post*. Three years later, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) asked her to do a study on poverty in Pakistani, concentrating on women. She leaped at the opportunity. She discovered the courage, strength, and humor of the Pakistani people as she worked beside them, learned their language, and exchanged life stories with them. Their stories, said Staples, “became the framework for *Shabanu* and *Haveli* [the sequel to *Shabanu*].”

After covering real-life stories as a journalist for twelve years, Staples turned to fiction writing. She explained that she had begun to think that fiction might be better than news stories at promoting cultural understanding.

Staples has furthered Americans' understanding of other cultures through four young-adult novels: *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind* (1989), *Haveli* (1993), *Dangerous Skies* (1996), and *Shiva's Fire* (2000). She has also helped enlighten people about Islamic culture by lecturing on the status of women in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan.

Staples currently lives with her husband in Mount Dora, Florida, where she enjoys reading, running, tennis, and theater, and continues to write fiction.

Introducing the Novel

Ms. Staples . . . has surely accomplished a small miracle in the unfolding of her touching and powerful story. She has managed to present to her readers an engaging and convincing portrait of an adolescent girl who is alternately bewildered and exhilarated by her changing mind and body; at the same time, the author offers rich and provocative insights into a culture so distanced from rock videos and designer jeans as to seem extraterrestrial.

—Maurya Simon, poet and critic

BACKGROUND

When Suzanne Fisher Staples went to Pakistan to study the cycles of poverty among women for USAID, she had little reason to suppose that she would be doing more than attempting to understand and solve some of the problems faced by Pakistani women. While reporting on the Afghanistan War several years earlier, she had contemplated writing fiction. She had thought that stories, which give people an intimate glimpse of others' lives, might help people realize that the human heart is the same the world over. Still, when she headed for the Cholistan Desert, it was only to gather information for the USAID study.

As a sign of respect for the Islamic people and their culture, Staples wore Pakistani clothes. To better understand the women of the desert, she worked and slept beside them. She studied their language so that she could exchange stories with them. She laughed and cried with them. Sometime in the midst of these experiences—possibly while she was sitting around the campfire at night listening to the nomads' stories or when she met the intelligent eleven-year-old orphan being raised by her grandmother on whom the character Shabanu is based—the seed of her first novel took root.

THE TIME AND PLACE

The Cholistan Desert of Pakistan, which, centuries ago Arab marauders referred to as hell, is a long strip of sand dunes covering an area about the size of Maine. It is located along the border between the southeast edge of Pakistan and northwest India (see

map below). This desert is scorching hot, receives little rainfall, and is prone to sandstorms. Nevertheless, for thousands of years, nomadic tribes have lived out their entire lives there, herding camels and, more recently, goats and sheep. To survive, they depend upon one another, developing fierce loyalties to their extended families. In “Different Is Just Different,” Staples writes, “Living as they do on the very edge of survival, they depend on each other too much for triviality to creep into their relationships. They see joy and humor everywhere it hides, and they train themselves to find the best in every situation.”



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Did You Know?

Urdu is an official language of Pakistan. The author of *Shabanu* refers to many aspects of nomadic Pakistani Muslim life by their Urdu names. As you read, you will learn the meanings of many of these words and in so doing, learn something about the nomadic culture of the tribes who live in the Cholistan Desert.

One of the first Urdu words used in the novel is *chadr*, which is the veil worn by Muslim women of marriageable age. Staples, herself, was at first reluctant to wear one,

seeing it as a symbol of the repression of women, but she gave in out of respect for the women and their culture. What she discovered as time went by was that life in the desert would have been inconceivable without it: "I was mistaken about the veil, as I was in most of my other preconceived ideas about Islam. The *chadr*, when tied between the branches of a tree, makes a fine cradle. It is a backpack for carrying fodder and kindling, a screen to dress and bathe behind, a sheet, protection from the sun, a bandage, a towel."

CRITIC'S CORNER

"Suzanne Fisher Staples's first book, *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind*," offers young American readers a fascinating glimpse into the alien world of . . . a nomadic family." She concludes with the hope that, "her readers will gain from it a renewed sense of self and a deep respect for what is other."

—Maurya Simon, *New York Times* book review

Before You Read

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind Chapters Guluband–Shatoosh

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Recall a time when you lost a beloved pet or something else to which you were very attached. What were the circumstances, and how did you react?

Think-Pair-Share

Think of a time when you lost a beloved pet or something else that had special meaning for you. Recall how you felt and what the loss meant to you at the time. Then share the experience with a classmate.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how Shabanu loses her favorite camel, Guluband.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

Nomads have no fixed home. They move from place to place—usually in a group—to find food, water, and grazing land for their herds. Pakistanis are citizens of the nation of Pakistan. Muslims are followers of the religion of Islam.

Islam, which literally means “submission” to the will of God, is a religion based on the teachings of the prophet Muhammad. Muhammad, who lived from about A.D. 570 to 632, believed that he was the messenger of Allah (Arabic for “God”) and that, as such, he received revelations from Allah. After his death, Muhammad’s followers recorded these revelations and gathered them into one collection, the Koran, loosely translated as “recitation.” The Koran is the single most important book to the practitioners of Islam. The Sunna, the book containing the rules governing traditional Islamic conduct based on the words and deeds of Muhammad, is also sacred to Muslims.

Today more than 840 million people throughout the world practice Islam, making it second to Roman Catholicism in the number of followers. Although cultural and regional differences exist among Muslims, all Muslims share the central beliefs and practices set forth in the Koran and The Sunna.

Figurative Language: The Simile

In *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind*, Staples uses similes to create vivid images. A **simile** is a figure of speech in which a comparison of two unlike things is introduced by like or as. Examples include “tough as rhinoceros hide” (page 7); “content as old women in front of a fire” (page 36); “like a flower blooming in the desert sunset” (page 56); and “Like a breeze gathering strength,” (page 58). Be alert for the use of other similes in the novel.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

betrothal [bi trō´thəl] n. engagement to be married (p. 3)

cistern [sis´tərn] n. tank for storing liquids, especially rainwater (p. 1)

deferential [def´ə ren´shəl] adj. respectful (p. 22)

dowry [dour´ē] n. the money or property that a woman brings to her husband at the time of her marriage (p. 2)

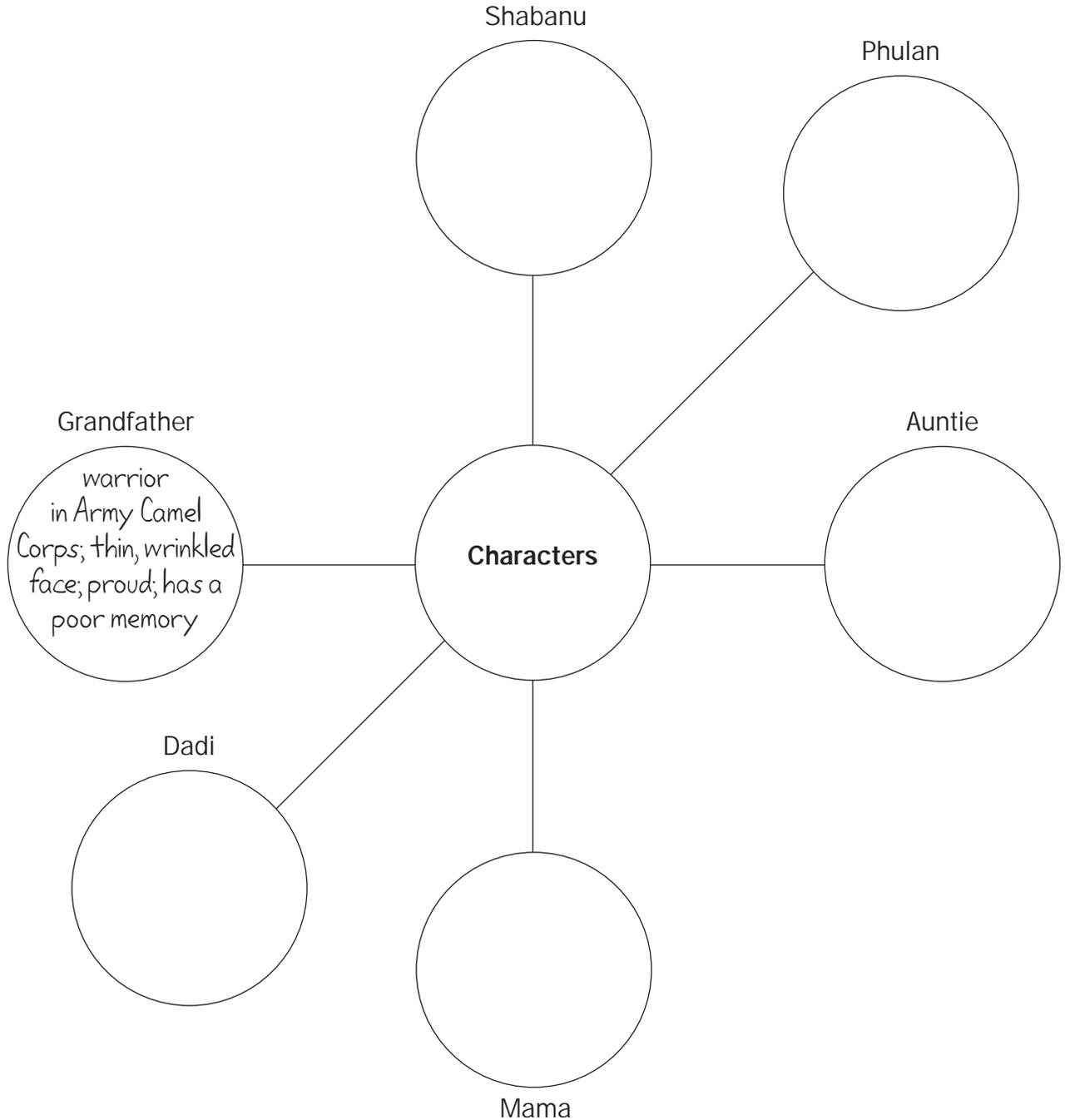
fodder [fod´ər] n. something fed to domestic animals (p. 30)

henna [hen´ə] n. a reddish brown dye obtained from leaves of the henna plant and used especially on hair (p. 19)

Active Reading

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind Chapters Guluband–Shatoosh

Writers use sensory details to make their characters, settings, and events come alive for readers. As you read *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind*, pay attention to the descriptive words and details that help you to imagine each of the characters identified by the circles below.



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Responding

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind Chapters Guluband–Shatoosh

Personal Response

What is your opinion so far of Dadi as a father? What influenced your opinion of him?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. What event temporarily relieves the family's concern? What does it suggest about the nature of life in the desert?

2. What does Phulan do that irritates Shabanu? Why might Shabanu feel this way?

3. What does Shabanu do during the episode with Tipu and Kalu that angers Dadi? Why, do you think, does he respond to Shabanu as he does?

4. What coincidence makes the shopkeeper give Shabanu the beautiful shatoosh? What effect do you think it had on her opinion of herself?

Responding

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind Chapters Guluband–Shatoosh

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

5. After explaining “camel vengeance,” Staples writes, “In the desert, men aren’t so different from camels. They never leave an old argument unsettled.” What might such a statement be preparing readers for?

6. How does Shabanu’s loss at the Sibi market affect her? Review your response to the **Focus Activity** on page 16. Then tell why she might feel as she does. What lesson might she take from this experience?

Literature and Writing

Analyzing Character

Look at what Shabanu has to say about herself—especially when she compares herself with others, as she does on page 17 of the novel. Then decide whether she would characterize herself as being more like a boy or a girl in her culture. State your decision as a thesis and write a short composition in which you support your thesis with evidence from the story.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

With your group, create a timeline that records the experiences that Shabanu has on her trip to and from Sibi with Dadi. Then pick the most thought provoking of these experiences and discuss why the author may have included it in the story. Answering questions such as, What effect does it have on Shabanu? and What might she have learned from this event? may help. Compare your time line with those of other groups in your class to find out what experiences they found to be the most thought provoking.

Science Connection

Many believe that the camel is the perfect animal for transporting people and goods across the desert. Research camel physiology to discover what features of a camel’s body help it survive desert conditions. Then report your findings to the rest of the class. To make your report more interesting and clear, you may wish to use visual aids such as pictures of camels or drawings that show the various parts of their bodies.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind Chapters Dowry–Derawar

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Name an activity that you now think you are too old to engage in. When did you first realize that you had probably done so for the last time?

Quickwrite

Write a paragraph about something that you used to enjoy doing but that you now feel too old to do. Describe the activity, explain why you now feel too old for it, and tell when you first realized that you were too old.

Setting a Purpose

Read to learn why Shabanu feels that she has outgrown the annual fair.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

Shabanu describes the women at the shrine of Channan Pir as “whirl [ing] like dervishes” (page 60). Dervishes are members of Muslim religious orders who are known for performing devotional dances. The purpose of the dance, characterized by whirling in circles, is to glorify God and seek spiritual perfection. The practice is more than seven centuries old. The dancers sit in a circle, listening to music. Slowly they rise, greeting the master. Standing in place, they go round and round, whirling faster and faster. The movement is an attempt to enter a trance to merge their identities with God. The ceremony always ends in prayer. Not all dervish orders dance. Some stand on one foot and move the other to music.

Foreshadowing

Foreshadowing is the author’s use of clues to prepare readers for events that will occur later in a story. In *Shabanu*, Staples uses foreshadowing throughout the story. One example is Shabanu’s father’s selling her favorite animal, Guluband, despite his telling her that he would not. This loss foreshadows Shabanu’s loss of Murad as a future husband when he becomes betrothed to Phulan. Another is the mention of camel vengeance and men’s tendency never to leave an old argument unsettled. This statement foreshadows Hamir’s avenging Nazir’s insult to Phulan, a vengeance that results in his death. As you continue to read, be alert for instances of foreshadowing.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

animation [an’ə mā’shən] n. liveliness; spirit; vivacity (p. 48)

desolate [des’ə lit] adj. deserted, lonely; miserable (p. 76)

devastation [dev’əs tā’shən] n. destruction; desolation (p. 70)

inclination [in’klə nā’shən] n. a liking; a tendency to a particular action (p. 76)

martyr [mār’tər] n. a person who dies or sacrifices something of great value for the sake of a principle (p. 73)

mosque [mosk] n. a building used for public worship by Muslims (p. 59)

pannier [pan’ē ar] n. a large container or basket for carrying goods, especially one of a connected pair designed to be slung across the back of a pack animal (p. 56)

relic [rel’ik] n. some object associated with a saint, martyr, or other venerated person (p. 84)

wrought [rôt] v. made; formed; shaped by hammering; ornamented (p. 70)

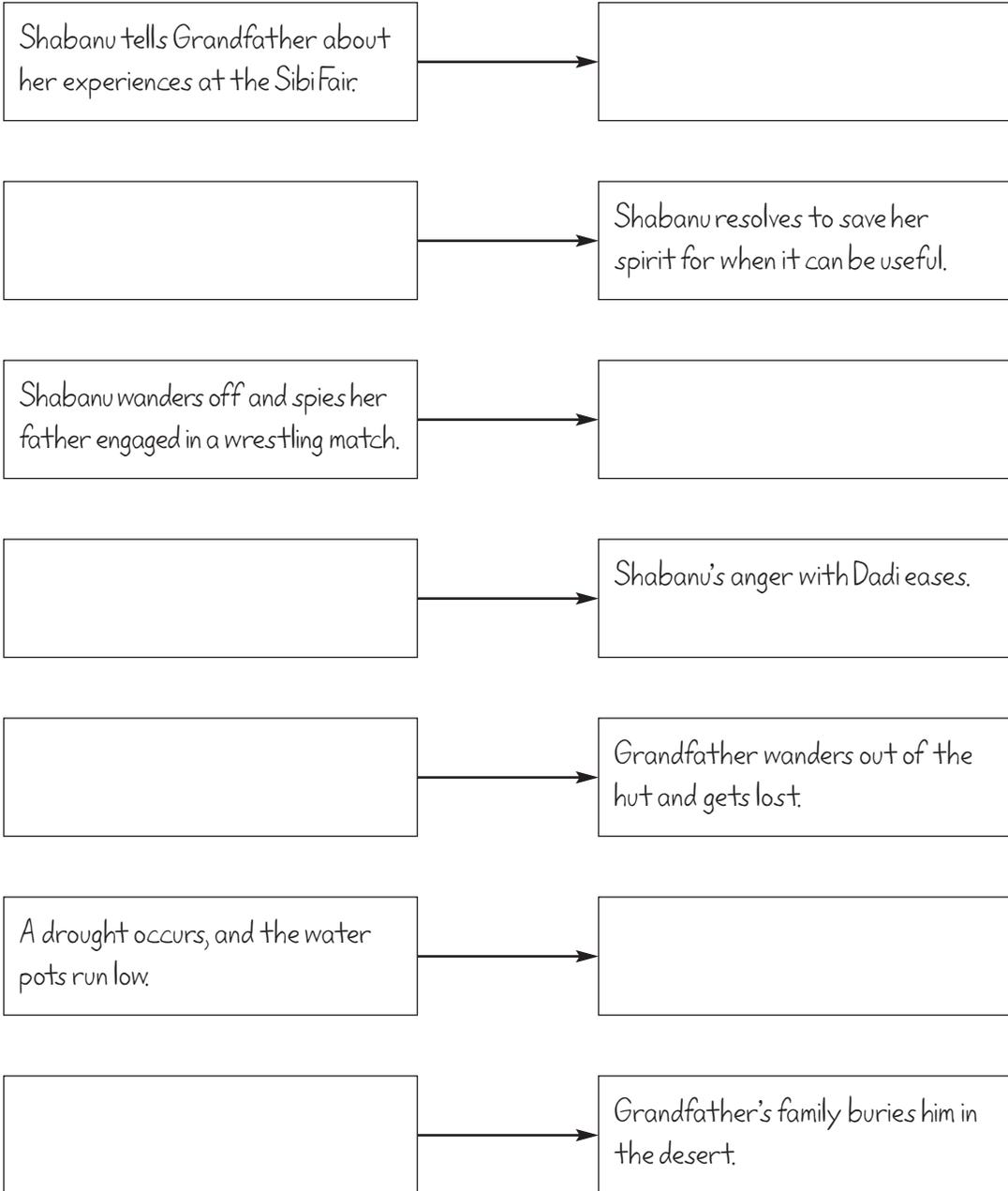
Active Reading

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind Chapters Dowry–Derawar

In this section, a number of events occur that contribute to Shabanu’s growth and maturity and that also demonstrate the hardship desert nomads must endure. Below are the causes and effects of certain key events. As you read these chapters, fill in the boxes below, linking the cause with its associated effect, or the effect with its related cause.

Causes

Effects



Responding

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind Chapters Dowry–Derawar

Personal Response

Which incidents in this part of the novel did you find the most moving? Why?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. What does Shabanu see her father doing? Why, do you think, is he angry?

2. What natural disaster suddenly befalls the family? Why does Dadi decide to take the family to Derawar?

3. What do Shabanu and Phulan find while they are out hunting for sito? What do Dadi's actions suggest about his character and beliefs?

4. What do Dadi and Shabanu encounter when they attempt to bury Grandfather? What appears to be lacking in Sulaiman and the villagers in general?

Responding

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind Chapters Dowry–Derawar

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

5. Explain the importance of Sharma’s character for Shabanu. Why, do you think, does the author portray Sharma the way she does?

6. Why does Shabanu no longer care about going to the Sibi Fair? Review your response to the **Focus Activity** on page 20. Is the fair something that Shabanu has outgrown?

Literature and Writing

Analyzing Effectiveness

Is *Daughter of the Wind* an appropriate subtitle for Shabanu? Why or why not? Write a paragraph or two explaining your answer. Base your argument on details from the novel.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Do you think that American society places higher value on males than it does females? If so, why? Is this tendency less true today than it was in the past, or has it not changed at all?

Compile a list of evidence that supports your point of view, and debate this issue in your small groups.

Learning for Life

Women’s Roles

Sharma is presented as a character who is unusually independent for a nomadic Pakistani Muslim woman. How unusual is her behavior? What choices are really available to nomadic Pakistani Muslim women? Use the Internet and books and magazines from your library to answer these questions. You might also contact USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) and other international organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch to get information. Then, in a brief report, share what you have learned with the class.

Music Connection

When the women are camped at Channan Pir, Sharma sings songs called ghazals and kafis. Search the Internet for recordings of these. Then check your library or music store for their availability.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind Chapters Ramadan–Justice

FOCUS ACTIVITY

Think of a time in your life when you experienced an unexpected change—perhaps your family moved, someone had an accident or suddenly became ill, or another major event changed your plans for your future. What were your emotions at the time?

Journal

In your journal, write a brief personal entry about a time when your life or plans that were important to you changed suddenly. Describe the experience and, in particular, how it made you feel. Describe how you responded to the change.

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out how a decision has drastically changed Shabanu's life.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

In the novel, the author mentions places and rituals that are of special importance to Muslims. For example, the characters turn the faces of the dead toward the holy city of Mecca. They face Mecca when they say their prayers. They also make a pilgrimage, or special journey, to a shrine to pray for sons and good fortune for Phulan, leaving sweets and garlands as offerings. Ramadan is another important observance mentioned in the novel. Ramadan, the ninth month of the Islamic lunar calendar, is the month of fasting, when adult Muslims must go without food and drink from dawn to sunset. Children are exempted from fasting as are families that are undergoing exceptional strain.

Rising Action

In a story or a novel, the part of the **plot** in which complications develop, and readers' interest increases, is called the **rising action**. The rising action follows the **exposition**, in which the setting, the characters, and the initial conflict are introduced. The rising action leads up to the **climax**, or the point of highest dramatic tension in the story. In this section of the novel, as event unfolds upon event, the action rises steadily. As you read, try to predict what the climax will be.

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

anemic [ə nē' mīk] adj. having or characteristic of anemia; lacking vitality or spirit; (p. 90)

compensation [kəm' pən sā' shən] n. payment given or received as an equivalent for service, loss or damage (p. 88)

deed [dēd] n. a signed and usually sealed document that contains a legal transfer of property (p. 88)

irrigation [ir ə gā' shən] n. the supplying of land with water by means of channels, streams, or pipes (p. 86)

primeval [prī mē' vəl] adj. of or relating to the earliest ages of the world; ancient, primitive (p. 103)

pitch [pɪtʃ] n. a dark, thick, sticky substance obtained as a residue in the distillation of organic materials and especially tars (p. 101)

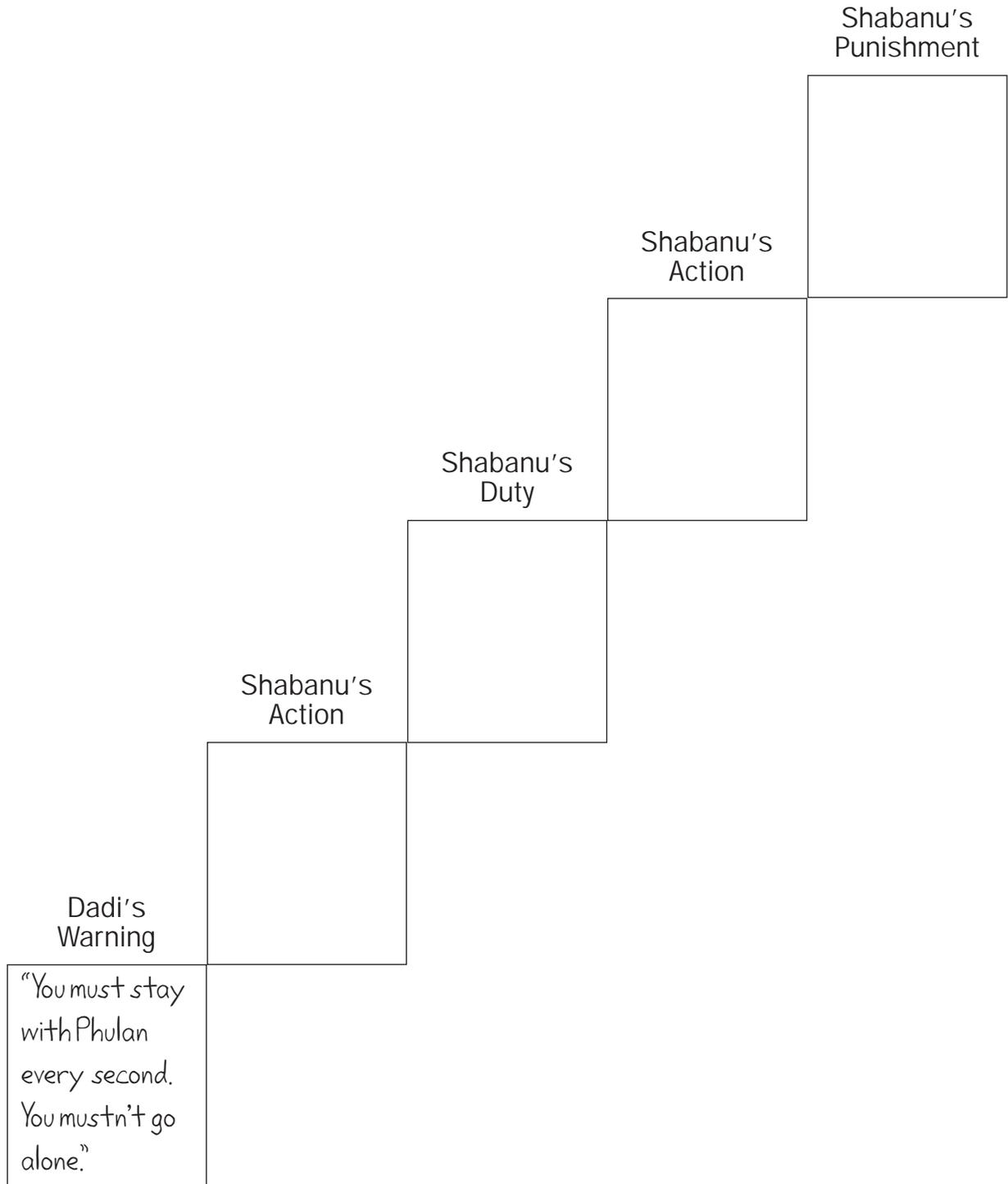
revulsion [ri vul' shən] n. disgust; repugnance (p. 107)

transfix [tran(t)s fik] v. to make motionless, as from awe or fear (p. 112)

Active Reading

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind Chapters Ramadan–Justice

In this section of the novel, Shabanu’s actions bring trouble on herself and her family. In the graphic organizer below, fill in the steps in Shabanu’s disobedience that lead to her punishment for disobeying.



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Responding

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind Chapters Ramadan–Justice

Personal Response

For which character did you feel the most empathy—that is, whose emotions or feelings did you understand the best and care about the most? Why?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. What reason does Dadi give Shabanu for not leaving Phulan alone? Why, do you think, does he decide to give her an explanation?

2. What happens to Shabanu and Phulan on their way back from the canal? Why is this event likely to prevent Phulan from marrying Hamir?

3. How does Rahim-sahib meet Shabanu? Why might she have appealed to him?

4. What new marriage arrangements does the family make for Shabanu and Phulan? Do you think than Shabanu's family really has her best interests at heart in making the arrangement? Why or why not?

Responding

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind Chapters Ramadan–Justice

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

Evaluate and Connect

5. Could Shabanu have avoided her fate? How did her character determine her fate?

6. Review your answer to the **Focus Activity** on page 24. How did the major change that occurred in your life compare with the change that Shabanu had to accept? Explain.

Literature and Writing

Analyzing a Theme

Staples says that men of the desert are like camels: they never forget an old, unsettled dispute. Look for evidence in the story that vengeance is a major theme in the story. What acts are avenged? Who are the avengers? Write a short essay, using examples from the novel in support of vengeance as a major theme.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

Role-play a meeting called to arbitrate the dispute between Hamir and Nazir Muhammad. The object is to settle the dispute in a fair and amicable way. The interest of both parties should be represented by your group. Base the discussion on details in the novel. After an agreement is reached, discuss the insights you have gained into the nature of the dispute and into the feelings and motives of the characters.

Learning for Life

Incident Report

Imagine that you have been asked to write an incident report on the circumstances surrounding Lal Khan's death. The report is to be the basis for an inquest. Base your report based on Dadi's account, and include all of the relevant details.

Performing

Write and perform a scene in which Murad and Shabanu plan to run away together. Base their dialogue on the characterizations established in the novel, and try to capture their voices and mannerisms. If you wish, you may dress in appropriate garb and videotape the scene.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Before You Read

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind Chapters The Choice–Cholistan

FOCUS ACTIVITY

What is the most important decision that you have had to make thus far? What factors made the decision especially difficult for you?

Share Ideas

In your small group, discuss the most important decision that you have ever made. Why was the decision so important? How did it affect your life? Did you rely on advice to arrive at the decision? If you had it to do over, would you make the same decision?

Setting a Purpose

Read to find out what decision Shabanu makes in response to her arranged marriage.

BACKGROUND

Did You Know?

In 1988, Pakistan elected its first woman prime minister, Benazir Bhutto. Bhutto was not only the first woman prime minister of Pakistan but the first to head a modern Islamic state. The daughter of the former prime minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto, who was removed from office and hanged in 1977, Bhutto was educated at Harvard and Oxford. When she returned to Pakistan from her studies abroad, she was placed under house arrest for seven years. On her release, she left the country. Returning in 1986, she led her party to victory in 1988. Charged with corruption and accepting bribes, Bhutto was removed from power in 1996. Her husband remains in a Pakistani jail. Maintaining her innocence, Bhutto now lives in Dubai, United Arab Emirates.

Resolution

The **resolution**, or **dénouement**, of a story is the final outcome of the main dramatic complication. As you read this last section of the novel, pay close attention to Shabanu's comments about her situation. Do you think that she will accept her fate, or will she make another effort to escape it?

VOCABULARY PREVIEW

demure [di myoor'] adj. quiet and modest; reserved (p. 133)

diminishment [di min'ish mənt] n. a decrease in size, amount, or degree (p. 120)

insolence [in'sə ləns] n. the quality or state of being insultingly contemptuous (p. 125)

livery [liv'ər ē] n. uniform provided for male servants; any distinctive garb or uniform worn by members of a group or profession (p. 127)

omen [ō'mən] n. a sign or occurrence supposed to be a sign of good or bad luck (p. 119)

raucous [rô'kəs] adj. loud and disorderly (p. 123)

savor [sā'vər] v. to take great delight in (p. 122)

unobtrusively [un'əb trōō'siv lē] adv. not obviously causing notice or disturbance; inconspicuously (p. 121)

Active Reading

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind Chapters The Choice–Cholistan

The resolution, or dénouement, of the novel takes place in the last three chapters. In fiction as in life, not all resolutions are satisfying. In this section, Shabanu faces several problems. Use the graphic organizer below to record these problems and their solutions.

Problem:	Shabanu is unhappy about the prospect of being Rahim-sahib's fourth wife.
Solution:	Sharma tends to Shabanu's appearance and convinces her that she has a choice.

Problem:	
Solution:	

Problem:	
Solution:	

Problem:	
Solution:	

Problem:	
Solution:	

Responding

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind Chapters The Choice–Cholistan

Personal Response

How did you react to the decision that would force Shabanu to marry a fifty-five-year-old man? Why?

Analyzing Literature

Recall and Interpret

1. How do Shabanu's feelings toward Phulan change after Phulan's wedding? What has brought about the change?

2. What gifts does Rahim-sahib bestow upon Shabanu and her family? Do the gifts affect Shabanu's feelings toward him?

3. What critical comment does Sharma make to Dadi about the new marriage arrangements? Have Shabanu's parents put their own interests ahead of Shabanu's? Explain.

4. What is Shabanu's ultimate decision about her situation? Why did she make the decision?

Evaluate and Connect

5. What advice does Sharma give to Shabanu the night that Shabanu comes to her tent? In your opinion, is this good advice?

Responding

Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind Chapters The Choice–Cholistan

Analyzing Literature (*continued*)

6. Think back to your response to the **Focus Activity** on page 28. Do you think that Shabanu's decision was worth the risk of being beaten? Why? Do you think that she will try to run away again? Explain.

Literature and Writing

Analyzing the Resolution of a Story

By the end of the novel, Shabanu feels that her fate is sealed: she will have to marry Rahim. Will she be able to be happy in this marriage? Will she make him happy enough to keep him from taking another wife? If she does succeed, will she be able to protect herself from the jealous reactions of his other wives? The answers to these questions are hinted at in the resolution to *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind*. Basing your prediction on her character as established in the novel, write a paragraph or two, to tell what you think will happen to Shabanu.

Extending Your Response

Literature Groups

With its young female protagonist and themes relating to the proper role of women in a male-dominated society, *Shabanu* might be viewed as a feminist novel. The feminist movement supports the social, political, and economic equality of women. Does *Shabanu* qualify as a feminist novel? Why or why not? Do some research on the feminist movement and in your groups debate the issue of whether *Shabanu* qualifies as a feminist novel.

Learning for Life

Letter to the Editor

Imagine that Sharma is an advice columnist who gives young women advice on love, relationships, and marriage. You have read Sharma's advice to Phulan on how to make a man happy, and you wish to respond. Consider Sharma's advice. Then write a letter in which you express your opinion on this advice as persuasively as possible. Use examples from the novel to support your ideas.

Social Studies Connection

Shabanu contains numerous references to the Islamic holy city of Mecca, located in Saudi Arabia. It is the religious duty of Muslims to make at least one hajj, or pilgrimage, to Mecca. Find out more about Mecca on the Internet or from other sources, and present an oral report to your class.



Save your work for your portfolio.

Waris Dirie
and
Cathleen
Miller

from *Desert Flower*, the Extraordinary Journey of a Desert Nomad

Before You Read

Focus Question

When you were six years old, did your family expect you to perform particular chores?

Background

Supermodel and UN special ambassador Waris Dirie describes growing up in Somalia, living the nomadic life of camel and goat herder. In many ways, Dirie's life is similar to Shabanu's.

Responding to the Reading

1. List three customs followed by the family and give Dirie's reasons for them.

2. What aspect of Dirie's life appeals to you? What doesn't appeal to you?

3. Why, do you suppose, is the camel so prized among Somalis?

4. **Making Connections** In what ways are Dirie's and Shabanu's feelings toward the desert, their animals, their families, and especially their fathers similar? Explain.

Literature Groups

Dirie says, "We always tried to be upbeat, optimistic. Nobody sat around complaining or whining or saying, 'Hey, let's have a conversation about death.' Life there was very hard; we needed all our strength just to survive and being negative sapped our vital energy." Of the Cholistan nomads, Staples writes something very similar, "Living as they do on the very edge of survival, they depend on each other too much for triviality to creep into their relationships. They see joy and humor everywhere it hides, and they train themselves to find the best in every situation." Reflect on these statements. Do hardships foster optimism? If so, why might they? Debate this idea in your group.

Diane Yancey

from Camels for Uncle Sam

Before You Read

Focus Question

What are your impressions of camels? Would you ever want to ride one? Why or why not?

Background

In June 1856 the first caravan of camels to travel through the Southwest passed through San Antonio, Texas. Imported from Egypt and Turkey, the camels were the first of the U.S. Camel Corps. The idea of the corps was first proposed in 1837, but not until Congress had a transportation problem did it consider the idea seriously. By then it was 1851, the frontier had been reopened, gold had been discovered in California in 1848, and settlers were flocking westward. The government needed an easy and relatively inexpensive way to deliver mail and supplies to the settlers—and aid when Native Americans attacked.

Responding to the Reading

1. Had you been a member of Congress in 1851, would you have favored using camels in the deserts of the Southwest? Why or why not?

2. Why, do you think, was the camel corps abandoned? Explain.

3. What was General Twiggs's reaction to the camels, and what was it based on, according to the author? Do you think his attitude was justified? Explain.

4. **Making Connections** In the novel, it becomes apparent that even in Pakistan there are differences of opinion about how camels should be used. What are these differing opinions?

Science Connection

Research an innovation in transportation that was attempted during the twentieth century. For example, you might look for information on the Tucker car, electric cars, bullet trains, trolley systems, or even zeppelins. Gather enough information about the innovation that you have chosen. Decide for yourself why it failed to gain acceptance. Report your findings to the rest of the class.

Chitra
Banerjee
Divakurini and
Cathy Song

My Mother Combs My Hair and Picture Bride

Before You Read

Focus Question

What experiences have your mother or grandmother shared with you that you could not imagine having?

Background

Chitra Banerjee Divakurini is an award-winning poet, novelist, and short-story writer who has lived in both India and the United States. Cathy Song grew up in the Hawaiian Islands. In these poems, both poets explore the feelings of women who lived in a place or period in which a woman's worth was determined by very different standards than it is in the United States today and in which her role was more limited.

Responding to the Reading

1. Why, do you suppose, does the mother who combs and braids her daughter's hair not make "the old comments" on this occasion?

2. What function does the silence between the speaker and her mother in Divakaruni's poem and the silence in the meeting between the man and the woman imagined in Song's poem serve?

3. What is the mood in each of these poems? Choose one poem and explain one or two of the ways by which the poet creates the mood.

4. **Making Connections** In what ways does the relationship between the mother and daughter of Divakurini's poem differ from the relationship between Mami and Phulan? between Mami and Shabanu? What might account for these differences?

Creative Writing

Imagine that you are the mother in Divakurini's poem or the grandmother or grandfather in Song's poem. Write a letter to the speaker in the poem explaining what you thought and felt at the climax of the poem. In the first poem, it would be the moment when the mother and daughter look at each other after the mother finishes her daughter's hair. In the second, it would be the first meeting between bride and groom.

Chinua
Achebe

Marriage Is a Private Affair

Before You Read

Focus Question

Give some reasons why a parent might object to a son's or a daughter's choice of marriage partner. In your opinion, would a parent ever be justified in voicing these objections? Explain.

Background

This story is set in Nigeria, a West African country that is made up of many different tribes and kingdoms that were unified into one nation in 1914. For more than a thousand years, however, these tribes were distinct, each having its unique culture and customs.

Responding to the Reading

1. Nnaemeka tells Nene not to cry over having been rejected by his father and describes him as being essentially good-natured. Do you agree with Nnaemeka's assessment of his father's nature? Why or why not?

2. What happens after Nnaemeka's father gets the letter from Nene with news of his grandsons? What, do you suppose, does the rain symbolize?

3. Nnaemeka breaks with tribal traditions and marries the woman he chooses, but Shabanu cannot. What are some of the differences between their situations that might account for the different outcomes?

4. **Making Connections** In what ways are Nnaemeka's father and Shabanu's father alike?

Learning for Life

Suppose that you are a father who is arranging a marriage for his son or daughter. What qualities do you consider the most important in a wife or husband? Develop a questionnaire to help you decide whether a candidate is the right choice. When finished, compare your questions with those of another student.

edited by
Andrew Lang

Story of Wali Dâd the Simple-Hearted

Before You Read

Focus Question

Think back to some of the fairy tales that you were told as a child. Which were your favorites? What did you like about them?

Background

This story was first printed in Andrew Lang's *Brown Fairy Book* in 1904, but it is actually much older. Presumably, Indians had been telling it to their children for generations. It probably originated in India or what is now Pakistan. (Pakistan was part of India at the time Lang decided to include the tale in his collection.) The Peris in the tale come from Persian mythology. Once considered evil beings, over time they came to be regarded and represented as benevolent creatures, much like fairies or angels.

Responding to the Reading

1. In Wali Dâd's culture, what appears to be the customary way of responding to a gift?

2. In your opinion, is Wali Dâd surprised that the horses have been sent as a gift? Use details from the text to support your opinion.

3. What, do you think, does simple-hearted mean? What adage, or saying, in your opinion, does the story illustrate?

4. **Making Connections** Compare and contrast the generosity of Wali Dâd with that of Rahim-sahib in *Shabanu: Daughter of the Wind*. In what ways are they alike? In what ways are they different?

Creative Writing

What would Wali Dâd do if he lived in your community today? What would happen as a result? Write a modern version of this folk tale to share with your classmates. Try to keep the same basic structure of the story but feel free to change the setting, characters, gifts, and even outcomes to update the tale. Be prepared to give the main message, or moral, of your story.