



Book Club in a Bag

Discussion Questions

Our Missing Hearts by Celeste Ng

1. There are two epigraphs that open the book—one (real) poem by Anna Akhmatova, and one (fictional) excerpt from PACT literature. How does their juxtaposition set up the invitation to compare reality and imagination, and see our present moment through a historical lens as well as the one devised by Ng for the novel?
2. Ethan is originally hired at the university as a linguistics professor, and his obsession with words seeps into his daily habits, such as reading from the dictionary. How does sharing this love of language help Bird in his quest, and ultimately reconnect their family, albeit indirectly, by the end of the novel?
3. Both Bird and Sadie struggle with missing parents, yet their approach to seeking a deeper understanding of their past is vastly different. What about their personalities guide their respective strategies, and why do you think their friendship is so strong?
4. Discuss Margaret's transformation when she becomes a mother. How is she able to adapt to so many different circumstances—from her rebellious and resourceful youth to the comfort of her life with Ethan to the purpose driving her life and survival when she goes into hiding? What about Bird's existence makes her willing to sacrifice it all for the children she tries to honor in her final act?
5. Which form of storytelling resonated with you most in the novel, or in life in general: written or oral? How are they each used in ways to preserve the truth of lived experience when history or other dominant powers tried to erase them—such as the missing children, and Margaret herself?
6. We see several events in the novel from two perspectives, Bird's and his mother's. How do these two perspectives shape your understanding of the family dynamic, as well as each of their motives to find each other?

The above questions were taken from
<https://www.penguinrandomhouse.com/books/710187/our-missing-hearts-by-celeste-ng/9780593492543/readers-guide/>
 to enhance your discussion of the book.

Author Biography

Celeste Ng grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Shaker Heights, Ohio. She graduated from Harvard University and earned an MFA from the University of Michigan. She is the author of the #1 bestselling novel *Little Fires Everywhere*, which has been adapted as a limited television series. *Our Missing Hearts* is her third book and was an instant *New York Times* bestseller.

<https://www.celesteng.com/about/>

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