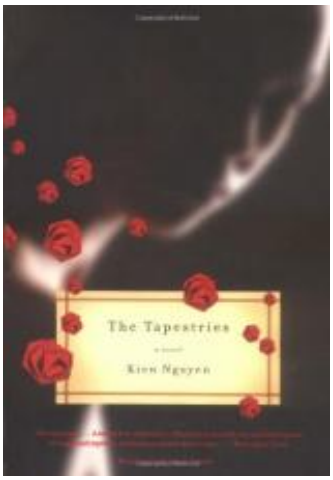
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The Tapestries: A Novel

by Kien Nguyen



About the Book

This epic tale of romance and revenge immerses us in the world of a spirited young boy in turn-of-the-century Vietnam: Dan, who is thrust into an arranged marriage at age seven, who secretly witnesses his father's beheading, who escapes certain death by being sold into servitude, and who, ultimately, must choose between passion and family honor when he falls in love with the one woman he can never have.

Discussion Guide

1. Discuss the tension between duty and personal choice in **The Tapestries**. To what extent did the characters have control over the way they lived their lives? Discuss the role of fate in the lives of the novel's principal characters.

2. Did you learn something new about Vietnam and its history from reading **The Tapestries**? Did you sense a conflict between the forces of history and the forces of modernism? Could you foresee a source of future conflicts in Vietnamese society after reading this novel?

3. Discuss the romantic relationships in the novel - Ven and Big Con, Dan and Tai May, Dan's mother and her gardener. What was the role of loyalty in these relationships? Can you identify modern as well as traditional elements in each relationship?

4. Who was your favorite character in **The Tapestries**, and why? Which characters were the most dynamic? the most passive? the most complex?

5. How did the author's use of metaphors and other figures of speech influence your experience of the story? How did the author's depiction of weather and landscape contribute to the novel's mood and tone?

6. What is the significance of Ven's disfigurement at the hands of Magistrate Toan? Do you think it reflects the position of women in Vietnamese society in the era portrayed in the novel? Do you think that the position of Vietnamese women has changed since that time?

7. Were you surprised by the details of food and daily life that are presented in the novel? In what way were these details important to the story? Discuss the differences in the lives of the wealthy and the poor.

8. Did you perceive certain characters to be representative of the historic culture of Vietnam? Did others appear more modern? Sometimes the characters in **The Tapestries** make choices based on traditional values that could be hard for a Western reader to comprehend. Identify some of the critical choices that altered characters' lives. Did the author succeed in making these choices understandable to you?

9. Who was the bigger villain - Magistrate Toan or Lady Yen? Who did more harm to Dan and the other characters in the story? Was Dan truly obligated to kill Magistrate Toan because of the family legacy?

10. Kien Nguyen has stated that **The Tapestries** was inspired by the story of his grandfather's life. Which parts of the novel do you think were factual, and which parts do you think were fictional? Are these distinctions important to you?

Author Bio

Kien Nguyen left Vietnam in 1985 through the United Nations "Orderly Department Program." After spending time at a refugee camp in the Philippines, Nguyen arrived in the United States. He lives in New York City.

Critical Praise

"**The Tapestries** is set in a Vietnam unknown to most Americans. That this strange and beautiful lost world has been brought to life for us by a storyteller of such force as Kien Nguyen is cause for celebration. A poignant and deeply satisfying novel."

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Publication Date: October 15, 2003
Paperback: 336 pages
Publisher: Back Bay Books
ISBN-10: 0316735604
ISBN-13: 9780316735605