

This reading group guide for **When the Future Comes Too Soon** includes discussion questions and ideas for enhancing your book group/club. We hope these suggestions will provide interesting angles of conversation and enrich your enjoyment of the book.

## Introduction

In this powerful and haunting novel, Selina Siak Chin Yoke once again immerses the reader viscerally in her characters' world.

**When the Future Comes Too Soon** (Book #2 in the Malayan Series) follows Mei Foong, who is married to the eldest son of the Wong family matriarch depicted in **The Woman who Breathed Two Worlds**, while she and her family adapt to the harsh reality of a country under Japanese occupation. As order and racial relations break down in Malaya, so does the relationship between Mei Foong and her husband, Weng Yu. With the entrance of Chew Hock San, a man who appears besotted with her, Mei Foong finds herself conflicted.

**When the Future Comes Too Soon** is a novel about the nature of personal choice and responsibility, and the meaning of fidelity and betrayal – narrated by an ordinary woman whom many of us can relate to.

## Discussion Questions

1. There have been many novels set during World War II. In what way does **When the Future Come Too Soon** differ from other novels you have read in which war served as a backdrop?

2. What do you feel you have in common, if anything, with the protagonist, Wong Mei Foong, and with her husband, Wong Weng Yu?

3. *“As our eyes met across the desk, I knew that nothing could ever be the same again. I wished later that I had seized the moment rather than letting it pass. But when it came, I could not find the courage to ask whether he loved me.”*

One of the recurrent themes in the novel is that of missed opportunities. What do you believe that Mei Foong could have done differently?

4. Describe the relationship between Mei Foong and Weng Yu at the start of the novel and how it evolves as the story progresses.

5. Wong Weng Yu believes himself to be, and is regarded by those around him, as a thoroughly Westernised man. Do you agree, and why or why not?

6. Discuss how the different characters react to the imminent disappearance of their British rulers and the sudden imposition of a Japanese regime.

7. What did you find most surprising in this novel?

8. *“Under the Japanese there was little sense of night and day, of right or wrong; no sooner did dawn break, than dusk settled. Time marched forward as it always had, but we were numb to its passing.”* Has your view about the behaviour of the Japanese Army during World War II changed in any way through reading this novel?

9. Describe your reactions to the growing friendship between Mei Foong and Chew Hock San.

10. To what extent do you believe that Mei Foong is responsible for her predicament at the end?

11. What do you think fidelity means in a relationship? In your opinion, does society hold women and men to different standards?

12. Betrayal is another theme in **When the Future Comes Too Soon**. Discuss the instances of betrayal in the story. Do you believe the British betrayed Malaya?

13. Do you think that Mei Foong will finally disclose to her children what she has kept from them for so long?

14. Discuss the title, **When the Future Comes Too Soon**. Is this a good title? What would you and members of your group have chosen?

15. What do you feel you have learnt by reading this book?

16. To whom would you recommend **When the Future Comes Too Soon** and why?

### **Enhance Your Book Group/Club**

1. Consider reading the first book in the Malayan Series, **The Woman who Breathed Two Worlds**, and discussing it in your group. Can you trace any lessons that each of Mei Foong and Weng Yu learns in the course of each novel?

2. Spend an afternoon with your group taking an introductory lesson in Chinese calligraphy.

3. Plan a viewing of the History Channel documentary, [Rising Sun over Malaya](#), with your group to get a sense of what Malaya was like during the war (NB there are disturbing scenes of a graphic nature).

4. Go armchair travelling with a map of Peninsula Malaya and pin all the places mentioned in this book. Think about the distances travelled by the Japanese army as it marched down the country. If you had been in Mei Foong's shoes, what would you have done?

5. Connect with Selina Siak Chin Yoke on Twitter, Facebook or her website and invite her to join your book club discussion of **When the Future Comes Too Soon**, either in person or virtually – she would be honoured to participate if her schedule permits. Even if she cannot join you, send her any questions you may have and she will do her best to provide answers. Follow her on Amazon to receive updates on upcoming the books in the Malayan Series!