

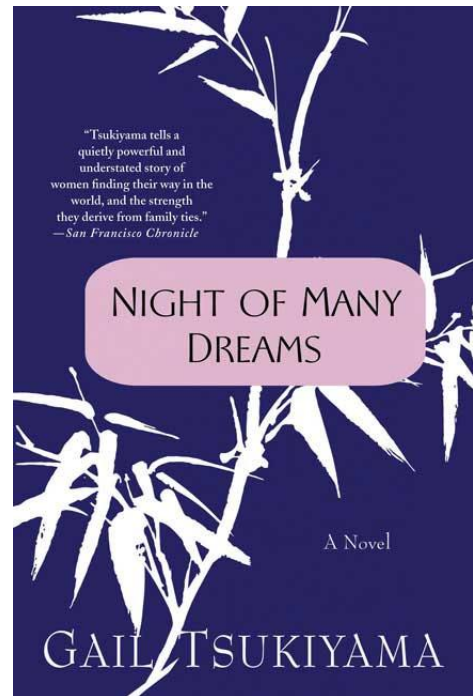
READING GROUP GUIDE

Night of Many Dreams

A Novel

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As World War II threatens their comfortable life in Hong Kong, young Joan and Emma Lew escape with their family to spend the war years in Macao. When they return home, Emma develops a deep interest in travel and sets her sights on an artistic life in San Francisco, while Joan turns to movies and thoughts of romance to escape the pressures of her real life. As the girls become women, each follows a path different from what her family expects. But through periods of great happiness and sorrow, the sisters learn that their complicated ties to each other--and to the other members of their close-knit family—are a source of strength as they pursue their separate dreams.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Joan is the "beautiful" sister, and Emma is the "smart" sister. Discuss the significance of the scene in which Emma goes with Joan to collect their father's money throughout the city during wartime. How do these descriptions affect each character's sense of self?



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2. Much of *Night of Many Dreams* takes place in Hong Kong. The city goes through several stages: pre-war, war, reconstruction and post-war boom. What happens to the landscape and businesses of Hong Kong in these different stages? How does the changing landscape of Hong Kong affect the characters, especially Auntie Go, Joan and Emma, throughout the book?
3. Macao is almost a magical refuge for Emma. It is also a very important place for both Auntie Go and Joan. What does Macao represent for each character?
4. Joseph Wong is the first seemingly suitable match for Joan. Not only does Joan fall in love with him, but so do Emma and Kum-Ling-each in her own way. What does the promise of Joseph represent for Joan, for Emma, and for Kum-Ling?
5. Joan becomes passionate about cooking after she and Joseph break up. Kum-Ling is angry about her desire to cook. Why is this? And how does Joan show that cooking is important to her?
6. How is marriage defined within the elite Hong Kong circles? What does the game of Mah-jongg fulfill for Kum-Ling and her friends?
7. Joan's passionate and illicit affair with her director, Edward Chung, fires her acting in their movie *A Woman's Life*. How does the character she plays help her understand her own experiences?
8. Joan is very close to Foon, the family servant. How does Foon show her love for Joan? And how does she keep the whole household together?
9. Joan and Emma's father is generally silent. What do we learn about his relationship with Auntie Go at the scene of his death? What releases him from this world?
10. Emma goes through many changes when she moves to San Francisco. How does the boat ride affect Emma? In her first taxi ride around town, how does she perceive the landscape of the city itself? What and who most influence her in San Francisco? What changes does her family see when she comes home?

