



Book Club Questions

The Storm We Made by Vanessa Chen

1. "And as the waxy birthday candle melted into Abel's dry birthday cake, Cecily knew. Bad things happened to bad people; and she was exactly that—a bad person." (pg. 5). How does this quote illustrate Cecily's guilt? What does it reveal about her perspective as a mother?
2. Jujubee reflects on the possibility that Western armies might have forgotten about Malaya, thinking, "Maybe people like her, Jasmin, and Abel did not matter—here in a tiny tropical corner in the East, being brutalized by people who looked almost exactly like them." What is the significance of their suffering being ignored by the West? Based on your knowledge of Malaya during the war, or lack thereof, do you think her suspicion is justified?
3. Mr. Takahashi, whose daughter perished in Nagasaki, feels enraged at America after the bombing yet displays kindness toward Malaysians. How do you interpret his overall sense of humanity? And how does Jujubee's encouragement for him to hold onto faith—despite Japan's actions toward her country—add complexity to this dynamic?
4. Cecily's yearning for more than being a housewife, coupled with the guilt she feels as a result of her past decisions, highlights the tension between personal dreams and familial responsibilities. How do Cecily's surroundings intensify this internal conflict? Do you see parallels to these struggles in modern society?
5. What moments in the story capture Jasmine's childhood innocence? How do the realities of war shape and, ultimately, challenge that innocence?
6. Cecily concludes, "All love was someone breaking their soul into smaller pieces and offering the broken pieces of themselves as a puzzle to someone else." (pg. 127). How does this sentiment reflect Cecily's experiences? Do you agree with her perspective on love?
7. Despite Fujiwara's actions and their complicated history, Cecily feels pity for him as she sees him and Lina reintegrate into society, noting his sacrifices for his ideology. Why do you think Cecily feels this way about him? How does she eventually come to terms with her feelings?
8. How does Cecily balance her love for Lina and Gordon while continuing her relationship with Fujiwara? What do her actions toward each of them reveal? How do the contexts of occupation and war further complicate her situation?



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9. Freddie's arrival, his first taste of toddy, and Brother Luke's death mark significant changes for Abel during his time at the camp. He reflects on a daily fight for survival and his confrontation with mortality. Do you think Abel's humanity was fundamentally changed or adapted to his circumstances? Would it have been possible for him to remain unchanged in such an environment?

10. "The British had come for the camp and bombed it to hell, to wipe out any way for the Japanese to transport supplies. And yet the only men who lay on the ground in piles of ash and limbs were conscripted boys who had, against the odds, survived the Japanese torture only to die at the hands of their supposed saviors." (pg. 297). How does war blur the boundaries between good and evil? What does the Alcantara family's story-and the tragedy of war-torn Malaya-reveal about who is caught in the crossfire of such blurred lines?

11. Based on your understanding of family dynamics, how do Jujubee, Jasmine, and Abel embody-or differ from-the stereotypical traits of their respective roles (oldest daughter, younger son, youngest daughter)?

12. How do the shifts in perspective, setting, and time between chapters provide deeper insight into the characters and their situations? How might your reading experience have differed if the story had focused on only one character throughout?

13. By the end of the novel, how has each character evolved? How have the horrors of violence and war shaped their transformations?

Discussion questions by the [publisher](#).