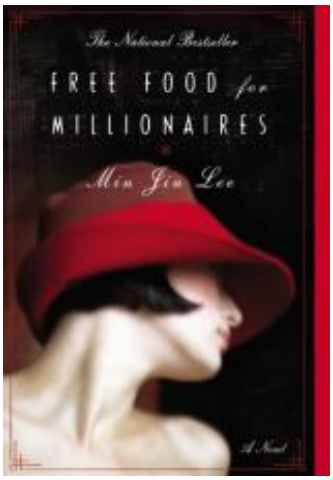
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Free Food for Millionaires

by Min Jin Lee



About the Book

Casey Han's four years at Princeton gave her many things, 'But no job and a number of bad habits.' Casey's parents, who live in Queens, are Korean immigrants working in a dry cleaner, desperately trying to hold on to their culture and their identity. Their daughter, on the other hand, has entered into rarified American society via scholarships. But after graduation, Casey sees the reality of having expensive habits without the means to sustain them.

As she navigates Manhattan, we see her life and the lives around her, culminating in a portrait of New York City and its world of haves and have-nots. **Free Food for Millionaires** offers up a fresh exploration of the complex layers we inhabit both in society and within ourselves. Inspired by 19th century novels such as Vanity Fair and Middlemarch, Min Jin Lee examines maintaining one's identity within changing communities in what is her remarkably assured debut.

Discussion Guide

1. Lee has said elsewhere that she believes that everyone is a kind of millionaire because each person possesses innate gifts or talents that make him or her wealthy. What do you think of this idea? What inherent gifts or talents do Casey, Ella and Ted have? Are they aware of their own gifts?

2. Why did Ella and Ted marry? How does adultery affect their relationship? Is sexual betrayal the reason why they end the marriage? Why is Ted drawn to Delia? Why is Delia drawn to Ted?

3. Does Leah love her husband Joseph? Does she love the choir director Charles Hong? How are these feelings different and similar?

4. How does an Ivy League education affect Casey's development as a young woman?

5. What does Joseph want for his daughters and why? Why does he drink? How does he change by the book's end?

6. Casey often makes unpopular choices. Why does she make them? Which choices do you agree with, and which do you disagree with?

7. The novel is divided into three sections entitled Works, Plans and Grace, respectively. What do these title names mean to you, and why do you think Lee organizes her book this way?

8. How does immigration affect Casey's characterization and her goals? How might this book be changed if she were not an immigrant? If she were not Korean? If she had not grown up working class?

9. Casey and Ella have known each other since they were little girls in Sunday school. How does their relationship change? What does Ella want from Casey, and what does Casey want from Ella?

10. When Casey meets Jay again at the Princeton reunion, how do they feel about each other (Book III, Chapter 7)?

11. The book has many scenes that take place in a Korean-American church in Queens. What role does the church serve for the Han and Shim families?

12. How does Sabine's relationship with Casey compare with Leah's relationship with Casey?

13. The bond between Casey and Tina is a strong one, but how do they get along as sisters? What does Tina want from her life? How does she change in the novel?

14. There is a scene where the Han family exchanges wedding presents with the bridegroom's family (Book II, Chapter 9). Why does Leah spend so much money on the gifts? How does this Korean practice differ from American wedding rites?

15. What do you think Casey and Unu will do with their lives? What would you like them to do? In the final image of the book, why do they draw a tree and flowers? (Book III, Chapter 15)

Author Bio

Min Jin Lee is the author of the novels FREE FOOD FOR MILLIONAIRES; PACHINKO, a finalist for the National Book Award, runner-up for the Dayton Literary Peace Prize, and a *New York Times* ?100 Best Books of the Century?; and AMERICAN HAGWON.

She serves as the New York State Author Laureate from 2025 through 2027. She is the 2024 recipient of The Fitzgerald Prize for Literary Excellence. Lee has received the Manhae Grand Prize for Literature, the Bucheon Diaspora Literary Award, and the Samsung Happiness for Tomorrow Award for Creativity from South Korea. She is the recipient of fellowships in Fiction from the Guggenheim Foundation, the Harvard Radcliffe Institute, and the New York Foundation for the Arts.

Lee is an inductee of the New York Foundation for the Arts Hall of Fame and the New York State Writers Hall of Fame. She lives in Harlem with her family.

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