

## Discussion Guide: *Like Spilled Water*

1. Why does Na resent Bao-bao? How did their relationship change after their parents took Bao-bao to the city?
2. How do traditional Chinese attitudes about children's duty to their parents shape Na's and Gilbert's ideas about what they can do with their lives? How has Bao-bao pushed back against these attitudes?
3. Na's family has a limited understanding of depression and other mental health issues. How might this make it difficult for Na's parents to understand the possible effects of the various pressures they've put on their children?
4. Describe Na's relationship with her parents. In what ways do her parents show that they love her? How does this compare to the ways your family shows affection?
5. How are Min and Wei different from anyone Na has met before? What does she learn about her brother through them?
6. Na's father says that having a daughter is *like spilled water*—a waste—because a daughter will inevitably leave her family when she marries. What other kinds of waste does Na see happening in her family? What scenarios would feel *like spilled water* to her?
7. Why is Na initially uncertain about whether to accept Gilbert's proposal? What advantages would marriage give her? What limitations would it impose on her?
8. How does working on Min's project affect Na's perspective on marriage?
9. Na believes that she's nothing like the unconventional heroine of Charlotte Brontë's novel *Jane Eyre*. But in what ways does Na defy society's expectations for her?
10. How is the pressure on Gilbert to marry a woman and conceal his orientation similar to the pressures Na and Bao-bao have faced? How is it different?
11. Mrs. Hu wants Na to give her parents a second chance and forgive them for what happened to Bao-bao. Do you agree with Mrs. Hu? Why or why not?
12. What questions does the end of the novel leave open-ended? How do you think these issues will play out over the next few years of Na's life?