

Study Questions for Quiet Odyssey by Mary Paik Lee

1. How was Korea a pawn in the struggle amongst imperialist powers in the nineteenth century? What were the consequences for the nation?
2. How did the Koreans struggle against Japanese colonialism?
3. What was the role of Protestant missionaries in Korea?
4. What was the status of women in Korean society? Why did Christianity appeal to many?
5. Why did Koreans emigrate prior to 1905? Where did they go? What did they do?
6. What types of discrimination did Koreans encounter in California? How did they organize?
7. Why did homeland politics matter so much to Koreans in California?
8. What were the responsibilities and roles of Korean women in America?
9. Why would Mary Lee leave Korea? What does she remember about life there?
10. What were life, school responsibilities, and school like for Mary in Riverside?
11. Why was her father humiliated by her work as a domestic? What types of employment did her father seek? Why would they leave Colusa?
12. What was life like in Idria?
13. What was the relationship between the Lees and other Koreans and ethnic groups like the Mexicans?
14. In what ways was Mary 'Americanized' in Hollister and Willows? How and why did the traditional cultural practices of the family persist? How did the politics in the homeland influence their life?
15. What types of discrimination did she and her family encounter? How did she respond?
16. Why did Mary and her husband move to Los Angeles in 1921?

17. Why were Mary and her husband required to make a private oral agreement to lease land in order to farm in Southern California? (See Appendix A.) What was life like for the family as small vegetable and truck farmers?

18. What was the relationship between the Lees and Japanese farmers? (See Appendix A.) What did the family experience after Pearl Harbor was bombed in 1941? How did the internment of the Japanese affect the Lees?

19. Why did the Mexican workers like H. M.?

20. In what ways did Mary believe race relations improved immediately after the war? How did she perceive that discrimination persisted?

21. What was the relationship between the Lees and blacks in Los Angeles? What did they experience in Memphis in 1959? (See Appendix A.)

22. How did Mary explain the success of her son Henry?

23. The Lees became citizens in 1960. What rights and public benefits had they been denied prior to that time?

24. Why do Mary Lee's reflections upon her life focus on the roles of family and Korean culture? (See Appendix A.) Why does she believe that the first generation of 20th-century Korean- and Asian-Americans were the cornerstone for the advancement of subsequent generations? According to Mary, how are fourth-generation Korean-Americans different?

25. Sucheng Chan states that she considers Mary Paik Lee's "ambivalence to be the hallmark of the Asian-American experience," and that "Mary Lee has kept her faith" (p. 162). What does she mean?