

Discussion Questions: *Repeat After Me*, Rachel DeWoskin

1. At the end of the novel, Aysha says that “I couldn’t have known when I lost Da Ge what he would give me. Permanence.” With this in mind, do you think that Aysha considers her relationship with Da Ge one of tragedy or romance? Why?
2. What do you think are some of the driving forces behind Aysha’s attraction to Da Ge? What about Da Ge’s attraction to Aysha? How big a factor in their relationship was their shared hospitalization time, or Da Ge’s need for American citizenship? Do you think their love was reciprocal or one-sided? Or two-sided, but in different ways?
3. Do Aysha and Da Ge’s ideas about family and family values clash? Or are they similar?
4. How does the past interfere with the present? How are these characters unable to escape from it?
5. Do you think that if Da Ge hadn’t died, their marriage would have lasted? Why or why not?
6. Language and the comprehension of language are significant factors of this novel. How is Aysha’s intense love of language presented throughout the novel? Is it simply a result of her obsessive-compulsive nature, or is it a serious attempt at self-enlightenment?
7. Ultimately, Aysha decides to leave New York and permanently move to China. Why do you think that Aysha feels such a connection to China? Is this an honest attempt to move on with her life or is she unable to let go of the past?
8. Do you feel that the inclusion of Da Ge’s letters helped your understanding of his character? How do they foreshadow his death?
9. How do you think that Da Ge’s death will affect Julia Too as she grows up? Will she harbor a guilt and sense of betrayal similar to the resentment that Aysha held for her own father?
10. During one of their meet-ups, Xiao Wang and Aysha discuss the cultural differences between America and China, notably in terms of communication. How are cultural misconceptions and misunderstandings portrayed throughout the

novel? And in terms of Aysha's relationships with her friends, family, students and Da Ge?

11. Initially, the friendship between Xiao Wang and Aysha revolves around watching movies. How does this reflect the overall theme of Eastern perceptions of Westerners? How does it reflect the theme of communicational misunderstandings?
12. Do you think that Da Ge's demonization of his father parallels Aysha's demonization of her own father?
13. Aysha openly acknowledges her battle with anxiety and mania. Do you think that Aysha's relationship with Da Ge prevented her from experiencing another manic episode? In other words, did her unconventional relationship actually help keep her sane?
14. What do you think was the real motivation behind Da Ge's suicide? Was it purely a matter of upholding cultural virtues, aka "saving face?" Or was it a consequence of his mental illness? Or were there other factors?
15. At the end of the novel, it's suggested that the mentor-student role has been reversed. In what ways did Da Ge act as Aysha's mentor?