

Diamond Head

Harper Perennial

by Cecily Wong

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Introduction

Frank Leong, a prominent shipping industrialist and head of the celebrated Leong family, brings his loved ones from China to Hawaii at the turn of the twentieth century, when the Japanese invade. But something ancient follows the Leongs to the islands, haunting them—the parable of the red string of fate. According to Chinese legend, the red string binds one to her intended beloved, but also punishes for mistakes in love, twisting any misstep into a destructive knot that passes down through generations.

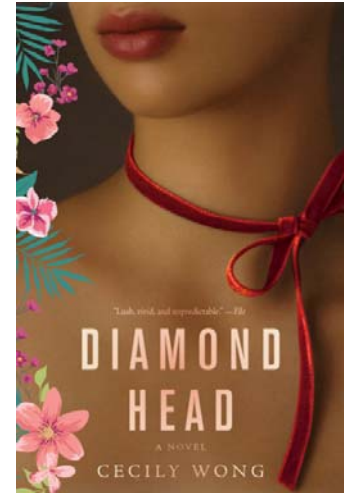
When its patriarch is murdered on Oahu, the Leong family is thrown into a downward spiral. Left to rebuild in his shadow, the surviving members attempt a new, ordinary life, vowing to bury their gilded past—until a letter arrives two decades later, carrying a confession that shatters the family even further.

Now the Leongs' survival rests with young Theresa, Frank's only grandchild. Eighteen and pregnant, Theresa holds the answers to her family's mysteries and must decide what stories to tell, with whom to side, and which knots will endure.

Told through the eyes of the Leongs' secret-keeping daughters and wives, *Diamond Head* is a breathtakingly powerful multigenerational tale.

Questions for Discussion

1. Consider the red string motif that runs throughout *Diamond Head*. Do you believe in the idea of a red string or a superstition that runs through generations, connecting them? Can you think of an example from your own family?
2. How is love defined in this novel? Is it defined by passion, (financial) security, obligation, etc.? Does the story suggest that love is predestined or that love can be chosen and cultivated?
3. Discuss the role of guilt throughout the novel. What kind of guilt does each character feel, where does it come from and how does that guilt affect them throughout the novel?
4. *Diamond Head* offers a commentary about the role of women in Chinese culture. Considering Lin, Amy and Theresa, what is the role of women throughout the novel, and does it change over the course of the three generations?



5. Though most of the novel is told from the perspectives of Lin, Theresa and Amy, Hong plays a very important role. Discuss Hong's character and her role in the story.
6. Is Amy to blame, at least partly, for Frank's death? Do you think she deserves to carry that burden? Why or why not?
7. Discuss the role of the men in the novel. Consider Bohai, Frank, Henry and Grandpa Chan. How is masculinity viewed within the culture and society?
8. Is there a single protagonist in this story? How did hearing all the different voices and perspectives inform your attachment to the characters?
9. The story weaves in and out through distance and across time. What is the purpose of telling the story in this way? How does the story's structure tie in with the overall theme of the novel?
10. Explore the mother-daughter relationships in the novel. Do the women in the novel end up forging new lives for themselves outside of their mothers' influences, or do they end up becoming products of their mothers' mistakes?
11. At the end of novel, Hong explains what she believes is the difference between fate and destiny. Do you agree with her differentiation? Which characters relied on fate and which characters relied on destiny?

Book Clubs

Cecily Wong would love to be involved in your book club's discussions of her work, by nphone/video chat or in person, if possible.

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