



THE WANGS VS THE WORLD

by Jade Chang

DISCUSSION GUIDE

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why is Charles Wang mad at America and mad at history? What does the novel suggest or reveal about “the American Dream”? What does Charles have to say about the American Dream and whom it belongs to?
2. What does Charles hope to recover? Is his plan reasonable—or successful? What do his children and his wife think of his plan?
3. Why did Saina want to be an artist as a young girl? What does she believe the purpose of art should be? What was Saina taught about the choice between art and marriage or motherhood, and what does she come to think of this teaching as an adult?
4. When Andrew turns to comedy, what does he discover as one of the true joys of this kind of performance?
5. Explore the theme of luck in the novel. How much control do the characters seem to have over their own lives, and how much is a matter of luck or fate? How are wealth and good fortune ultimately defined by the story’s conclusion?
6. How does each of the characters respond to the loss of the family fortune? Why does Barbra believe that her experience of this loss is different than everyone else’s? Who does she believe is most imprisoned by their possessions, and to whom does she think wealth should belong? Do you agree with her? Why or why not?





7. Why does the car accident have such a profound impact on Grace? Do you think she would have had a similar revelation on her own? And how does it relate to Andrew's thoughts about connection and love?
8. At the end of his affair with Dorrie, what does Andrew think is the only thing that matters? Does the rest of the novel seem to support or overturn his point of view? Explain.
9. Explore the treatment of gender in the book. What does Charles believe are the fundamental differences between men and women? Is there any difference in the way that Charles treats his son versus his daughters? How are the female characters in the novel treated by others? Do the female characters seem to have the same opportunities available to them as the men? Discuss.
10. How are the Wangs ultimately affected by their travels together and their reunion?

About the author

Jade Chang has covered arts and culture as a journalist and editor. She is the recipient of a Sundance Fellowship for Arts Journalism, the AIGA/Winterhouse Award for Design Criticism, and the James D. Houston Memorial scholarship from the Squaw Valley Community of Writers. *The Wangs vs. the World* is her debut novel. She lives in Los Angeles.

