



Lady Tan's Circle of Women

by

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Discussion Questions

1. This book is based on the true story of a 15th-century female physician. Do you think Lisa See creates a compelling voice in Tan? How are her struggles the same or different from today's women?
2. Who was most instrumental in Tan's success in becoming a female doctor?
3. Tan faces many obstacles when moving to her husband's household. How does she stay strong and eventually gain respect?
4. Tan goes to great lengths to please her mother-in-law. What drives her determination to be accepted? Why is her mother-in-law so harsh on her?
5. Lady Kuo conspired with Dr. Wong to ensure another male heir, so the family wealth and power would not go to Second Uncle if something happened to her son, Maoren. Do you think her actions were justified? As her punishment, she was to suffer in the afterworld for eternity. Was this enough?
6. Tan's grandmother arranged for Tan and Meiling to become friends - even though they were from different backgrounds. Over the years, they had a beautiful relationship that was tested many times but continued to grow. Do you think the friendship benefited both girls equally?
7. Tan and the other household women were ruled by strict etiquette with many restrictions and traditions. How would you handle these kinds of limitations? Do modern-day women have any similar restrictions?
8. Do you think women of today have the kind of strong bonds that 15th-century women did?
9. Maoren thought Tan disgraced the family by becoming involved in the Dr. Wong trial. As a result, he was not as loving or attentive. Tan's reaction was to buy him a concubine. Why do you think she did this? How does this make you feel?
10. Binding a woman's feet was a status symbol. It also increased the chances of a good marriage in a wealthy household. How does this make you feel? As a mother, would you choose to bind your daughter's feet?
11. Other than foot binding, how did this culture oppress women? What are some possible reasons?
12. What did you like most about this book? Least?