

# BOOK CLUB in a bag



## When We Fell Apart Soon Wiley

### Discussion Questions

1 . When We Fell Apart is told from two alternating perspectives: Yu-jin and Min. Yu-jin's chapters are narrated from first-person point of view and Min's is told in third-person perspective. Did that impact the way you relate to these characters, and if so, how?

2 . Min travels to Korea "because of ancestry, because he'd never seen the country whose language he spoke, because he'd never felt wholly American, because in the snuggest kernel of his heart, he hoped to find some sense of belonging." Do you think he finds belonging in Korea? Why or why not?

3 . In high school, Yu-jin describes herself as "focused, driven, ambitious, [and] obsessed." Do you think Yu-jin's approach to her own education is admirable? Why or why not?

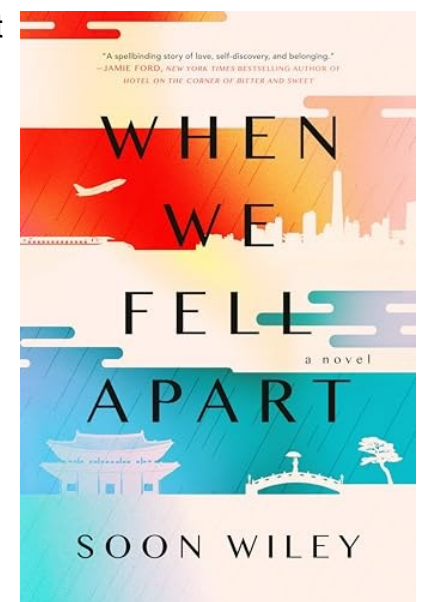
4 . Yu-jin describes Min as "the ideal guy here. Korean, but only half. American but not too American . . . And that nose. I bet that nose turns heads." How does Min's biracial identity interact with his experience in Korea?

5 . Min, Yu-jin, and So-ra go to an art installation together. Yu-jin thinks, "I saw two houses, two homes, one within the other. One Western, one Korean. Was it meant to symbolize the artist's yearning for home? Or was it a commentary on the cultures, their connections?" What do you think about the questions Yu-jin asks? How does this art installation relate to the larger themes of When We Fell Apart?

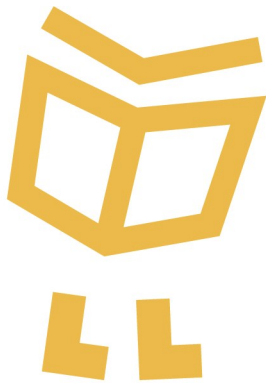
6 . All the major characters in the novel—Min, Yu-jin, So-ra, and Misaki — are drawn to Seoul for different reasons. What does Seoul represent to each character and what do they find so appealing about the city?

7 . Min thinks about how "In the public's imagination, there were no gay Koreans. Sure, homo-sexuality was real; it wasn't some horrible thing, but it existed elsewhere, New York, Bangkok, Berlin, anywhere but Korea." How do these cultural attitudes affect the characters and the journeys they take?

8 . When talking to her mother, Yu-jin thinks "Even in my happiest moments, when I thought I was flying, I'd always been caged." How does Yu-jin come to understand her own happiness? Is Yu-jin actually caged? Why or why not?



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## About the Author

A native of Nyack, New York, SOON WILEY received his BA in English and Philosophy from Connecticut College. He holds an MFA from Wichita State University and is currently pursuing an MA in Writing from Johns Hopkins University. His fiction has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize and earned him fellowships at Brush Creek Residency for the Arts in Wyoming and CAMAC–Centre d’art in France. He currently teaches English at Sidwell Friends in Washington, DC, where he resides with his wife and their two cats.

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