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The Architect's Apprentice

1.

One of the great themes of the novel is love; notably in the relationship between Jahan and Chota the elephant, Jahan and Sinan the Great Royal Architect, and Jahan and Mihrimah, the princess. How do these loves compare?

2.

Istanbul is depicted as a city of great ethnic and religious diversity: Jews, Christians, and Muslims; Armenians, Turks, and Gypsies all live together under the rule of the Sultan. How is the relationship between different groups affected by a crisis such as plague?

3.

The white elephant Chota is an important figure in the narrative as a lifelong friend and companion of Jahan. How is the relationship between humans and animals described in the novel?

4.

Istanbul is depicted as a creature with a mind and temper of its own. How does the representation of the city allude to the multicultural metropole of our time? How does Istanbul compare to, say, London or New York?

5.

Sancha dresses up as a man in order to work as one of the architect's apprentices; Mihrimah is forced to marry a man she doesn't love. Why are women represented in this way in the novel?