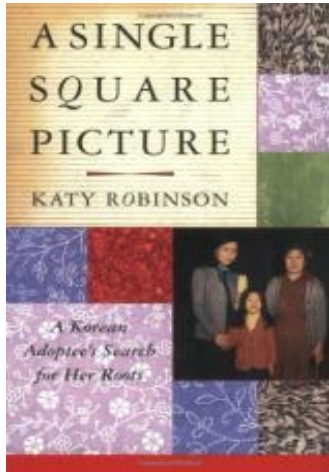


A Single Square Picture: A Korean Adoptee's Search for Her Roots

by Katy Robinson



About the Book

One day she was Kim Ji-yun, growing up in Seoul, Korea. The next day she was Catherine Jeanne Robinson, living with her new American family in Salt Lake City, Utah. Twenty years later, Katy Robinson returned to Seoul in search of her birth mother-and found herself an American outsider in her native land. What transpired in this world-at once familiar and strange, comforting and sad-left Katy conflicted, shattered, exhilarated, and moved in ways she never imagined.

Discussion Guide

1. One day she was Kim Ji-yun, growing up in Seoul, Korea. The next day she was Catherine Jeanne Robinson, living with her new American family in Salt Lake City, Utah. Twenty years later, Katy Robinson returned to Seoul in search of her birth mother-and found herself an American outsider in her native land. What transpired in this world-at once familiar and strange, comforting and sad-left Katy conflicted, shattered, exhilarated, and moved in ways she never imagined.
2. In Chapter 6, Katy discusses her assimilation into American culture and the ways in which she tries to fit in with her adoptive family. Later she states that, "It wasn't until much later that I realized I was different?and not just in looks. It hit me on one Christmas morning not that long ago as I looked around the room and felt utterly alone." To what extent is her feeling of alienation from her family normal? How much, if any, does her ethnicity play into this? What does her experience tell you about the role of nature versus nurture? In your opinion, which played a stronger role in shaping her character?
3. What was your initial impression of Katy's Korean father, and how did that change throughout the story? Do you think he should have told Katy more about his life during their first meeting, or was he right to omit some of the details until

later? Do you think he wanted her to find her Korean mother? During her time in Korea, Katy comes to believe that her father is purposefully deceiving her in order to hide his past. Do you agree or disagree with her assessment of him?

4. Discuss some of the major cultural differences Katy and her husband encounter in Korea. Were you surprised by any aspect of Korean culture in particular? How do Korean culture and beliefs compare with those of other countries? In your opinion, did Katy behave more "Korean" or "American" once she was in Korea?

5. One of the stronger bonds Katy forms in Korea is with her half brother. Do you think that he is an honest person? What do you think his motivations were for telling Katy that her Korean mother had died in a car accident? Discuss his role as the oldest son in the family, as a husband, father and head of a company -- in what ways did he behave traditionally, and in what ways was he more modern in his thinking?

6. Discuss the Korean women in the story -- Katy's grandmother, mother, half maternal aunt, half sister, brother's wife and father's first wife - and their respective positions in Korean society. Do you think they are typical or atypical of women in Korea? Do you view their various choices as showing strength or weakness?

7. Compare and contrast the Prologue and Epilogue. What conclusions does Katy draw at the end of her journey? Do you think she is right to give up the search for her Korean mother? What do you think is the truth about her mother?

8. More and more families in the United States are adopting children from abroad, especially from Asian countries. After reading this book, has your attitude toward adoption (international and domestic) changed in any way? Do you know anyone who is adopted? How does Katy's experience compare with that of other adoptees that you know?

Author Bio

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Publication Date: August 6, 2002

Mass Market Paperback: 304 pages

Publisher: Berkley Trade

ISBN-10: 042518496X

ISBN-13: 9780425184967