Book Club Questions

In the beginning of the book Steven had a hard time feeling that he fit in anywhere. By the end of the book he has overcome those feelings and become a person who is happy with himself and his life. What are some of the major turning points that led him in this direction, and what are some of the primary obstacles that stood in his way?

The hike up into the mountains is an experience that permanently bonds Steven, Suki, Nick, and Ollie. When they come back down, the whole world has changed due to the bombing of Pearl Harbor. In what ways would each of their lives have been different if they had not had the support of each other’s friendship?

Mr. Cho acts as a mentor to Steven, and imparts many invaluable lessons that Steven carries with him throughout his life. One piece of advice that made the most impact was when Mr. Cho said, “Enjoying the world just as it is. Understanding that many things are incomplete. Allowing it to be so.” How do you think Steven applied this wisdom to his own situation?

When Steven finds Nick has fled from the root cellar, all that remains is a letter Nick left behind. “You deserve to be with somebody wonderful who can be everything you want him to be. I’m sorry I can’t be that person for you.” Later, when Steven finally finds Nick in New York, Nick seemingly abandons him again. Do you think these were acts of cowardice on Nick’s part, or acts of love?

During a particularly difficult time in his life, Steven makes his way to Manzanar to find Suki. He is greatly impacted by the conditions he sees there. How did the author’s vivid details of the hardship of the internment camp and descriptions of the brutal wind and blowing sand affect you as a reader?

When Steven arrives to pick up the Yamamoto family at Manzanar, he realizes that Suki’s grandmother is buried there and must be left behind. In another scene, at the bus stop, Steven reflects on letting the Yamamoto family go and allows them the little dignity they have left. In these scenes and others, as the author clearly pulls back the veil on this often unspoken of time in history, what revelations or insights most stood out to you?

Despite his family’s contempt and lack of support for his sexual orientation and choice of friends, Steven stays true to himself. What does this say about his character as a person, and his courage, even after he returns home to his family after running away and realizes the only thing he can see in his father’s eyes is scorn?

At the end of the book, Steven, with his lifelong partner, Levi, reunite with Suki. Steven reflects on the challenges and losses they have all faced, and yet here they are after all these years, still friends. How do you think they held on to their friendship despite the different paths their lives took?