

FARRAR, STRAUS AND GIROUX

Reading Group Gold

Flashlight

by Susan Choi



ISBN: 9780374616373 / 464 pages

This reading group guide for *Flashlight* includes discussion questions for enhancing your book club's experience. The suggested questions are intended to help your reading group find new and interesting angles and topics for your discussion. We hope that these ideas will enrich your conversation and increase your enjoyment of the book.

Introduction

A monumental new novel from the National Book Award winner Susan Choi, *Flashlight* spans decades and continents in a spellbinding, heartgripping investigation of family, loss, memory, and the ways in which we are shaped by what we cannot see.

Contact us at readinggroup@macmillanusa.com | www.readinggroupgold.com
Don't forget to check out our monthly newsletter!

Reading Group Gold

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What does Louisa remember about the night of her father's disappearance? Why is she unable to piece together the events? *The New York Times* calls the author "a major world writer . . . in thrilling command." Did you feel like you were on a monumental reading journey already, with the book opening on such a consequential scene?
2. What promises are made to Seok's parents about the kind of future possible if they emigrate? What makes Seok suspicious? What do the letters he receives reveal?
3. Describe the Anne we meet at the beginning of the novel. How do marriage, mothering, and illness shape the course of her journey? How does she retain her independence?
4. Describe the life baby Louisa is born into with Anne and Serk. How do their parenting styles, priorities (like swimming lessons), and wants diverge? *Entertainment Weekly* noted that the book is "a captivating examination of family and belonging." How does the book capture what it's like at home?
5. In *The Washington Post*, Ron Charles called the novel "devastating," and *New York Magazine* called *Flashlight* "gorgeous [and] almost impossibly heartbreaking." Did you find sections of the novel hard to read emotionally or hard to put down? For example, what did it feel like to be in the strawberry field with Anne and Tobias?
6. Why might Serk feel that the past threatens the life that he's built with Anne? Why is he so guarded about his life before meeting Anne? Why might Serk perceive Tom and his own sister as threats to his life with Anne and Louisa?
7. What awaits the Kang family in Japan? In what ways does Louisa adapt to life there? Did they get the VIP treatment they were promised? How does Anne's unease in their new life mask her health symptoms?

Reading Group Gold

8. Discuss the relationship between Louisa and her mother in *Flashlight*. Is Louisa cruel to her mother or just immature? Why do you think that Louisa behaves as she does towards her mother? How does anger show its head in the novel?
9. How does Walt's fascination with Korea lead to his presence in Anne's life? When Walt enters Anne's life what changes? How are they "compatibly crass" (203)? Did you like Walt?
10. Describe Louisa's summer abroad in London and Paris. How is she treated by Tamar's family? Had she been naive—but also mistreated? How does Louisa's experience in each city change based on her financial situation?
11. Why is Byung Ho sent to learn from Serk? How does he become a lifeline?
12. Who is the Fisherman and how is he connected to Serk's story?
13. How does Louisa evolve over the course of the novel? What moved you the most, or changed your opinion about a character in the novel?

For more questions, see the "Enhance Your Book Club" section on the next page.

Reading Group Gold

ENHANCE YOUR BOOK CLUB

1. Refer to the works of fiction and nonfiction that Susan Choi references in the acknowledgments section of *Flashlight*. Have you or any of your book club members read any of these works? Pick one or two of these works to read together and discuss the experience of reading them, what you learned, and how this experience deepened or reshaped your experience of reading *Flashlight*.
2. Discuss how the author presents Louisa's experiences in college in all their vividness. Did it resonate with you? Have you traveled abroad? If so, share some of your experiences and what you learned from them with your book club.
3. The letters shared showed that Dr. Grassi dedicated himself to Anne's "literary flowering" (308) and giving her a second chance in life. Have you ever had a teacher that saw a spark in you? Tell your book club about the teacher. How did that teacher's interest impact you?