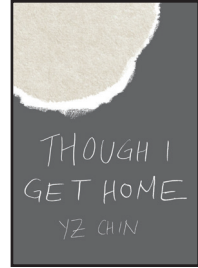


READING GROUP GUIDE

THOUGH I GET HOME by YZ Chin

978-1-936932-16-0 pbk • 978-1-936932-17-7 ebook • \$16.95 • 224 pages • April 2018



1. In “The Butler Opens the Door,” Lily’s community believes that the haunting of the rest house indicates her passing. The author, however, never reveals the details of her disappearance and death. Why do you think the author omits the details of Lily’s death? What do you think happened to Lily, and what evidence can you find to support your claim?
2. In “The Butler Opens the Door,” Mr. Burgess, Lily, and the British community outwardly express their racist views toward Malays, Indians, and the Chinese. They hurl racial epithets at the aforementioned ethnic groups, romanticize their suffering, and display horror and disgust at the non-Christian funeral that Grandfather organizes for Lily. Are Grandfather’s feelings toward his colonizers and their colonization of Malaysia as apparent? How do you think he feels? Does he exhibit any prejudices against them?
3. When Isa Sin arrives in Kuala Lumpur, she marches in the street to protest income inequality, rising taxes, the plummeting value of the ringgit, and government corruption. Have you ever participated in a protest? What was the cause? What form did your protest take?
4. The Malaysian government erroneously arrests and imprisons Isa Sin for writing seditious poems on sodomy and government corruption. The authorities torture and abuse her, although she did not actually author these poems. Why does Isa accept culpability for writing them? What is she trying to prove to herself and others?
5. Throughout the collection, the Malaysian government directly interferes with and controls many aspects of its citizens’ lives including religion, sexuality, gender roles, and censorship of the press. Has your own government ever violated the rights of its citizens? In what capacity?
6. Howie’s multicultural experience comes with difficulties. He attempts to align himself with his Malaysian culture by voting in the election, dating Malaysian women, and moving back to Malaysia. Some of his family, however, spurn him for his time abroad and his development of American “ways.” How does Howie’s experience both limit and expand his possibilities in life? Have you ever dealt with balancing a hybrid identity? What did that identity look like?

7. In “Duty,” readers are introduced to Ibrahim’s work with the Religious Department. He raids and captures those engaging in “immoral acts” ranging from premarital sex to transsexual beauty pageants. Why do you think Ibrahim has nightmares of his past raids? Do you think that his nightmares will ever stop occurring?
8. Throughout the text, the author juxtaposes Isa’s action with Howie’s passivity. For example, Isa claims to have written seditious poems and endures various forms of physical and psychological violence in prison. Howie, however, stays silent after learning of his female peer’s assault, his sister’s experience with sexism and corporal punishment, and his former girlfriend’s authorship of the seditious poems that Isa is imprisoned for. How did you relate to these two characters? Consider their motivations for each of their courses of action or inaction.



YZ CHIN was born and raised in Taiping, Malaysia. She now lives in New York and works as a software engineer by day and a writer by night.

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