

The Choice Within

Discussion Questions



1. The US had little experience fighting a war in the Pacific before WW2. What challenges did this area pose in war that differed from the European theater? What challenges did this area pose to the medical staff that did not exist in the European theater?
2. After the neighborhood meeting, Akira's father shared his concern that a neighbor might be part of the secret police or an informer. How would it feel to wonder if your neighbors were spying on you? How could someone choose to do this? Was it really for the good of the country?
3. The Great One said: "They may be hard, but there are always choices." Do you agree? Why or why not?
4. The war effort was a male-designed endeavor. What do you think were the greatest challenges to the nurses that deployed to the Pacific theater? What do you think motivated those women to volunteer for that duty?
5. Discovering the actual state of the war shocked Akira. Why was this hidden from the population? Was it to benefit the people? Is there ever a justifiable reason to keep information, like this, from the population?
6. Most of the nurses who served in war were young women, thrown into a situation that required greater levels of flexibility, initiative, and responsibility. Jeannette described the role as "pseudo mix of doctor and chief nurse, directing the medics to deal with the patients." How hard do you think it was for these women to step up to this level of responsibility, then go back to the US and into the narrower role of nursing?
7. After progressively increasing food quotas and rationing, the Japanese papers began articles about a new policy: "Giving Our All. A nation of 100 million ready to make the final sacrifice." How do you think the population felt about this?

8. **Nick stated: “I’m amazed that the Japs keep fighting. They think differently than we do.” How do you think the cultures of the US and Japan influenced the fighting?**
9. **While helping in the hospital on Biak, Jeannette treated the enemy and thought about how easily she could have killed him. Is that a justifiable thought? How would having a thought such as this affects a nurse who wants to save lives?**
10. **There were several major medical advances that occurred during this time period. Which medical advances saved lives, and which, while initially helpful, later proved to have long-term consequences?**
11. **After helping a hospital on Leyte, Jeannette didn’t want to talk about it, “not now, not ever.” Was this the start of her downward spiral?**
12. **Why didn’t Akira desert? Did you understand and agree with him—based on his reasons? What options did he have?**
13. **Many in the Japanese military used corporal punishment on their men. Considering their situation, why do you think the Japanese military used this method of punishment, and what other options existed to motivate or discipline their men?**
14. **Commanders asked many (not all) pilots to volunteer for suicide squads. Were they heroes to the Japanese war effort? Those men who volunteered for the Doolittle raid on Tokyo were brave, skilled pilots who volunteered—for what was tantamount to a suicide run. Were the kamikaze missions any different?**
15. **There were several hot-air balloon bombs that made it to the US mainland. Did you know about these? What other historical events were new to you?**
16. **Sensei told Akira that it was his choice whether he died a slave or a man. Akira’s reaction was that he wasn’t a slave, then questioned this idea. Is dictation of thought a form of slavery?**
17. **Akira references his need to visit the: “station called Death.” While none of us know what happens after death, most religions have some form of idea. Do we live on and what does live on mean?**
18. **There are several enemies in the book. Which ones did you find? Which resonate more with you?**