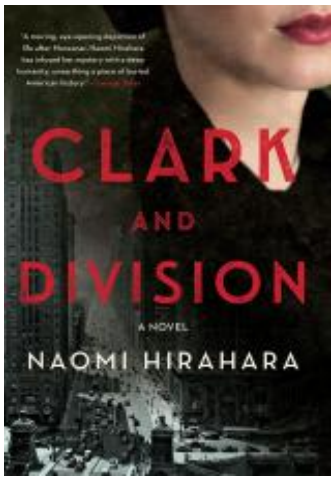
Clark and Division

by Naomi Hirahara



About the Book

Set in 1944 Chicago, Edgar Award winner Naomi Hirahara?s eye-opening and poignant new mystery, the story of a young woman searching for the truth about her revered older sister's death, brings to focus the struggles of one Japanese American family released from mass incarceration at Manzanar during World War II.

Chicago, 1944: Twenty-year-old Aki Ito and her parents have just been released from Manzanar, where they have been detained by the US government since the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, together with thousands of other Japanese Americans. The life in California the Itos were forced to leave behind is gone; instead, they are being resettled 2,000 miles away in Chicago, where Aki?s older sister, Rose, was sent months earlier and moved to the new Japanese American neighborhood near Clark and Division streets. But on the eve of the Ito family?s reunion, Rose is killed by a subway train.

Aki, who worshipped her sister, is stunned. Officials are ruling Rose?s death a suicide. Aki cannot believe her perfect, polished and optimistic sister would end her life. Her instinct tells her there is much more to the story, and she knows she is the only person who could ever learn the truth.

Inspired by historical events, CLARK AND DIVISION infuses an atmospheric and heartbreakingly real crime fiction plot with rich period details and delicately wrought personal stories Naomi Hirahara has gleaned from 30 years of research and archival work in Japanese American history.

Discussion Guide

1. How do the opportunities and choices available to the Ito family --- in terms of home, employment, education and community --- change after the bombing of Pearl Harbor? How do euphemisms such as ?internment? and ?relocation? diminish the harsh reality of incarceration?

2. Aki almost blacks out on the train ride to Chicago. What do you make of her sickness? Were you fearful when Aki heard Rose?s voice? How does forced displacement and relocation affect the body, memory and identity?

3. In Chapter Nine, Aki translates *kurou* as ?a guttural moaning, a piercing pain throughout your bones.? How does Aki cope with the grief of her sister?s death? How do her parents internalize their pain? How do the physical items Rose left behind take on a new life?

4. Aki seems driven to protect her sister?s legacy. Why do you think she takes the investigation of Rose?s death into her own hands?

5. How is Aki watched and evaluated differently --- at the police station, outside the chocolate factory, inside Art?s truck --- by *nisei* and *hakujin*?

6. Aki often describes herself as a lesser version of Rose. How does Aki?s definition of herself in relation to her sister change over the course of the novel?

7. What do you make of the library scene when the professor belittles Phillis? What type of connection is the author making between the discrimination against Black and Japanese American citizens?

8. Why does Aki initially feel guilty about her relationship with Art? Were you surprised that she did not tell him about her efforts to find out what happened to her sister?

9. How is police sergeant Graves responsible for Rose?s death and continued abuse against women? What is the relationship between the Chicago Japanese American community and local law enforcement? Do you think trust can exist between the police and an ethnic, racial or religious minority community?

10. In Chapter Six, Aki?s mother tells her to ?Never shame us. All we have is our reputations.? How does Keizo take advantage of the silence and sacrifices demanded of Japanese American women and girls?

11. Besides Aki, what character do you relate to the most? In what way do you think their decisions and actions during this tumultuous time resonate with your own approach and experiences?

12. Why do you think the author chose CLARK AND DIVISION as the novel?s title?

Author Bio

Naomi Hirahara is an Edgar Award-winning author of multiple traditional mystery series and noir short stories. Her Mas Arai mysteries, which have been published in Japanese, Korean and French, feature a Los Angeles gardener and

Hiroshima survivor who solves crimes. Her first historical mystery, CLARK AND DIVISION, which won a Mary Higgins Clark Award, follows a Japanese American family?s move to Chicago in 1944 after being released from a California wartime detention center.

A former journalist with *The Rafu Shimpo* newspaper, Naomi has also written numerous non-fiction history books and curated exhibitions. She has also written a middle-grade novel, 1001 CRANES. EVERGREEN, her follow-up to CLARK AND DIVISION, released in August 2023 and was on the *USA Today* bestseller list for two weeks. Her latest book is CROWN CITY.

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