

FLOWING WATER, FALLING FLOWERS

By X.H. Collins

MWC Press

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Thank you for reading this book!

If your club has a discussion question that's not included below, please email me at xixuan@xhcollins.com! I would love to take a look, and may include it in my updated list and give your club the credit for it! Thank you and enjoy!

Topics and Questions for Discussion

1. Towards the end of the novel, Lady Han made a choice based on her faith. Iris, and later Hong-mei and Rose, all questioned this choice. Do you sympathize with Lady Han's choice? Why or why not?
2. The four women of two generations of the Han Family had similar dreams in which grandmothers visited granddaughters. What are the other grandmother-granddaughter relationships in the book? How have the relationships between different sets of grandmothers and granddaughters evolved? Do you agree that grandparents and grandchildren have special bonds that are separate from the bonds between parents and children? How might the grandparent-grandchild relations in China differ from those in the U.S.?
3. The novel describes the landscapes in Chengdu, Three Rivers, and Cloud Gate. Some are new, such as the high-rise apartment buildings, skyscrapers with images of American celebrities, and interstate highways. Others are old, such as the Diaoyu Fortress and the Guanyin Temple. Some are old made new, such as the arch in Cloud Gate. How do landscapes shape the stories? Are there any landscapes or special places of your childhood that shaped you?
4. Early readers of the book loved the descriptions of the food in this book. Is this something you noticed, too? Like landscapes, food shapes us. We make traditional foods with recipes passed down in the family, sometimes through generations. Do you notice anything about the Chinese food mentioned in this book that you might not know before? If any, which food item(s) particular interest you? How might they be different from what you think Chinese food is from your local take-out place?
5. There are three families in this novel: the Hans, the Wangs, and the Fangs. They are connected through marriage, friendship, and shared tragedies. What is the definition and meaning of a family? Does a family have to be blood-related, or can it be chosen? Why?

6. One theme of the book is female friendship: Lady Han and A-mei, and Lady Han and Mrs. Fang. How do women's experiences in a particular society and culture shape their friendships? Why female friendships might be particularly important in a patriarchal society?

7. Rose has interesting experience in the U.S. and in China. In America, she sometimes is pressed on with the question "where are you from?" and people talk to her as if she has trouble understanding English. It is the opposite in China. No one asks her where she's from, and everyone assumes that she understands Chinese. What causes this difference? How do we determine if someone belongs? By appearance? Language? Shared culture? How does this influence our interactions with others who look like or unlike us?

8. One major conflict in the novel is between Lady Han and her mother-in-law, Old Ancestor. Are you surprised to learn this? Is their relationship different from a typical daughter-in-law and mother-in-law relationship in America, both past and present?

9. Old Ancestor and Lady Han are both devout Buddhists, but they have different views about how girls should be treated. Why do you think that's the case?

10. What do you think are the lessons Rose learns at the end of the book? Which one is the most meaningful for you?

11. Does your book club have questions or discussion topics that are not mentioned above? Please email them to Xixuan at xixuan@xhcollins.com!

Thank you for reading!

I hope you enjoy the book!

