



THIS TIME WILL BE DIFFERENT

by Misa Sugiura

Booktalk

Katsuyamas never quit—but seventeen-year-old CJ doesn't even know where to start. She's never lived up to her mom's type-A ambition, and she's perfectly happy just helping her aunt, Hannah, at their family's flower shop. She doesn't buy into Hannah's romantic ideas about flowers and their hidden meanings, but when it comes to arranging the perfect bouquet, CJ discovers a knack she never

knew she had. A skill she might even be proud of. Then her mom decides to sell the shop—to the family who swindled CJ's grandparents when thousands of Japanese Americans were sent to internment camps during WWII. Soon a rift threatens to splinter CJ's family, friends, and their entire Northern California community; and for the first time, CJ has found something she wants to fight for.

Questions for Group Discussion

Family First. CJ's aunt Hannah, while explaining the family legacy attached to the flower shop Heart's Desire, ends her statement with the well-known saying, "Family first, right?" (p. 54). When in the novel do you see characters put "family first"? When in the novel do you see characters prioritize other values over family loyalty? To what extent should family be valued over other aspects of life, like work, activism, romantic relationships and/or public image?

Changing Friendships. Though CJ protests that Brynn's actions in middle school disqualify her from being accepted as a friend or girlfriend now, Emily insists that "it might be time to move on, that's all. Things are different now. I think maybe she's changed" (p. 74). Which character do you support more in this argument, and why? Is it possible for bullies to change? How do you know if a damaged friendship is worth repairing?

Love Life. Early in their friendship, Owen expresses that everyone wants "a love that lasts forever," but CJ has differing views based on her mom's story in which "no one falls in love in the first place" and her aunt who "falls in love so often that you wonder if it's really what they're feeling" (p. 83). What life experiences shape each character's view on romantic love?

History Repeating. Though the title of the novel is *This Time Will Be Different*, throughout the text, multiple characters experience events that echo history. From CJ's unplanned pregnancy connecting with her mom's, to the central issue of the McAllister family buying out the smaller Katsuyama family business, history tends to repeat itself. Where else do you see history repeating itself, in the novel and in real life?

Activism & Identity. While CJ's school activist group present their petition to the school, CJ hears an audience member saying, "Zach and Aviana aren't even full Japanese" and is momentarily angered, thinking it's "as if being 'only part' automatically disqualifies a person from claiming a heritage" (p. 237). During two other publicity events, the activist group is upset that Brynn takes most of the air time during an interview and organizes an article to center her own efforts in the struggle for reparations rather than letting Japanese-American voices lead the movement. Why does identity and representation matter in activist movements? In this book, do you think questions of identity do more to help or hinder the movement to change the school's name from Robert McAllister to Ryōhei Motohara High School?

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