

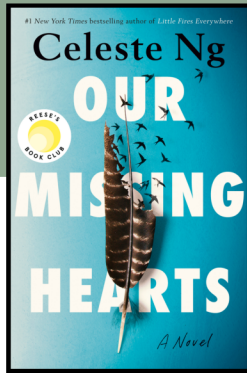
Discussion Questions

July 16

6:30 p.m.

COVER TO COVER

Our Missing Hearts



by

Celeste Ng

BOOK CLUB

- 1 The novel takes place in a world that “isn’t exactly our world, but it isn’t not ours, either,” writes Ng in the Author’s Note (327). What elements of the novel’s setting align with your understanding and experience of the events of the twenty-first century thus far? How close do you think we are to a society like that described in the novel?
- 2 The novel takes place in a world that “isn’t exactly our world, but it isn’t not ours, either,” writes Ng in the Author’s Note (327). What elements of the novel’s setting align with your understanding and experience of the events of the twenty-first century thus far? How close do you think we are to a society

like that described in the novel?

- 3 The connection between literature and protest is powerful in the novel—from the proliferation and censorship of Margaret’s poetry to the network of librarians caring for the relocated. Why do you think this form of communication is so resilient against forces and events as big as the Crisis and PACT? How does it inspire individuals and groups in the novel to act?
- 4 Ethan is originally hired at the university as a linguistics professor, and his obsession with words seeps into his daily habits, such as reading from the dictionary: “His father’s oldest habit: taking words apart like old clocks to show the gears still ticking inside” (18). How does sharing this love of language help Bird in his quest, and ultimately reconnect their family, albeit indirectly, by the end of the novel?
- 5 Both Bird and Sadie struggle with missing parents, yet their approach to seeking a deeper understanding of their past is vastly different. What about their personalities guide their respective strategies, and why do you think their friendship is so strong?
- 6 Margaret and Domi’s parting during the Crisis is devastating to them both. Why are they able to restore their friendship once Margaret returns seeking help? What do each of them gain by working together on Margaret’s plan, even beyond the emotional healing of their split?
- 7 Discuss Margaret’s transformation when she becomes a mother. How is she able to adapt to so many different circumstances—from her rebellious and resourceful youth to the comfort of her life with Ethan to the purpose driving her life and survival when she goes into hiding? What about Bird’s existence makes her willing to sacrifice it all for the children she tries to honor in her final act?
- 8 Bird’s trip to and through New York City to reveals all the ways, big and small, the city had been reshaped by the current, post-Crisis, PACT-enforcing government. Have you ever been to a familiar place that changed radically over time, or after you yourself had changed radically? What was your experience in encountering its newness, or through new eyes?

Discussion Questions

July 16

6:30 p.m.

COVER TO COVER

Our Missing Hearts



by

Celeste Ng

BOOK CLUB

- 9 Although Bird dislikes the name his father gives him, Noah, how does it relate to his mother and father's names, which have etymological roots in plants and the natural world? What does it mean for him to reclaim the name his mother called him?
- 10 What is the special allure of the stacks in the university library for Bird and for Ethan? Do all libraries carry the same quality of discovery and comfort, and have you been to a library that held that "mix of dust and leather and melted vanilla ice cream. Warm, like the scent of someone's skin" (68)?