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Peach Blossom Spring

by Melissa Fu



About the Book

A "beautifully rendered" novel about war, migration and the power of telling our stories, PEACH BLOSSOM SPRING follows three generations of a Chinese family on their search for a place to call home (Georgia Hunter, *New York Times* bestselling author of WE WERE THE LUCKY ONES).

It is 1938 in China. As a young wife, Meilin?s future is bright. But with the Japanese army approaching, Meilin and her four-year-old son, Renshu, are forced to flee their home. Relying on little but their wits and a beautifully illustrated hand scroll, filled with ancient fables that offer solace and wisdom, they must travel through a ravaged country, seeking refuge.

Years later, Renshu has settled in America as Henry Dao. Though his daughter is desperate to understand her heritage, he refuses to talk about his childhood. How can he keep his family safe in this new land when the weight of his history threatens to drag them down? Yet how can Lily learn who she is if she can never know her family?s story?

Spanning continents and generations, PEACH BLOSSOM SPRING is a bold and moving look at the history of modern China, told through the story of one family. It?s about the power of our past, the hope for a better future, and the haunting question: What would it mean to finally be home?

Discussion Guide

Warning: Spoilers Ahead!

1. What purposes do Meilin?s scroll stories serve throughout the narrative? What do they mean to Meilin? In what ways do they shape the person Renshu/Henry becomes?

2. How do ideas from Tao Qian?s poem "Peach Blossom Spring" echo with larger themes in the novel? What was your

reaction when Henry discovered how the original poem differed from Meilin?s version? Why did Meilin change the story?

3. What was your favorite fable in the novel? Was there one lesson that resonated with you more than the others?

4. Languages are important in this book. How is language used both to bring people together as well as keep people apart?

5. On p. 89, Longwei tells Meilin, "China has become a chessboard." What does he mean? How does Meilin see things differently? Do you think either is right? Discuss how their different visions for China shape their choices throughout the novel.

6. What were Longwei?s motivations in switching the names on Renshu?s visa application? Do you think what he did was wrong or necessary or maybe both?

7. Early on, Meilin tells Renshu that "regret is a heavy burden." Later, she reflects that "it?s impossible to have complete conviction that you?ve made all the right decisions. No one is that lucky or that naive." What regrets, if any, do you think the characters have?

8. Are Renshu and Henry different people? How does taking on a new identity help Renshu? Does it also harm him?

9. Henry and Rachel?s relationship is the one marriage we see in the book of some duration. How does their relationship change, and how do they change each other over the years?

10. Discuss how the novel explores motherhood. What does a mother owe to her children? Is Meilin a good mother? Is Rachel? How is raising a child different during a time of great struggle --- such as during a war? In what ways are their challenges the same?

11. Why does Henry become paranoid living in Los Alamos? What do you think he is really afraid of? How does his fear affect Lily?

12. Do you wish Meilin could have found a way to live in America? Would her life have been better there?

13. What does Henry and Lily?s trip to Taiwan mean for each of them? Does it change how they see themselves, their family and each other?

14. Why does Henry become obsessed with growing fruit trees? What does an orchard mean to him? What did it mean to Meilin?

15. Towards the end, Lily says, "I never realised that my father has such a nice smile." What has made it possible for Henry to smile and for Lily to finally see it?

16. Each of the main characters, Meilin, Renshu/Henry and Lily goes on a kind of journey. For each of them, what is the journey? How are their journeys similar --- and how are they different? What are the events that change them the most, and how are they changed?

Author Bio

Melissa Fu grew up in Northern New Mexico and has lived in Texas, Colorado, New York, Ohio and Washington. She now lives near Cambridge, UK, with her husband and children. With academic backgrounds in physics and English, she has worked in education as a teacher, curriculum developer and consultant. She was the 2018/19 David TK Wong Fellow at the University of East Anglia. PEACH BLOSSOM SPRING is her first novel.

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