

Eyes *that* Kiss in the Corners

Discussion Questions

1. Notice the language used to describe other girls' eyes at the beginning of the book. What do phrases like "sapphire lagoons," "Lace trim on ballgowns" make you think of? Why do you think these are the phrases the author chose to use to show the young girl feeling different?
2. The young girl in the story mentions three other people whose eyes also resemble hers. Who are they? What does the girl call each of them? Why are they significant?
3. What are some phrases the author uses to describe the girl's eyes? What ideas do these phrases convey about her eyes? What details do you notice in the illustrations? In what ways do the illustrations support or add meaning to the text?
4. What kinds of figurative language does the author use to describe the young girl's eyes? How does this figurative language add meaning/help you better understand the girl's eyes?
5. What messages do Mama's eyes convey to the young girl? How are their eyes alike? How does the young girl feel when she is with Mama?
6. In turn, whose eyes do Mama's eyes look like? Similarly, in what ways is this beloved family member also important to the young girl? How does this individual's eyes tell the young girl she is precious and loved?
7. When the young girl is with her amah, what does she learn from her eyes? What stories do Amah's eyes tell the young girl? What stories do your family members' eyes tell you?
8. Why is Mei-Mei so special to the young girl in the story? How is the young girl's relationship with Mei-Mei different than those who are older than her, like Mama and Amah? Who do you think has the greatest influence on the young girl?
9. What are your strengths? In what ways do you celebrate the power of your strengths like the young girl in the story? Share with your class five statements about yourself and where you come from that highlight your strengths and unique qualities.
10. Thumb through the book and take a look at the stunning illustrations by Dung Ho. Which page of illustrations is your favorite? Why? What is most meaningful about the illustrations to you? Share with your classmates.

Extension Activities

1. **Celebrating Me.** Celebrate all that makes you wonderfully you. Create an "All About Me Poster" that encompasses a number of your favorite things, such as sports, colors, hobbies, school subjects, places to visit, games, foods, and/or ice cream flavors. Draw illustrations to accompany your answers on your poster and share it with your class in a "Uniquely You Exhibition."
2. **Mirror, Mirror on the Wall.** Study Dung Ho's dazzling pictures carefully. Look at the expressions of the young girl, Mama, Amah, and Mei-Mei. What stories do their faces tell us? Prop up a small mirror in front of you to look at your face. What do you love about yourself? Where are your features from and what stories do they tell? On a blank piece of drawing paper, draw a self-portrait and highlight the features that make you uniquely you.
3. **Imagination Station with Joanna Ho.** Joanna Ho has a lyrical, elegant style of writing. She often compares the eyes of loved ones to an object of beauty. The eyes of all in the story come "alive" with her vivid description. How could you use Joanna Ho's lyrical writing as a mentor text to describe the eyes of someone you love in your family? Share these with the class and see how you can use colorful adjectives to bring life to your own loved ones' eyes.
4. **Go Figure.** Joanna Ho expertly uses figurative language to make her words dance on the page. She specifically uses *similes* and *metaphors* to compare the beloved women in her life to things in the universe. What are the characteristics of a simile? What are the characteristics of a metaphor? What are the differences between the two? Create a chart of both metaphors and similes for members in your own family. What metaphors and similes could you use to make your words dance on a page?

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Dear Reader,

Eyes that Kiss in the Corners is ultimately a story about love. It is the story of the love shared between generations, the love we must develop for ourselves, and the love that we use to create change in the world.

It is also a personal story. I, like many Asian children around the world, grew up wishing for bigger eyes and longer eyelashes. For too many years, I wanted to fit standards of beauty that did not reflect me, my family, or my culture. I didn't realize that wishing for different eyes was also a rejection of so much more. My outlook began to change one evening while I stood in line at a convenience store in Taiwan. I flipped through a magazine and was amazed at all the beautiful people on its pages—people who looked like me and had eyes like mine. In that moment, I began to realize that I could be—that I was—beautiful too.

The lyrical prose of ***Eyes that Kiss in the Corners*** flows with the narrator through sweet snuggles with her mother, inspiring talks with her Amah, and playful romps with her little sister. Each moment helps the narrator develop a stronger sense of identity, a greater pride in her heritage, and a deeper connection with family.

For those of us who are marginalized and made invisible by dominant definitions of beauty (and who isn't?), learning to recognize our own beauty requires confronting, disrupting, and changing beliefs that have been ingrained in our cores. It requires loving and lifting ourselves and others.

Learning to recognize our own beauty is an act of revolution.

I hope that ***Eyes that Kiss in the Corners*** helps to build a world in which all children recognize their own beauty. I hope it inspires revolution.

Thank you for picking up ***Eyes that Kiss in the Corners***. This is a book that celebrates family relationships while disrupting definitions of beauty that render most of the world invisible.

With love,

Joanna Ho





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Joanna Ho is the *New York Times* Bestselling author of *Eyes that Kiss in the Corners*, *Playing at the Border: A Story of Yo-Yo Ma*, and *Eyes that Speak to the Stars*. She is passionate about equity and inclusion in books and education and is currently the vice principal of a high school in the San Francisco Bay Area. Homemade chocolate chip cookies, outdoor adventures, and dance parties with her kids make Joanna's eyes crinkle into crescent moons.

Visit her at www.joannahowrites.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Dung (pronounced Dzung) **Ho** is a *New York Times* bestselling illustrator based in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. Her work focuses on children's books.

She also loves to draw interesting characters with unique personalities. When she is not drawing, she enjoys cooking, watching movies, walking, and tending to her plants.

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