

Marlborough Public Library Adult Book Club

April 8 or 10, 2025

*The Phoenix Crown* by Kate Quinn and Janie Chang

Questions abridged from: <https://www.readinggroupguides.com/reviews/the-phoenix-crown/guide>

1. The 1906 San Francisco Earthquake is one of the deadliest disasters in American history. How much did you know about it going into the book? Have you read any other novels or nonfiction about the San Francisco earthquake?
2. Gemma Garland is determined to build a career while handicapped by health issues and bad luck, and resolves to be hard-nosed in protecting her own interests. What did she learn in the course of events? Did your opinion of her change?
3. Suling belonged to the first generation of American-born Chinese. In many ways, people like her faced more challenges of identity than their parents did. Discuss those challenges and compare them to what immigrants today face when settling into a new country.
4. What hints did you get that Suling was not typical of a Chinese girl of that era, and what influences in her life made those characteristics credible to you?
5. Alice Eastwood is a friend and mentor to all the other women at various points in the novel --- an independent woman with a career and a strong sense of self. What do the others learn from Alice, and what does she learn from them?
6. Did you suspect the connection between Gemma's friend, Nelly, and Suling's suitor, Reggie?
7. Historical fiction frequently sparks an interest in learning more from the historical record. What storylines, tidbits or trivia from this novel inspire you to go down the research rabbit hole?