

## **Girl in Translation – Discussion Questions**

1. Throughout *Girl in Translation*, the author uses creative spelling to show Kimberly's mis-hearing and misunderstanding of English. How does the language of the novel evolve as she matures? How do the roles of English and Chinese shift?
2. Kimberly must translate far more than language. What other areas of her life require translation—identity, priorities, expectations, behavior? Why are these moments significant?
3. Compare Kimberly's relationships with Matt and Curt. Why does she ultimately choose one over the other? What does this reveal about her values?
4. Kimberly becomes the effective head of household after immigrating. Was this inevitable? How might Ma feel about this shift? In what ways does Ma still act as a traditional mother?
5. Kimberly often imagines her life if her father had lived. Do you think she is right to believe things would have been easier?
6. Kimberly's friend Annette never grasps the extent of Kimberly's poverty. What does this say about privilege? Is Kimberly right to hide her home life?
7. School represents her path out of poverty. Does it always meet her expectations? What helps her succeed—and what fails her?
8. How is Kimberly's immigrant story both universal and unique? How does it compare to other immigrant narratives?
9. Were you surprised by the level of poverty Kimberly endures? Did this book affect your views of immigration?
10. The story is set in the 1980s. How might the immigrant experience be different—or similar—today?