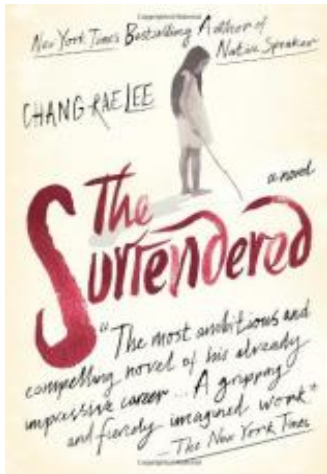


# The Surrendered

by Chang-rae Lee

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## About the Book

With his three previous novels, Chang-rae Lee has established himself as one of the most talented writers of his generation. Now he has returned with a novel that amplifies everything we've seen in his earlier work. A stunning story about how love and war inalterably change the lives of those they touch, **The Surrendered** is elegant, suspenseful, and unforgettable: a profound meditation on the nature of heroism and sacrifice, the power of love, and the possibilities for mercy and salvation.

## Discussion Guide

1. In the orphanage, June is a bully to the other children and shows affection only to Sylvie. Yet when we first meet her, she is incredibly caring to her sister and brother. What do you think caused this change in her personality? How did her experiences as a young girl shape the adult she became?
2. Hector seems to develop true feelings for Dora. If things had ended differently in the final scene with Dora, do you think he would still have gone off with June? Why or why not? Do you think his experience with Sylvie colored his relationship with Dora? How?
3. Do you think Sylvie and Tanner would have adopted June had things not happened the way they did turned out differently? Why or why not?
4. June seems fixated on finding Nicholas even after it becomes clear that he is not who he says he is. Why do you think she is so focused? Why do you think she needs to find him?
5. If you've read Chang-rae Lee's work in the past, you know that he writes often of identity. How do these themes play out in **The Surrendered**? Of Hector, June, and Sylvie, which character do you think has the strongest sense of identity?

The weakest?

6. Each character undergoes a traumatic experience that ends up shaping the course of his or her life: Hector's father's death, June's loss of her family, and Sylvie's experience in Manchuria. How do these events change their characters? Do you think each person's life would be different had these traumatic events not occurred?

7. The book **A Memory of Solferino** recurs throughout the novel and is passed from Sylvie to June to Nicholas. What do you think the book means to each character and how does it influence the choices they make?

8. Although **The Surrendered** is very much about war, the events of the Korean War itself make up a very small part of the book. Why do you think the author chose this approach? What point do you think he was making? How does this relate to his choice of title?

9. Discuss the idea of mercy in the book. Which characters do you think most exemplify this trait? In which scenes does the idea of mercy seem to be the guiding force?

10. Hector is born in the town of Ilion and is named after Hector in the Iliad. Discuss heroism in the book. Are any of the characters heroes? Do they behave heroically?

## Author Bio

Chang-rae Lee is the author of **NATIVE SPEAKER**, winner of the Hemingway Foundation/PEN Award for first fiction, as well as **MY YEAR ABROAD**, **ON SUCH A FULL SEA**, **A GESTURE LIFE**, **ALOFT** and **THE SURRENDERED**, winner of the Dayton Peace Prize and a finalist for the Pulitzer Prize. A 2021 winner of the Award of Merit for the Novel from the American Academy of Arts and Letters, Chang-rae Lee teaches writing at Stanford University.

## Critical Praise

"Lee writes with tremendous insight."

? *USA Today*

"The accretion of wisdom in Lee's [writing] is stunning."

? *The New York Times*

"Lee is an original."

? *LA Times*

"Lee is a writer of exquisite intimacy and delicate disclosures."

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## **The Surrendered**

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