

# When We Vanished

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

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### THE CHARACTERS & STORY

- Which point-of-view character did you connect with the most?
- What was the most surprising moment in the book? The scariest? The most triumphant?

### SNACK FOODS

- How do you feel while eating your favorite snack foods? How do you feel afterwards?
- Is it possible to be addicted to certain foods?
- Can we find a balanced way to eat things we enjoy but know aren't good for us, or is it better to give them up entirely?

### ADVERTISING

- Food companies often spend a tremendous amount of resources on marketing and advertising their products. Do you think that your own choices are influenced by ads, either consciously or subconsciously?
- Do ads make you feel entertained, or manipulated, or both?

### CORPORATE RESPONSIBILITY

- What responsibility, if any, do companies have when it comes to the health of their customers?
- Do they have any responsibility to the environment?

### FOOD PRODUCT RESEARCH

- Every processed food product goes through a long process of research and development before it hits the shelves (for an in-depth look, check out this [New Yorker article](#)).
- How do you feel about the amount of high-tech food science that goes into processed food? Is it gross? Or kind of amazing? Does it make you feel safer?

### FOOD CHAINS

On p. 188, Naveed hides in a Dumpster surrounded by loaves of bread and thinks about everything that went into them.

- What are the typical ingredients in a loaf of store-bought bread?
- Which resources went into creating each ingredient, and the loaf as a whole?
- How about the packaging?
- Think about the people involved in the process, too—how many different job roles might be involved in producing, selling, and marketing this product?

### MAKING CHANGES

- What are some of the choices we can make as individuals to improve the ecological impacts of our own diets?
- What can we do individually or collectively to improve the food system itself?

