1. What roles do Meilin’s scroll stories serve throughout the narrative? What do they mean to the characters? What can we learn from this book about the power of storytelling and folklore?

2. How are people’s daily lives affected by war? How does Longwei’s relationship with Meilin and Renshu affect their wartime experiences?

3. Meilin, Renshu and many others are refugees both within their own country and in other countries. What did you learn about the strain of displacement and immigration on people’s lives?

4. Which of Meilin’s personal qualities helped her and Renshu survive?

5. Do we owe our children all of our memories and stories? How do people’s traumas affect the lives of their family members? What does Renshu/Henry do to try to navigate his past?

6. What are the reasons for Lily’s identity crisis?

7. What helps both Henry and Lily to find peace within their own lives and with each other at the end of the book?

8. What do you make of Meilin’s decision to not tell the whole story of Peach Blossom Spring to Renshu as a child? How does the meaning of the fable play out in the plot of the book?

9. What did you learn about Chinese history or culture from the book that you didn’t know before?
**Helpful Terms and Names**

**Baba & Yeye** – Father & paternal grandfather

**Benshengren** – People who lived in Taiwan under Japanese rule before 1945.

**Chiang Kai-shek** – Chinese Nationalist Party leader of the Republic of China (ROC) from 1928 to his death in 1975.

**Changsan ladies** - High class prostitutes who also were skilled in cultural entertainments such as singing and playing instruments.

**Chinese Communist Party (CCP)** - The founding and sole ruling party of the People's Republic of China (PRC).

**Juancun** - Housing for military families.

**Kempeitai** – The Japanese Army's military police from 1881 to 1945 that also served as secret police.

**Kuomintang (KMT)** - Also known as the Chinese Nationalist Party, the KMT is a major political party first in mainland China and then in Taiwan after 1949.

**Mao Zedong (Mao Tse-Tung)** – The communist revolutionary who was the leader of the People's Republic of China from 1949 until his death 1976.

**People's Republic of China (PRC)** – The official name of China, declared by Mao Zedong in 1949.

**Qipao** - A Chinese dress, also known as a Cheongsam.

**Red Army** - The armed forces of the Communist Party from 1928 to 1937, later renamed the People's Liberation Army.

**Republic of China (ROC)** - A sovereign state recognized between 1912 to 1949.

**Shikumen** – A style of architecture combining Western and Chinese elements.

**Taitai** – A married woman who is often elevated above other women in the household.

**Tingzijian** - A small study in a flat or apartment.

**Wai gong & Wai po** - Maternal grandfather & maternal grandmother

**Waishengren** - People who migrated from China to Taiwan from 1945 to 1949.

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**Key Historical Events**

**The Sino-Japanese War** (1937–1945) was primarily waged between China and Japan within the wider Pacific Theater of World War II.

The **Chinese Civil War** was fought between the Kuomintang-led government of the ROC and the forces of the CCP both before and after World War II. The CCP prevailed and established the PRC in mainland China in 1949.

228, also known as the **February 28 Massacre**, occurred in 1947 when the KMT violently suppressed an anti-government uprising in Taiwan.

In 1949, two million soldiers followed **Chiang Kai-shek into exile in Taiwan** where he set up a provisional government claiming to be the legitimate ruling body of China.

**The White Terror** is generally considered to have begun when the KMT declared martial law in Taiwan on May 19, 1949.

**Chinese Cultural Revolution** was a movement in the PRC launched by Mao Zedong in 1966. Its stated goal was to preserve communism by rooting out remnants of capitalism and traditional culture from Chinese society. Chaos led to martial law, Communist Party purges, and 1.5 million deaths.

On January 1, 1979, the **United States formally recognized the PRC** and severed its diplomatic relations with Taiwan.

In April 1979, Congress passed the **Taiwan Relations Act**, which gave the breakaway island nearly the same status as any other nation recognized by the United States. In place of the U.S. Embassy in Taiwan, an “unofficial” representative, called the American Institute in Taiwan, would continue to serve U.S. interests there.

**The Taiwan independence movement** is a movement that advocates the formal declaration of an independent and sovereign Taiwanese state, as opposed to Chinese unification. China claims Taiwan is a province of the People's Republic of China.