

“Fifty Words for Rain” by Asha Lemmie

Author Bio:

- Birth—ca. 1995
- Where—the State of Virginia, USA
- Raised—the State of Maryland
- Education—B.A., Boston College
- Currently—lives in New York City, New York

Asha Lemmie is an American author, who, from the early age of two developed a passionate interest in reading. By the time she was five, she was writing her own stories. Attending school in Washington, D.C., Lemmie was fortunate to be exposed to a wide variety of cultural influences.

After graduating from Boston College with a degree in English literature and creative writing, Lemmie relocated to New York City, where she worked in book publishing. *Fifty Words for Rain* is her first novel. (*Adapted from the publisher.*)

Discussion Questions:

1. What do you think the title "Fifty Words for Rain" means? What role does nature play in Nori's life?
2. For Nori, watching Akira play the violin is captivating, and she wants to be able to make people feel that way too. Why do you think music has such a strong effect on Nori? Aside from, bringing her and Akira closer, what does playing the violin mean to Nori?
3. Have you previously read a World War II novel set in Japan? How does setting a story outside Europe change the way you think about this period? What are some of the lasting effects from the war that you see in the book?
4. Discuss Akira and Nori's relationship. Despite the vastly different ways they are

treated, they form a very powerful bond. Why do you think they are able to be close? How does their relationship change the course of their lives?

5. There are many examples of female relationships in the book. Look at how Nori interacts with her mother, her grandmother, Alice, Kiyomi, and Miyuki. How do these women's relationships reflect and resist Japanese culture in the 1950s?

6. What does Nori learn from reading her mother's diaries? How do you think this influences her own trajectory?

7. How does Nori transform throughout the book? In one regard, she moves from not fighting her confinement to resisting other people's control over her life. What inspired those changes within her? Are those changes reflected in the rest of society?

8. This is a book about family, love, duty, and isolation. Do you see any parallels between the views in the book and those of today, especially about our attitudes toward women and other marginalized people?

9. What do you think Nori's Obaasama (grandmother), Yuko, means when she says "Many, and none" in response to Nori's question about whether she has any regrets?

10. Do you agree with Nori's decision about her future? When considering what to do in your own life, how do you balance your desire for happiness, purpose, and sense of responsibility, whether it be to your family, friends, or society?
(*Questions issued by the publisher.*)