



Spring Moon

By Bette Bao Lord
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Introduction

Behind the garden walls of the House of Chang, Spring Moon is born into an exclusive world of luxury and privilege. Her servant, Plum Blossom, attends to her every need and inadvertently alters the course of her life forever. Her uncle, Bold Talent, who has returned to China from the United States with radical new ideas, educates her against the wishes of the family, and intervenes at the moment when Spring Moon most needs his help.

But the tempests of change sweep Spring Moon into a new world == one of hardship, turmoil, and heartbreak; one that threatens to destroy her husband, her family, and her darkest secret love. Through her tumultuous lifetime, Spring Moon must cling to her honor, to the memory of a time gone by == and to a destiny, foretold at her birth that has yet to be fulfilled.

Discussion Questions

1. At the beginning of the novel, Spring Moon's happy existence is thrown into turmoil because of the family's plan for her servant, Plum Blossom. Her young uncle, Noble Talent, explains: "Plum Blossom is not yours ... [S]he belongs to the House of Chang." How do honor and duty factor into family decision making in the House of Chang?
2. How does the death of Old Venerable affect Bold Talent's life and responsibilities? How is Bold Talent received upon his untimely return to Soochow? What steps does he take to shed the Western manners and behaviors and reacquaint himself with Chinese traditions and customs?
3. How would you characterize the initial relationship between Spring Moon and her uncle, Bold Talent? What elements of Spring Moon's character does Bold Talent admire? Why does he agree to teach Spring Moon how to read and write? How does the House of Chang react to Bold Talent's decision to educate Spring Moon?
4. What aspects of China's political life cause unrest between Bold Talent and Noble Talent? How does Noble Talent feel about China's entering into agreements that weaken its power as a nation? When Soochow becomes a treaty port, how does Bold Talent react to protect China's interests?
5. Discuss Spring Moon's reaction to the news of her arranged marriage with Pan Tai Tai's son? Why does she go to Bold Talent and reveal the news of her marriage to him? Were you surprised by Bold Talent's willingness to intervene to rescue Spring Moon? Why does the Matriarch encourage him to find a husband for Spring Moon? Were you at all surprised by his choice of a husband? Why does Spring Moon feign grief at the news of her newly arranged marriage to Glad Promise?
6. Describe Spring Moon's mode of travel on her ten-day journey from Soochow to Peking. What does her treatment as a new bride suggest about the roles and opportunities of upper-class women in China in the late 19th and early 20th centuries? How does Spring Moon and Glad Promise's wedding night defy tradition?
7. Discuss the significance of ancestors and filial obligation in Spring Moon. How important are ancestors and ancestor worship in this novel? How is the role of ancestors evident in rites of passage like births, betrothals, New Year's celebrations, weddings, and deaths?
8. What motivates Glad Promise to return to Peking and leave his pregnant wife? Why does Spring Moon decide not to bind Lustrous Jade's feet? How does the Woo clan treat her and her daughter after Glad Promise's departure?
9. What changes does Spring Moon find in Soochow when she returns with Lustrous Jade from Peking? How is she received by her family? How would you describe Bold Talent's marriage to Golden Virtue? How does Spring Moon's return affect that relationship? Discuss the implications of Spring Moon's decision to conceal her pregnancy and the birth and adoption of Enduring Promise from Bold Talent and his wife.
10. How does Lustrous Jade's awakening to Christianity and Communism affect her relationship with Spring Moon? How do Lustrous Jade and Resolute Spirit get entangled in affairs with Noble Talent? Discuss how Lustrous Jade's political fervor differs from that of her granduncle.
11. What elements of Chinese history did you find most compelling as they played out in the chronicle of the House of Chang? What aspects of Spring Moon's experience resonated most for you as a reader?

About the author

President Clinton hailed Ms. Bao Lord as "someone who writes so powerfully about the past and is working so effectively to shape the future." Her first novel, *Spring Moon*, was an American Book Award nominee for best first novel and an international bestseller. Ms. Lord is also the author of *Eighth Moon*, *In the Year of the Boar* and *Jackie Robinson*, and *The Middle Heart*.