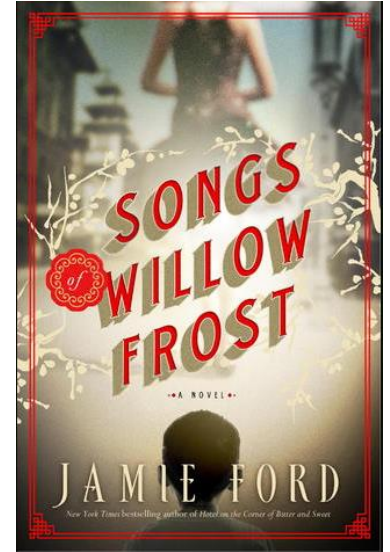


Songs of Willow Frost

by Jamie Ford

1. William's life at Sacred Heart is, he feels, a hard one. Do you agree? In the long run, do the caregivers at Sacred Heart do more to help or harm their young wards?
2. The orphans at Sacred Heart share a collective "birthday," one for boys and one for girls. What would it be like to celebrate such an event? Would it feel less special without a focus on the individual, or even more joyful to share it with a community?
3. On May 4, 1931, the first bookmobile hit the streets of Seattle, where it did indeed visit the historical Sacred Heart Orphanage (as well as Boeing Field). Why do you think there was such a need to bring the library to its patrons, rather than allowing those patrons to visit the library as they chose?
4. What qualities does Liu Song share with her mother? How are their lives similar or different?
5. Does Liu Song's mother represent strength, weakness, or a little of both? Do you think she knew she was a second wife?
6. Why doesn't Liu Song study Cantonese Opera instead of pursuing a career on film and stage?
7. What do you think happened to Mr. Butterfield after the loss of his music store? Personally and professionally, how would he react to receive Liu Song's newfound fame as Willow?
8. Imagine that you are Liu Song and pregnant under her circumstances. What would you do? Who might you tell? And would you keep the baby?
9. The novel explores the subject of abandonment, whether by willful desertion or by circumstance. What forms does such abandonment take among contemporary families?
10. In the time period the novel is set in, economic and social classes were clearly defined and while change was desired by some, it was feared by others. Do you think we live in a more just and fair era today, or are we in fact worse off?
11. The social worker, Mrs. Peterson, represents an outside authority at a time when mothers had fewer rights to their children than fathers. When did that begin to change and why?



12. During the early years of the silent film era, studios and production companies could be found in most states. So why had much of the film industry congregated in Hollywood a decade later?
13. What factors contributed to the eventual demise of the grand movie palaces of the 1920s and 1930s?
14. Willow always knew where her son was, so why didn't she come back sooner, especially as she gained success?
15. Why does Willow die in all of her films?
16. How do you think Charlotte's death impacted Sister Briganti?
17. In the end Willow comes back for William. What do you think happened to them after the novel's conclusion? What happened to her career?
18. Overall, do you think the story is one of hope and promise or suffering and sacrifice?