



Book Club Resources – After you Read

Suggestions for Reflection and Discussion¹

1. Throughout the story, there are descriptive passages brimming with vivid and precise details. Some examples of this include the descriptions of Miji's childhood home in Kingsland, shopping trips to Chinook Mall in Calgary, and visits to her friend Karen's house. Is there a passage that you found to be particularly striking? Did these sections of the book bring back any memories of your own childhood?
2. Miji's relationship with her mother is a critical part of how she interprets and understands the events in her life. At times she feels overwhelmed by her mother's protective care, occasionally railing against it but often wishing for her mother's approval. Why do you think mother/daughter relationships are so filled with contradictions? What is your own relationship to your mother like? Have these dynamics translated to your relationships with your own children? What are some of the pressures you feel as a mother?
3. "Maybe it is fathers who make us brave after all," Miji writes near the end of the book. How would you describe her relationship to her father? How does it compare to your relationship with your father? What do you think Miji means by the above quotation?
4. The difficulties and joys of marriage and family life are laid bare in this story. Why do you think that some women are willing to sacrifice their own happiness and sense of identity for the sake of their marriage and children? Miji talks about how hard it is to be a single parent to her boys as well as the challenges of creating a blended family. As a society, do you think we tend to blame rather than support individuals whose marriages do not work out?

¹ My thanks to [Alyssa Fehr](#), avid reader and early fan of my book, for preparing these questions.

5. Social conventions and societal expectations such as going to church and listening to your parents play a large role in Miji's childhood. She and her sisters respond in different ways to these conventions and expectations. Do you think that birth order affects how we deal with these things? Describe your relationships to your siblings and how those relationships have developed and evolved since childhood.
6. Miji's story perfectly illustrates how powerful the stigma surrounding mental health disorders such as anxiety and depression is in our society. Why does this stigma continue to exist? Do you have experience with a mental health issue, either personally or within your family or circle of friends, that has affected how you see people who suffer with mental illness? How do you think we can work to overcome the reluctance that many people have in discussing how mental illness affects all of us?
7. Miji describes her home as sanctuary, and she goes to great lengths to provide this sense of comfort and peace for her family. What does Miji do to ensure that her home is a refuge? What places in your life provide you with a sense of sanctuary?
8. Women often rely on other women for support through challenging times, and Miji plants a Courage Garden to honour the strong women in her life. If you were going to plant a Courage Garden, which women would you choose to honour and why? What flowers best represent the qualities you admire about them?
9. Memoirs are generally written in the past tense, but Miji has chosen to alternate between past and present tense as she tells her story. Why do you think she chose to write in this way?
10. There are many literary allusions throughout the book, including references to *Jane Eyre*, Prometheus and *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Do any of these allusions stand out particularly for you? How did they help to clarify or illuminate your understanding?