



# Everything I Never Told You (2014)

By Celeste Ng  
(Alex Award: 2015)



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## Discussion Questions taken from *Lit Lovers*

1. Discuss the relationships between Nath, Lydia, and Hannah. How do the siblings both understand and mystify one another?
2. Why do you think Lydia is the favorite child of James and Marilyn? How does this pressure affect Lydia, and what kind of impact do you think it has on Nath and Hannah? Do you think it is more difficult for Lydia to be the favorite, or for Nath and Hannah, who are often overlooked by their parents?
3. "So part of him wanted to tell Nath that he knew: what it was like to be teased, what it was like to never fit in. The other part of him wanted to shake his son, to slap him. To shape him into something different.... When Marilyn asked what happened, James said merely, with a wave of the hand, 'Some kids teased him at the pool yesterday. He needs to learn to take a joke.'"
4. How did you react to the "Marco Polo" pool scene with James and Nath? What do you think of James's decision?
5. Discuss a situation in which you've felt like an outsider. How do the members of the Lee family deal with being measured against stereotypes and others' perceptions?
6. What is the meaning of the novel's title? To whom do the "I" and "you" refer?
7. What would have happened if Lydia had reached the dock? Do you think she would have been able to change her parents' views and expectations of her?
8. This novel says a great deal about the influence our parents can have on us. Do you think the same issues will affect the next generation of Lees? How did your parents influence your childhood?
9. "It struck her then, as if someone had said it aloud: her mother was dead, and the only thing worth remembering about her, in the end, was that she cooked. Marilyn thought uneasily of her own life, of hours spent making breakfasts, serving dinners, packing lunches into neat paper bags."
10. Discuss the relationship Marilyn and her mother have to cooking and their roles as stay-at-home mothers. Do you think one is happier or more satisfied?
11. The footprint on the ceiling brings Nath and Lydia closer when they are young, and later, Hannah and James discover it together and laugh. What other objects bring the characters closer together or drive them further apart?

12. There's so much that the characters keep to themselves. What do you wish they had shared with one another? Do you think an ability to better express themselves would have changed the outcome of the book?

(Questions issued by the publisher.)

### Author Bio:



Birth—ca. 1980-81

- Raised—Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; Shaker Heights, Ohio, USA
- Education—Harvard University; M.F.A., Michigan University
- Awards—Hopwood Award; Pushcart Prize
- Currently—lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts

Celeste Ng [pronounced "ing"] grew up in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and Shaker Heights, Ohio, in a family of scientists. She attended Harvard University and earned an MFA from the University of Michigan (now the Helen Zell Writers' Program at the University of Michigan), where she won the Hopwood Award. Her debut novel, *Everything I Never Told You* (2014) was a New York Times bestseller and was also included as one of the paper's Notable Books of the Year. It was named a best book of the year by more than a dozen other publications, won several awards, and was a finalist for a number of others.

*Little Fires Everywhere* (2017), Ng's second novel, was also published to rave and starred reviews.

Her fiction and essays have appeared in *One Story*, *TriQuarterly*, *Bellevue Literary Review*, *Kenyon Review Online*, and elsewhere, and she is the recipient of the Pushcart Prize. She lives in Cambridge, Massachusetts, with her husband and son. (Adapted from the publisher.)

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