



The Street of a Thousand Blossoms

by Gail Tsukiyama

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1:30p | Isabel Hall

Discussion Questions

1. Tradition plays an important role in the novel, and one way for traditions to be passed down from generation to generation is through storytelling. Discuss the various stories in the novel and their significance for some of the characters.
2. What lessons do Hiroshi and Kenji learn from their grandparents, and how do those lessons serve them in a changing world? How would you compare the marriage between Yoshio and Fumiko to those of their grandsons?
3. Even though no one in the novel ever fights on a battlefield, in what ways does the war shape their lives? How might their lives have been different if there had been no war?
4. Yoshio tells his grandsons early in the book, "Just remember....Every day of your lives, you must always be sure what you're fighting for." What implications does this have for Hiroshi and other characters in the story?
5. Both Kenji and Aki feel like "ghosts." In what other ways are they similar—and different?
6. Art and beauty are obviously central in the lives of Kenji and Akira, as well as the violinist Mariko. What roles do art and beauty play in other characters' lives? How does beauty help—or not help—sustain the characters in difficult times? What does Haru mean when she says that she sees "such beauty" at the end of the Prologue?
7. The four central female characters—Fumiko, Aki, Haru, and Mika—lead very different lives. How do they represent the changing roles of women, and in what ways do they represent their individual natures and circumstances? How do you regard each of these characters?
8. Kenji gives Hiroshi a poem before his first big match. *Winter solitude/in a world of one color/the sound of wind*. What do you think it means to Hiroshi? To Kenji?
9. Hiroshi, Akira, and Kenji all achieve considerable fame. What are its rewards and pitfalls for them?
10. Members of the kasutori generation are filled with "guilt and grief," clinging to the past while also struggling to find their own way in the "new" Japan. How do Kenji and Hiroshi, as well as Aki, Haru, and Mika, rebel against the "old" Japan of their childhood? How do they embrace it?