



DEAR MEMORY VICTORIA CHANG



LETTERS ON WRITING,
SILENCE, AND GRIEF

DEAR MEMORY

Letters on Writing,
Silence, and Grief

By Victoria Chang

Publication date:
October 2021

ISBN:
9781571313928
Hardcover, \$25

Milkweed Editions
1011 Washington
Avenue S,
Minneapolis, MN
55415
milkweed.org

Discussion Questions

1. How do you think the letters, the photos, and the slips of paper work together or against each other in *Dear Memory*?
2. In “Dear Grandmother,” Chang writes “That is what Mother feels like: an enormity. My history feels even larger. The size of an atmosphere.” (6) What is the significance of Chang writing about her mother to her grandmother? Where else can you feel the generational ties and struggles in the book?
3. As the child of immigrants, Chang expresses shame for lost moments and pride for her heritage. How do these juxtaposing feelings appear in the chapters? In the photo and poem collages?
4. Memory acts as an antidote to silence in the collection, but memory can also fuel grief: “Memory isn’t something that blooms but something that bleeds internally, something to be stopped.” (49) Can memories reclaim what’s lost? What happens as our memories shift and change? As Chang ponders, “I wonder how memory can become larger and larger.” (22)
5. “Poets live between a fire and great fire” Chang writes (37). How does Chang’s work as a poet shape your experience reading *Dear Memory*? Which lines of prose read like poetry to you?
6. “You meant for me to listen to the questions and into the absence” Chang writes to a former teacher (59). What role do questions play in *Dear Memory* as a work of nonfiction, a genre fit for giving answers?
7. “Maybe we inherit generations of shame. Of trauma. Of silence. Even of joy.” (71). Where do you see expressions of shame, trauma, silence, and joy throughout the collection?
8. Chang writes several “Dear Daughter” chapters detailing her own struggles with assimilation and racism. How do her hopes and promises for the future cut through these stories?
9. How would you describe Chang’s journey throughout the book or the arc of memory and silence? Do you think Chang’s perspectives changed as she wrote?
10. What memories do you hold dearly in your family? Do you have the privilege of saved family photos and documents?
11. How does Chang reclaim and reinvent the letter-writing format? Which letters are more traditional? More experimental?
12. Who do you wish you could write a letter to and why? What do you wish you could say to or ask them?

