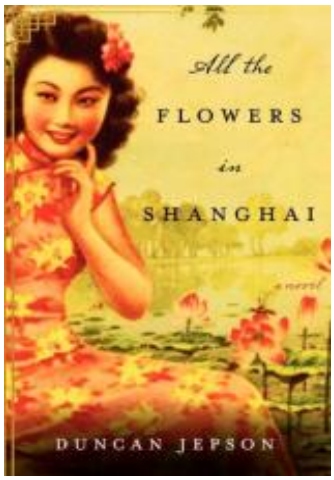
ReadingGroupGuides
The online community for reading groups

All the Flowers in Shanghai

by Duncan Jepson



About the Book

For every young Chinese woman in 1930s Shanghai, following the path of duty takes precedence over personal desires.

For Feng, that means becoming the bride of a wealthy businessman in a marriage arranged by her parents. In the enclosed world of the Sang household --- a place of public ceremony and private cruelty --- fulfilling her duty means bearing a male heir.

The life that has been forced on her makes Feng bitter and resentful, and she plots a terrible revenge. But with the passing years comes a reckoning, and Feng must reconcile herself with the sacrifices and terrible choices she has made in order to assure her place in the family and society --- even as the violent, relentless tide of revolution engulfs her country.

Both a sweeping historical novel and an intimate portrait of one woman?s struggle against tradition, **All the Flowers in Shanghai** marks the debut of a sensitive and revelatory writer.

Discussion Guide

1. What is Feng?s relationship like with her parents compared to her grandfather? What important lessons does her grandfather teach her?

2. Why is Feng attracted to Bi? What kind of background does he come from, and why is it considered unacceptable for Feng to associate with him?

3. Describe the hierarchy in the Sang family. Where does Feng fit in? How does she learn to manipulate these relationships to her own advantage?

4. What is Feng?s sister and mother?s view of an ideal life? How is this different from what Feng wants? Does Feng finally achieve this life, and if so, how does it make her feel?

5. Do you think Xiong Fa is a good or bad husband? Is he also a victim of society?s expectations of him?

6. Why does Feng feel like she has to give up her daughter? Even if you may not agree with her decision, can you sympathize with her reasons for doing it?

7. Do you think the suffering that Feng endures during the Cultural Revolution is enough to atone for the mistakes she has made? Why or why not?

8. How does Feng change throughout the novel? Has she learned anything about herself?

9. Based on this novel, what do you feel is the prevailing attitude toward daughters in China? Is it very different from how daughters are perceived in the West?

10. Are you surprised that the author is a man, given the book?s first-person perspective and subject matter? Do you think that men can write about these things?

Author Bio

Duncan Jepson is the award-winning director and producer of five feature films. He has also produced documentaries for Discovery Channel Asia and National Geographic Channel. He was the editor of the Asia-based fashion magazine *West East* and is a founder and managing editor of the *Asia Literary Review*. A lawyer by profession, he lives in Hong Kong.

All the Flowers in Shanghai
by Duncan Jepson

Publication Date: December 20, 2011
Genres: Fiction, Historical Fiction
Paperback: 320 pages
Publisher: William Morrow Paperbacks
ISBN-10: 0062081608
ISBN-13: 9780062081605