



Pachinko

Min Jin Lee

A sweeping family saga that follows four generations of a Korean family making a home in Japan, full of tenderness, resilience, and quiet courage.

Reading level: Moderate

Best for: A club that loves long, sweeping family stories and conversations that wander into personal memory

Discussion

WARM-UP

1. Where did you do most of your reading of Pachinko, and did you have a snack or drink that became part of the ritual?
2. Which early scene wrapped around you like a blanket, the kind you wanted to sit inside a little longer?

DIGGING IN

1. The boarding house meals and small kitchen moments carry so much love. What food memory from your own family did this book stir up?
2. Sunja's quiet strength shows up in small, daily acts. Whose steadiness in your own life does she remind you of?
3. So much of this story is about making a home in a place that doesn't always welcome you. When have you felt most at home somewhere unexpected?
4. Mothers, grandmothers, and the things they don't say out loud are everywhere in this book. What did that bring up for you?

GOING DEEP

1. Without giving anything away, which character's journey stayed with you after you closed the book, and what feeling did it leave behind?
2. The novel suggests that history happens to people in very personal, quiet ways. Was there a moment that made you sit with that idea for a while?

On the table

Kimchi jjigae with rice

A bubbling, comforting stew that nods to the Korean kitchens at the heart of the story

Steamed white rice and seasoned banchan (spinach namul, pickled radish, marinated tofu)

Easy to set out potluck-style, echoing the homey meals Sunja and Yangjin prepare

Warm hotteok or sweet red bean buns

A cozy, slightly indulgent dessert that bridges Korean and Japanese street-food traditions

To sip

Barley tea (boricha) (no alcohol)

Toasty, soothing, and traditionally sipped warm in Korean homes

Hot yuzu honey tea (no alcohol)

Bright and gentle, a hug in a mug for a long conversation

Warm sake or makgeolli

A soft, milky or mellow pour that fits both the Japanese and Korean settings

Run of show

7:00

Soft landing

Greet guests with warm barley tea and slippers by the door. Soft lamps, no overhead lights.

7:15

Bowls in laps

Serve kimchi jjigae and rice family-style. Let people settle in before any 'real' talk.

7:40

Warm-ups

Drift into the two warm-up questions while everyone is still eating.

8:00

Heart of it

Move through the theme questions. Let silences sit. Refill cups often.

8:40

Sweet pause

Bring out hotteok and honey yuzu tea, then ease into the deep questions.

9:10

Last sips

Pass out bookmarks, fill in scorecards together, and let the night wind down gently.

HOST TIPS

- Set the table before guests arrive so the room already feels held when they walk in.
- Keep a kettle going all night. Refilling someone's cup is the easiest way to make space for a quieter voice.
- If a question lands emotionally, don't rush to the next one. Cozy nights are about lingering, not covering ground.

Playlist

Hushed, nostalgic, and tender, like late afternoon light through a kitchen window

01 Arirang (traditional) - Sumi Jo

03 Spring Waltz - Yiruma

05 Kiss the Rain - Yiruma

07 Bird Song - Park Ji Ha

02 Merry-Go-Round of Life - Joe Hisaishi

04 Aka Tombo (Red Dragonfly) - Rie Hata

06 Departures - Joe Hisaishi

08 Home - Bobby Kim

Trivia

1. In what year was Pachinko first published? (2017)
2. Pachinko was a finalist for which major American book award in 2017? (The National Book Award for Fiction)
3. What is the first sentence's famous opening word about? (History (the novel opens with the line about history having failed))
4. In which two countries is most of the novel set? (Korea and Japan)
5. What is pachinko, the game the book is named after? (A Japanese arcade game similar to a vertical pinball machine, often used for gambling)
6. Min Jin Lee was born in which city? (Seoul, South Korea)
7. Roughly how many years does the novel's timeline span? (About 80 years, from the early 1900s into the late 1980s)
8. Pachinko was adapted into a TV series in 2022 by which streaming service? (Apple TV+)

Rate the book

Comfort level ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Made me feel something ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Characters I'd cook for ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Sense of place ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

Would re-read on a rainy day ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

One word for how this book left me: _____

A scene I want to keep on my shelf: _____

Who I want to call after finishing this: _____

YOU'RE INVITED

A Quiet Night with Pachinko

Come sit a while with stew, sweet buns, and four generations of one unforgettable family. Slippers encouraged, opinions optional.



Plan your own book club night

Scan the code or visit bookclubnight.com

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