

1. With five main characters, each with their own motivations, families, dreams, and connections to China, there are many ways to enter into this story. Which character's perspective was the most relatable to you? Who did you feel you had the most in common with and in what ways did you feel connected to them?

2. Why was it important to the story for the characters to travel to Beijing at the beginning of the book? What did it mean to each of them to visit China—either returning to it or arriving for the first time? How do you think it impacted their decisions to participate in the heist?

3. The legacy of the colonization of art is a central theme for the book, bringing up the very real issue of museums' possession of other countries' art. Discuss the theft of works of art from their original countries and creators and what responsibility museums and private collectors have to return that art.

4. Several times throughout the book, Irene asserts the tenet "Art is power." What do you think she means by this? How is the possession and portrayal of art a demonstration of power? How has that power been wielded throughout history?

5. We learn early on Will Chen wrote a recent article for the Harvard Crimson titled "What Is Ours Is Not Ours: Chinese Art and Western Imperialism." How does the discussion of this topic in the first chapter set the stage for Will's passion for the heist and what's to come in the rest of the book?

6. How do you think the characters' ages and the points they're at in life—either in their last years of college or recently having started their first job—affects their decisions? Why do you think taking this job is so appealing to them as they graduate from school and think about what they want to do for their lives and careers?

7. Considering other movies, TV shows, and books in the heist genre, did you expect the art theft aspects of the story to play out the way they did? How did they echo other media in the genre and in what ways did they depart from them?

8. We're told this about Lily's perspective on diaspora: "Diaspora had always been an unmooring, a boat cast free. She did not know how to find her way back. She never had." How does each character grapple with their own experiences as part of the Chinese diaspora? How are their identities as Chinese Americans explored throughout the book?

9. Think about Daniel and his father's relationship and Will and Irene's relationship throughout the book. How does the arc of both of these loving but, at times, strained familial relationships help frame the story?

10. Early in the book, Will protests to Lily that he's an art history major, not an artist, saying, "I study history. I don't make it." Why do you think he was so hesitant to pursue art and call himself an artist early on in the novel? How do the events of the book change his perspective?

