

HIROSHIMA IN THE MORNING DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. In order to travel to Hiroshima and interview survivors of the atomic bomb for research, Reiko left her children with her husband in the US for four months—a choice that has been described as controversial. What do you think about a woman who decides to put her work before her family? Does it make a difference if her partner agrees to the arrangement? If Reiko were a man, would you think differently about her decision?
2. Reiko describes the decision to have children as something her husband wanted, not something that she had wanted for herself. But once the children were born, she became just like her own mother: a traditional maternal caregiver. In the course of being in Hiroshima and away from her children, Reiko realizes that she wants to be a different kind of mother. Have you ever had a change of heart like hers? Did you act upon those feelings? What do you think about Reiko's desire to reconstruct motherhood for herself?
3. As Reiko reflects on her choices as a mother throughout the book, she searches within herself to find her own mother's voice, and records the stories of heroic mothers who saved their children when the atomic bomb was dropped. How do memories of your mother reverberate in your own life? How do you relate to Reiko's realization that she had become like her mother in relation to her own children and husband?
4. Reiko creates a new family for herself amidst those who help her research and the people she interviews in Hiroshima. How do you define family?
5. Reiko describes her initial exchanges with the *hibakusha* (survivors of the atomic bomb) as unemotional and seemingly detached. After 9/11, the interviews change. The *hibakusha* become more animated, and relate to Reiko as a survivor. Were you surprised that the survivors seemed have no anger toward Americans? Did you feel as an American that you were a survivor after 9/11? Did you feel changes in your own career path and/or your family life after 9/11?
6. The atomic bombs deployed on Hiroshima and Nagasaki ended World War II, but at tremendous cost. Do you think violence should ever be used to stop violence?
7. A common value of the survivors of the atomic bomb is the desire for peace. In what ways does Reiko function as a peace activist by writing this book? Do you consider yourself a peace activist?
8. What is the role of memory, both collective and individual, in ensuring peace for the future?
9. In light of the recent nuclear disaster in Japan, what do you think about nuclear power, and its threats and benefits? If nuclear disaster can be a result of both war and peace, as the people of Japan have experienced, what can we do to protect ourselves and each other from its dangers? Do the gains of nuclear power outweigh the risks?
10. How has the world changed in between these nuclear disasters? How has it remained the same?