

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

# EVERYTHING I LEARNED, I LEARNED IN A CHINESE RESTAURANT

By Curtis Chin

1. Detroit is a character itself, in this memoir as well as throughout Curtis's life. What is Curtis's relationship with the city he grew up in? How does the last section of this book, "The Fortune Cookie," encapsulate this?
2. In this memoir of growing up in a Chinese restaurant, the connection between food and community takes center stage. Can you describe this relationship? Why was Chung's so influential in Curtis's life? How did the restaurant fit in with the larger community?
3. In the introduction, Curtis says, "*For here or to go?* As I got older, it was a question I asked myself." Why does this question feel significant to Curtis? How does it relate to his identity as an ABC, or an American-born Chinese?
4. During his childhood, Curtis has a pivotal relationship with a fry cook named Mr. Mah. What was his ultimate influence on Curtis's life? What do you feel is a pivotal moment or relationship in your life?
5. As Curtis grows older, he begins to think more about his sexuality, at first resisting his attraction to men, but ultimately embracing his identity. What were some of the obstacles he encountered along the way? How did this intersect with his identity as a Chinese American?
6. While at Chung's, Curtis has an interaction with a drag queen and her partner that leaves him stunned. What was the significance of this moment? What does it say about the complexity of identity and community?

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7. At the start of high school, Curtis takes an interest in politics, eventually becoming involved in the Republican Party. What drove his embrace of conservatism? How did this change as he grew older?
8. A significant moment in Curtis's life comes in Ann Arbor, when he comes out to his friend Mimi. What is the impact of the conversation that follows? What kind of community does Curtis find during his college years?
9. Curtis has a complicated relationship with his grandmother, the fiery Ngin-Ngin, who helped raise him. Towards the end of the book, as Ngin-Ngin struggles with old age, Curtis decides to begin taking care of her, saying, "For once, I believed in karma, both the good and the bad." What do you think he means by this?
10. Curtis's relationship with his family evolved greatly over the years. What do you think changed the most as they grew older? What has stayed the same?