

Discussion Questions

1. Later in life, Kat's father seems to be obsessed with preservation: he taxidermies a fish and refuses to throw out items accumulating in his home. Earlier in his life, though, he seems to be indifferent — declining to send for his deceased mother's possessions. What do you think catalyzed that shift? Have you had a similar experience, growing more attached to possessions as you've aged?
2. Kat writes that, for years, her family grieved by not telling any stories about her mother. Do you think, then, that writing this memoir is finally a way to preserve her mother's memory? Or is it instead an exorcism of the painful memories Kat's carried since her passing? Could it be both?
3. Kat seems concerned with all the ways she's "failed" in her grief: not visiting Mahayana Temple more frequently, the headstone hiccup, talking about food at her mother's funeral. Yet her love for her mother is palpable. Do you think there is a proper way to grieve? How can cultural observances of grief help or hinder healing?
4. Kat quotes the poet Diana Khoi Nguyen reflecting on how difficult it was to return to her familial home after her brother's death. Do you think Kat and her sisters felt similarly? What must it have been like, then, for their father to stay?
5. After hearing of her mother's diagnosis, the first thing Kat asks her mother is about getting a horse. Why do you think she chose that topic? Have you also struggled to find the words for loss?
6. Kat reveals that Kaufu has long believed that her father was partially responsible for her mother's death, and that her father tried to sue the hospital. Why do you think they both sought someone to blame? How is that easier to swallow than the truth?
7. How do you think losing their mother helped inform Kat and her sisters' understanding of their father's search for his father? In that vein, what experiences of yours most significantly changed how you understood your parents?
8. For a memoir, *SEEING GHOSTS* is rich with history: that of Hartford, of China and Hong Kong, and of various figures like Yung Wing and Lon Dorsa. How are these histories inextricable from Kat's story? Could she have written this book without them? What histories inform your story?
9. Kat includes a number of details related to food, as well as a few scenes in restaurants. What importance did restaurants and the food itself carry for her family? How has food come to symbolize grief or family traditions in your own life?

10. After losing their mother, Steph and Caroline began to take more care of Kat, emotionally and materially, just as Yi Ma took care of Kat's mother. What do you think this says about the role of mother and the composition of a family?
11. Kat feels the specter of her mother long after her passing. Likewise, her father seems to be driven to action by the wishes of his departed parents. What are the significances of ghosts in this book? How do you feel them in your own lives?
12. Kat and her sisters seem to have been spurred to rebury Jonathan after their father finds his father's bones in Cuba. That is a quest he undertook, though, only after his daughters lost their mother. How did they all catalyze each other? How does this speak to inheritance and what we each inherit from our family members?
13. Kat portrays the displacement and the pursuit of success, whether it be how her Yi Ma marries a stranger and moves to the United States, or the chosen careers of each of her parents. What do these instances reveal about the "American Dream"? Are there other ways this project comments on its pursuit?
14. Kat writes matter-of-factly about the expenses related to burying a loved one — and the financial strains that can occur after a loved one's passing. What does this reveal about how class affects grief?