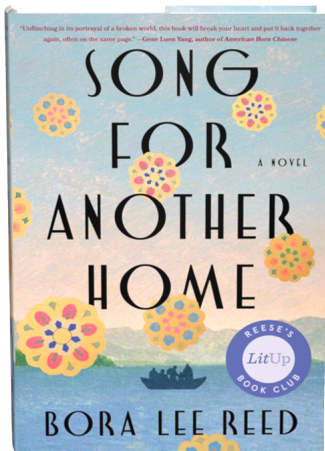




SONG FOR ANOTHER HOME

READING GROUP GUIDE

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!

Please note these questions include spoilers.

1. Discuss the role of storytelling in this novel: the dual storylines of Oksoon and Junho, the stories Junho writes in his letters to America, the stories the orphans want to hear from Oksoon's mother, the stories Oksoon remembers from the past in Pyongyang.
2. What draws Junho so deeply to Miss Kim? What does she see and respond to in him?
3. In the crucial river crossing scene, what do we learn about Oksoon that we didn't know before? What does the boatman experience that compels him to change his mind and go back for Oksoon's mother and brother?
4. At one point Miss Kim says that Americans "build walls around their hearts to protect them from suffering, all the while looking for things to confirm their sense of generosity." What concept of America and Americans is developed through Junho's letter writing connections?
5. Even as Oksoon wishes for her nuclear family to reunite and struggles to keep her mother, brother, and herself connected, they also find connection with Boatman and Dolly at the restaurant. In what ways do these connections function as "found family" for all of them? In what other ways is the idea of "found family" present in this story?
6. Why, in the end, does Junho choose not to share the story of Lucky's death with Mrs. Hope Longfield? What do we learn about Junho from what he writes and what he withholds?
7. As a reader, how do you respond to the catastrophic confrontation with Hongsunim and the end of the Soup House? What, aside from the obvious, has been lost for Oksoon and her family? What are the consequences for Changho and Oksoon's sibling relationship?
8. This book is delineated into roughly equal parts according to the four seasons of the year. How do the seasonal changes affect the tone and mood of the story as it unspools?
9. Discuss Junho's choice to give his opportunity to go to America to Oksoon. How does his decision impact his cousins and his aunt, and what does it mean for his own future?
10. How does Oksoon's relationship with her mother grow and change over the course of the story? As the book concludes, what has remained steady, and what has shifted? What do you imagine the future will hold for them as mother and daughter?

THE STORY BEHIND THE STORY

A NOTE FROM BORA LEE REED



My father (right) with his brother, his sister, and their mother (seated)

In the fall of 1950, my grandfather, a Methodist pastor, left Pyongyang to visit churches he had planted in distant villages. He was still away when China entered the war, turning the tide against South Korean and UN forces. As the fighting reached Pyongyang, my father, then fifteen, fled with his mother and his younger siblings, not knowing whether they would ever see my grandfather again.

I grew up with these stories of displacement, loss, and family separation. *Song for Another Home* is a work of fiction, but it's a deeply personal project that explores what it means to leave one home and make another.

I'm so grateful your group is reading it together.

"In this moving debut by the Korean-American writer Bora Lee Reed, the guns and the soldiers are an offstage menace. The novel is concerned with how life persists in the shadow of war, and how small, happy lives can be devastated by careless decisions made elsewhere."

THE TIMES (LONDON)

KOREA, 1950–1953

WHERE THE STORY TAKES PLACE



A SHORT TIMELINE

June 25, 1950

North Korean forces cross the 38th parallel and invade the South.

September 1950

UN forces land at Incheon and retake Seoul.

October 19, 1950

UN and South Korean forces take Pyongyang.

Late 1950

China enters the war and drives UN forces south. In December they withdraw from Pyongyang, and many civilians flee south with them.

January 4, 1951

Seoul falls for a second time.

July 27, 1953

An armistice ends the fighting. No peace treaty is signed, and Korea remains divided.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Photo courtesy of the author

Bora Lee Reed was born in Seoul and immigrated to the United States as a young child, growing up among a vibrant Korean immigrant community in Southern California. *Song for Another Home*, her debut novel, draws on her family's experiences during the Korean War. She holds an MFA from Warren Wilson College, is a Reese's Book Club LitUp fellow, and has received residencies from Hedgebrook, Ragdale, and Ucross. She lives in Berkeley, California.

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