

***What's Eating Jackie Oh?* by Patricia Park**

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Patricia Park is a tenured professor of creative writing at American University, a Fulbright Scholar in Creative Arts, and a Jerome Hill Artist Fellow. Her debut YA novel, *Imposter Syndrome and Other Confessions of Alejandra Kim*, received starred reviews from Kirkus Reviews and School Library Journal and was an NPR Book of the Day. Patricia's newest novel, *What's Eating Jackie Oh?*, is inspired by her love of watching competitive TV cooking shows and creating somewhat edible meals from leftovers. It was also inspired by Patricia's New York Times op-ed, "[I'm Done Being Your Model Minority](#)." Patricia's writing has also appeared in the New Yorker, the New York Times, the Guardian, Salon, and others. A native of Queens, she lives in Brooklyn, New York. Visit her online at patriciapark.com.

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

As you read and annotate the book, keep these three big questions in mind. Look for quotes or short passages that answer these questions – then mark those sections of the book!

- ★ How do societal and cultural expectations shape a person's identity and behavior?
- ★ How can family relationships both support and challenge personal growth?
- ★ What does it mean to be your "authentic self" in a world that expects conformity?

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What is Jackie like? What are her strengths? What obstacles does she face? Why does she care so much about cooking? What effect does her Korean heritage have on her life? What influence does living in New York City have on her?
2. Discuss Jackie's parents, their personalities, their backgrounds, and their work. Why do you think professional and financial success is so important to them? What effect does that emphasis on success have on Jackie's life? How do her parents and her relationship with them, especially her mother, change during the novel?
3. What is Justin's relationship like with his parents and grandparents? What impact has the fact that he's in prison had on their social lives?
4. What is Jackie's relationship like with her brother? What kind of letters do they exchange? What interests do they share?
5. The title of the first chapter is "Not Your Model Minority." What does this phrase mean to Jackie? What attributes does she feel many people expect her to have because of her Korean heritage? When does the concept feel oppressive, and why?
6. What is the role of her grandparents and their deli in Jackie's life? How do they treat Jackie? How do they balance her parents' role? What do her grandparents value?

7. How do Jackie and KT meet, and why do they become friends? What do they like about each other? Why do they grow apart, and how do they end up reconciling?
8. How does Jackie perceive Stephen Min? How does she think he perceives her? Why is it hard for Jackie to understand and then believe that Stephen likes her?
9. Describe the judges and contestants of *Burn Off! High School Edition*. How does Jackie's sense of competition influence how she interacts with the other contestants?
10. How does Jackie's menu for the "Final Exam" of the show reflect her own life and New York City?
11. Consider the format and structure of the book. How does the title suit the book and foreshadow its content? What is the effect of having a first-person, present tense narrative? The narrative is interspersed with text messages, taped interviews, excerpts from performances, a web chart, menus, and more. What do these add? What about the appendices? Why do you think the author included them?