

EYE CONTACT OVER TRUK

Discussion Questions

1. Nick tried to bury the past and fought the idea of facing it. If you had been in Nick's position, would you have gone back?
2. Do you think the way Natalie handled Nick's depression was the right way? Have you had a situation with a depressed friend or love one, and if so, how did you help motivate them?
3. Junichi reflected that he and his father spoke of tasks, not nightmares or dreams. When do we really find out about our parents as people with lives full of struggles and successes? When do we let our own children see our full selves?
4. A very specific odor triggered Junichi's memory. This idea came about because smell is the strongest of the five senses to trigger memories. Have you had a case where some smell brought back a memory?
5. Junichi's mother told him that "you want to be free, though you are not yet clear on what you want freedom from." Have you experienced a time in life when your energy wanted something, but your mind and heart couldn't provide the clarity?
6. Had you heard about the shipwrecks in Truk Lagoon (now known as Chuuk)? Would you want to scuba dive on those wrecks, knowing why they exist? How do you feel knowing that these wrecks are now a popular diving site, even though the families of those who died still place wreaths on the water?
7. Was Junichi's anger toward Nick justified? How often do we focus our anger on one person when we can't hold the actual cause responsible?
8. If you were in Nick's position, how would you have responded to Junichi's anger?

9. How do you think the innocent people, native to an area, feel about their hometowns used as a battlefield between two groups from far-off countries?
10. Were you aware of the fire-bombings in Japan and the extent of the death toll? Planners knew about the high wind forecast when they planned these attacks. Were these justified?
11. On the path to the cave, Nekiniuo said: "...the path ends, but the trail goes on. From here, the hike is much harder." What are the metaphorical implications of these words?
12. Nekiniuo also shared his perspective that many of the intelligent people look at so much, yet see so little. Why do you think he felt that way?
13. In a scene where Nick was alone on deck for a sunrise, he describes his life as a leaf blowing in the wind with no control and no idea of where he would land. Did you ever experience a time when your normal day-to-day life ended, leaving you with an unknown future? How did you react?
14. Part IV starts with the line: "When we face our greatest fear, we find our greatest strength." Do you agree?
15. There are many themes in the book: grief, fear, forgiveness? Which one resonated with you the most and how did it impact you? How do each of these interplay with the others?
16. C.S. Lewis wrote: "I sat with my anger long enough until she told me her real name was grief." Nick, Junichi, Natalie, Shoko, and Eonin suffered grief from their respective experience from that war. What were the similarities and differences of each of their perspectives?
17. This battle also touched Nekiniuo, but he found closure many years earlier. How did he do this?
18. Who did you think J.C. was and were you surprised?
19. This story wove many events of history: The Corn Belt fleet, Truk, the firebombings, attack on USS *Bunker Hill*, Japanese civilians leaping to their deaths, shipwrecks, and life in Japan post WW2. Which of these did you know about and which were new?
20. Who should play each lead character if they make this story into a movie?