

# Searching for Sylvie Lee

1. How do the members of the Lee family deal with being measured against stereotypes, language barriers, and others' perceptions? Have you ever felt like an outsider?
2. Discuss the relationship between Amy and Sylvie. How do the siblings both understand and mystify one another?
3. How is this immigrant family like others you've seen or read about? What about their experiences do you think are universal or unique?
4. How does Kwok represent the different languages in each chapter? Did any idioms or word orders surprise you or make you think? Why do you think Kwok chose to depict language this way?
5. This novel says a great deal about the influence our families can have on us. How did Amy and Sylvie's different upbringings shape them and their choices? Did anything about your own upbringing strongly influence you?
6. Did your perception of Ma change when you read her chapters? How did she appear through other's eyes in comparison to how she sees herself? Do you think others see you the way you really are?
7. Do you think any of the characters in the novel are reliable narrators? Can any narrator be truly reliable, or are we all colored by our perceptions and misunderstandings?
8. What is the price of the American dream? Who pays for it? How does the lifestyle in Europe compare?
9. Amy and Sylvie perceive the Netherlands differently. How do their impressions of the landscape and the people—especially Filip and Lukas—demonstrate their own characters?
10. Has reading this novel deepened your understanding of the implications of casual racism, even toward well-integrated people? Did any instances in the novel surprise you? Have you ever encountered situations like this in your life?
11. Different men love Sylvie in this novel. How did their love differ, and why?
12. Why do you think Helena resented Sylvie? How deserved do you think it was?
13. There are so many secrets that the characters keep to themselves. What do you wish they had shared with each other, and how might this have changed the plot? Are secrets always bad, or are they sometimes necessary? Have you ever kept secrets from people you loved?
14. Do you think the novel's title, *Searching for Sylvie Lee*, has multiple meanings?