

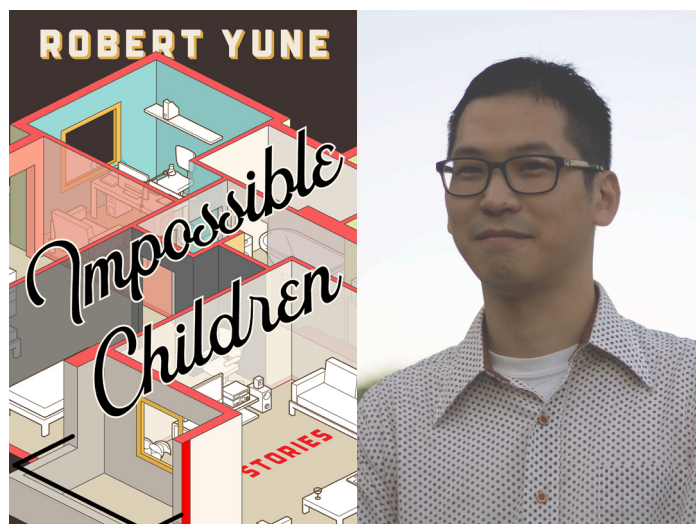


IMPOSSIBLE CHILDREN

ROBERT YUNE
READER'S GUIDE

TEN QUESTIONS TO CONSIDER

1. This book features two very different Korean-American families. Which one is more successful, and what accounts for that success?
2. How do the stories in the book explore the theme of “impossibility” and parent-child relationships?
3. Many of the characters in this book are first-generation immigrants. If your family immigrated to America, did they have any similar experiences?
4. How do history and technology affect the characters? How might their lives be different if this book took place in a different era (for example, the 1980s)?
5. What effect did the Korean War have on the lives of the book’s characters?
6. This book contains some fantastic elements (ie “Scenes from the Reverse Metamorphosis” and “The Impossible Daughter”). How do these elements complement the more realistic stories?
7. In addition to parent-child relationships, this book also explores sibling relationships. How would you characterize Jason and Tommy’s relationship? What about Laura and Jennifer’s?
8. What parts of the characters’ experiences are



- universal, and which parts are uniquely Asian?
9. Some stories are set in very specific locations (Chicago, Princeton, Michigan). How are those places depicted in the story, and how does this affect the story’s characterization and plot?
10. Which of the stories feels the most connected to contemporary events or issues?

WRITING EXERCISES

1. In my Fiction, Form and Function class, we were discussing Jennifer Egan’s *A Visit from the Goon Squad* and my student Anjali Glenn came up with this great writing prompt during her presentation on the book: “Write three scenes focusing on a single character at different points in his or her life.”



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PRAISE CONT.

When possible, I write along with my students in class, and this prompt really helped me get a better understanding of Edward Moon as a young man—before he became the all-powerful industrialist. That really was a breakthrough in figuring out his character.

2. I'm really interested in moments when history becomes personal—there's a sort of crystallizing moment, as in Tommy's interaction with the Korean War vet in "The Thirty-eighth Parallel." Write a scene where a character suddenly realizes his or her place in history—either in the moment (for example, during a significant national crisis or decision) or years later, when he or she is caught up in the aftermath.