

Reader's Guide questions for Lucky Girl

1. Although Meí-Líng Hopgood always knew she was adopted, she never thought about birth parents and almost resented it when people assumed she should. Do you think adopted children should search for their birth parents?
2. Did this book change your feelings about whether adoptions should be open or closed? Should birth parents have the right to find the child they gave away?
3. How would you characterize Meí-Líng's contrasting relationships with her Chinese father and her American father? Are there any similarities? How would you describe her relationship with each of her mothers? What are the differences?
4. Meí-Líng was surprised to discover how easy it was to relate to her birth sisters and how much she wanted to get to know them. "I felt as if I was being passionately recruited for an exclusive, mysterious sorority, and I was eager to be inducted officially into the club" (page 85). What defines and influences sibling relations in adulthood?
5. What, if anything, would have been different for Meí-Líng if she had been reunited with her birth family at an earlier age? As a child? As a teenager?
6. How do Meí-Líng's personality and her experience as a journalist inform her approach to getting to know her birth family?

7. Meí-Líng actively tries to get to know the truth behind her adoption and her history. Do you think she had a right to pursue her own history? How about her parents' history? How much do children really need to know about their parents' pasts? Was the knowledge gained worth the painful revelations that emerged, or would it have been best to leave some stones unturned?
8. In chapter 12, "Handmade Dumplings," Meí-Líng discusses coming to terms with her Chinese heritage in college. She said she realized that "all Asians, in fact, do not look alike (page 158)." When, if ever, have you had to confront and challenge your own stereotypes?
9. Meí-Líng learns to make her mother's dumplings. What's your favorite family recipe?
10. Why do you think Ma stayed with Ba, despite the way he treated her and the urging of her daughters to leave him? Do you think she had choices? How much can be blamed on her upbringing and culture? How much was the result of her personal demons?
11. Which do you think is the more "lucky" gender in this story? Why? In modern, western society, do boys or girls have it better?
12. Through the lives of her siblings, Meí-Líng was able to see how her destiny might have turned out. Can you identify any moments in your life or that of your parents when your family history could have taken a completely different turn?

13. This book has many mothers—Chris Hopgood, Ma, Meí-Líng's sister, Meí-Líng herself, and even Sister Maureen, in a way. Which mother do you relate to the most?
14. Was the language barrier the only reason that Meí-Líng did not really get to know and understand Ma?
15. Forgiveness is a major theme of the book. Do you think Meí-Líng can ever forgive her birth mother, or does she even need to? Why, or why not? Do you think the birth of Meí-Líng's own child makes this easier? Harder?
16. If you could meet any person in the book, who would it be and why?