1) What is the overall emotional tone/atmospheric color of this novel? How does Naguib Mahfouz achieve this consistent “coloration”? Looking back at the poetry we’ve studied, can you identify a poem that captures a similar emotional tone? (Alex)

2) How does the narrative structure of the novel reflect an innovation to long-form fictional prose in Arabic (i.e., the novel)? Why do you believe Naguib Mahfouz chose to frame this novel in this way, and how does the structure itself contribute to the overarching meaning behind this novel? (Claire)

3) The works of Naguib Mahfouz during his “early realist phase” – including Miramar - have been described as his personal lament for the failure of Egypt and Egyptians to live up to the revolutionary ideals of freedom, equality, and self-governance that coalesced in the anti-colonial uprising in 1919 and the Egyptian Revolution in 1952. Others have pointed out that these same novels “subvert the dominant elements of this allegorical discourse” (Terri DeYoung, “Mahfouz’s Novels and the Nation” [2012]: p. 59). Which of the two alternatives – failure of heroic ideas vs. critique of a simplified historical narrative - seems to fit most closely with your reading of Miramar? (Emily)

4) Miramar is the sole novel by Naguib Mahfouz that takes place in Alexandria (versus the more typical setting of a teeming alleyway/neighborhood in one of the older districts of Cairo)? What aspects of Alexandria’s modern political history and geographical positioning does Mahfouz emphasize that render Alexandria so well suited to the expression of the “postcolonial nostalgia” that pervades this novel? (Katie)

5) Does this novel do justice to its female characters (especially Zohra)? As literary constructs, are they treated similarly or differently from the male characters? (Mariam)

6) The novel is typically attributed to the “realist” phase of Mahfouz’ literary activity. On what basis can this claim be made? On the other hand, to what degree do you find the characters in this novel to be symbolic representations of a character “type”? In your opinion, how would you define the overall balance between “realism” and “allegory” in this novel? (Meredith)