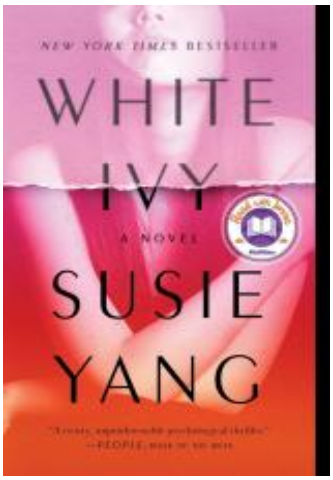
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White Ivy

by Susie Yang



About the Book

From prize-winning Chinese American author Susie Yang, this dazzling coming-of-age novel about a young woman?s dark obsession with her privileged classmate offers sharp insights into the immigrant experience.

Ivy Lin is a thief and a liar --- but you?d never know it by looking at her.

Raised outside of Boston, Ivy?s immigrant grandmother relies on Ivy?s mild appearance for cover as she teaches her granddaughter how to pilfer items from yard sales and second-hand shops. Thieving allows Ivy to accumulate the trappings of a suburban teen --- and, most importantly, to attract the attention of Gideon Speyer, the golden boy of a wealthy political family. But when Ivy?s mother discovers her trespasses, punishment is swift and Ivy is sent to China, and her dream instantly evaporates.

Years later, Ivy has grown into a poised yet restless young woman, haunted by her conflicting feelings about her upbringing and her family. Back in Boston, when Ivy bumps into Sylvia Speyer, Gideon?s sister, a reconnection with Gideon seems not only inevitable --- it feels like fate.

Slowly, Ivy sinks her claws into Gideon and the entire Speyer clan by attending fancy dinners, and weekend getaways to the cape. But just as Ivy is about to have everything she?s ever wanted, a ghost from her past resurfaces, threatening the nearly perfect life she?s worked so hard to build.

Filled with surprising twists and a nuanced exploration of class and race, WHITE IVY is a glimpse into the dark side of a woman who yearns for success at any cost.

Discussion Guide

1. After finishing the novel, reexamine the title. What do you think it refers to? In what ways can the title be interpreted?

2. The novel is both a thriller with plot twists and social commentary on the ?model minority? myth. How does Susie Yang meld these usually disparate genres?

3. Since middle school, Ivy values appearances and decorum. She believes that ?Muddy water, let stand, becomes clear? (p. 39). She wants others to think that she is morally upright, and she is ashamed when Roux catches her stealing. Why do you think Ivy values the appearance of propriety? How much of it is from her family and how much of it is from her environment?

4. Meifeng shares with Ivy the story about how her parents got together. Years later, Ivy learns new details of that story from her own mother. How does Ivy?s evolving understanding of her parents? history inform how she pursues her goals?

5. Ivy meets Dave, Gideon?s mentor, and his wife, Liana, an Asian woman, at a party. How does their interracial relationship differ from that of Ivy and Gideon?

6. Ivy thinks at one point, ?Perhaps this was the secret to a lasting marriage: to always uphold a veil of mystery between each other? (p. 147). Does this veil exist in her relationship with Gideon? Does it exist in her relationship with Roux? Why or why not?

7. Ivy?s and Gideon?s families meet for the first time on Thanksgiving. How do their families? cultures clash? How do their cultural differences manifest in the discussion about the wedding?

8. Throughout Ivy?s childhood, her parents are strict and frugal. Later on, her parents attain middle-class legitimacy and are more supportive of her. How does Ivy?s relationship to her parents develop over the course of the book?

9. Ivy is ambitious and covets privilege. She longs for money, access and legitimacy. What different desires do Gideon and Roux satisfy in Ivy? In what ways do their respective relationships remain unsatisfactory for her?

10. In a violent altercation, Ivy and Roux hit each other. Afterward, Roux says ?I love you? for the first time. How do Roux?s childhood and past relationships influence his behavior toward Ivy?

11. Ivy dyes her hair blond before making a crucial decision in the book. What does her blond hair signify?

12. What do White Anglo-Saxon Protestants (WASPs) exemplify for Ivy? What attraction do they hold, and how does Gideon exemplify this ideal?

13. Why does Ivy struggle to embrace her Chinese culture?

14. On her wedding day, Ivy learns not only a truth about Gideon, but also about Sylvia?s role in their relationship. How does Sylvia protect her brother?

15. In your opinion, does Ivy succeed in the end? Is she happy?

Author Bio

Susie Yang was born in China and came to the United States as a child. After receiving her doctorate of pharmacy from Rutgers, she launched a tech startup in San Francisco that has taught 20,000 people how to code. She has studied creative writing at Tin House and Sackett Street. She has lived across the United States, Europe and Asia, and now resides in the UK. WHITE IVY is her first novel.

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