

Discussion Questions *Layla and Majnun*

Group 1

1. How do we know this is written in an Islamic context? Examples?
2. Are there religious themes in this epic? Where?
3. How alike are Layla and Majnun? Do they represent the same ideas or different ones?
4. Compare and contrast Ibn Salam and Majnun— are they alike or different? How is their experience of love for Layla different?
5. Do you see parallels between *Layla and Majnun* and the poetry by Rumi and Ibn al-Farid?
6. Within the narrative, some characters tell short stories. Find one of these, and discuss its significance to the overall story.

Group 2

7. Why is Majnun in anguish? Is this tale a tragedy? Why or why not? Is Majnun a heroic or a tragic figure?
8. What are the social consequences of Majnun and Layla's love? How does it influence their lives and their communities?
9. Why were Layla and Majnun forced to be apart?
10. Would you read this poem as a love story, a theological work, or both? Why?
11. How does the work address death? Give examples from the text.
12. Do you think there is one central message of this tale? If so, what?

Group 3

13. How would you describe Majnun's love for Layla— what are the characteristics of his love?
14. Many scholars read this text as a mystical Sufi work— why?
15. What is Majnun's family life like? Layla's family life?
16. What happens when Majnun and his father go to Mecca (pp 26-28)?
17. Majnun's father finds Majnun in a degraded state and gives him advice. How does his father view him (pp 96-100)? What are the values espoused by the Sayyid? How does Majnun understand his own state, in contrast to the way his father sees it?
18. Analyze Majnun's poem on p 156— what does it mean?