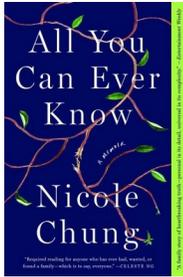


Books by the Stack



All You Can Ever Know: A Memoir by Nicole Chung

A Korean adoptee who grew up with a white family in Oregon discusses her journey to find her identity as an Asian American woman and a writer after becoming curious about her true origins.

Why you'll like it: *Candid. Thoughtful. Moving.*

About the Author: Nicole Chung's memoir, *All You Can Ever Know*, was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award for Autobiography, long-listed for the PEN Open Book Award, and named a Best Book of the Year by nearly two dozen outlets, including *The Washington Post*, *The Boston Globe*, NPR, *Time*, *Newsday*, and *Library Journal*. Chung has written for *The New York Times*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *GQ*, *The Atlantic*, *New York magazine*, *Longreads*, and *Hazlitt*, among many other publications. She is the editor in chief of *Catapult* magazine and the former managing editor of *The Toast*.

Questions for Discussion

1. The book opens with “The story my mother told me about them was always the same” (3) – how do stories and storytelling shape the author's view of herself and her life?
2. Chung writes about not telling anyone that she is looking for her birth parents and that “long after the papers were signed, and the original familial bonds are severed, adoption has a way of isolating the adoptee” (63). What role does isolation take in Chung's journey? What impact does her race and ethnicity have on these feelings of isolation?
3. Throughout her memoir, Chung openly asks questions to herself and others in equal measure. By the end of the memoir, do you feel as if she has answered the questions she asks? Does she need to?
4. Chung's search for her birth parents coincides with her first pregnancy, and her first meeting with her birth father lines up with her second. How do these events happening at the same time inform another? How does it affect how she views them?
5. Chung's adoptive parents have what she sees as “an enviable sort of nonchalance about my adoption,” but she writes that she “couldn't turn other people's nosiness into a joke, and [she] couldn't make them regret it, either” (34). What do you think was behind her adoptive parents' responses and the attitude about the adoption? How did these things impact Chung's perception of herself?
6. What are some of the mainstream ideas and narratives about adoption that Chung pushes back on? Where and how does she complicate the choices and events that tend to get simplified, particularly regarding adoptees of color?
7. After corresponding with her birth family, Chung is left to confront the fact that the story she was told about her birth parents was not entirely accurate. How does she process this new information? What shifts does she make after being presented with it?
8. Chung writes, “The peace I'd so badly wanted to give my birth parents, all along, was never my power to

give" (150). Who does have the power to give her birth parents peace? Why do you think they feel the way they do about the adoption, despite knowing Chung became who she is because of it?

9. How does Chung's journey influence her ideas surrounding motherhood and becoming a mother? As she builds a relationship with her sister and birth father, do these ideas change?

10. How does being Korean American with white adoptive parents in a predominately white town affect Chung's understanding of her racial and ethnic identity? How does the perception shift as she gets older? How does it change as she raises her own biological children?

(Questions provided by Litlovers.com)



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