

# A Discussion Guide for *Jessica Kim's*

# *STAND UP, Yumi Chung!*



# About the book!

One lie snowballs into a full-blown double life in this irresistible story about an aspiring stand-up comedian.

On the outside, Yumi Chung suffers from #shygirlproblems, a perm-gone-wrong, and kids calling her “Yu-MEAT” because she smells like her family’s Korean barbecue restaurant. On the inside, Yumi is ready for her Netflix stand-up special. Her notebook is filled with mortifying memories that she’s reworked into comedy gold. All she needs is a stage and courage.



Instead of spending the summer studying her favorite YouTube comedians, Yumi is enrolled in test-prep tutoring to qualify for a private school scholarship, which will help in a time of hardship at the restaurant. One day after class, Yumi stumbles on an opportunity that will change her life: a comedy camp for kids taught by one of her favorite YouTube stars. The only problem is that the instructor and all the students think she’s a girl named Kay Nakamura—and Yumi doesn’t correct them.

As this case of mistaken identity unravels, Yumi must decide to stand up and reveal the truth or risk losing her dreams and disappointing everyone she cares about.



The questions in this guide were written by Sarah Park Dahlen. Sarah is an associate professor in the Master of Library and Information Science Program at St. Catherine University. She co-founded and co-edits Research on Diversity in Youth Literature and researches Asian American children’s literature.

# Discussion Questions

1. Have you ever wanted to participate in an activity that your parents didn't think was valuable? How did you convince them to let you participate?
2. What are some reasons why parents might put pressure on children to excel in school? Why might some immigrant parents feel this way toward their children's education?
3. Why was Yumi afraid to tell the comedian Jasmine Jasper, her new friends, and her parents the truth about comedy camp?
4. Yumi writes in her Super-Secret Comedy Notebook, "It's really frustrating that my parents compare me to their friends' kids" (p. 4). Why might some parents use comparison as motivation? How can someone respond if this is frustrating rather than motivating? What are some examples of ways comparison can be hurtful? What are some suggestions for ways one can motivate someone without comparing them to others?
5. The comedian Jasmine Jasper talks about "the importance of challenging yourself to do things that make you uncomfortable" (p. 25). When have you been in a situation where you challenged yourself to do something uncomfortable, and how did it feel? How did you overcome your discomfort?
6. Yumi tells a joke about her parents refusing to reward her with money for good grades, and some people in the audience make comments about "tiger parents" and parents who are "abusive" (pp. 152-153), stereotypes that are often affiliated with Asian immigrant parents. How might we use humor to relay something about culture, and how might it be misunderstood?
7. Yuri, Yumi's older sister, tells her, "... we can't live for our parents for the rest of our lives. At some point, we have to do what makes us happy!" (p. 62). What does Yumi think about this? How can we strike a balance between doing what makes us happy and also listening to our parents' advice and guidance?
8. Ms. Pak, the hagwon director, tells Yumi, "The only failure is not trying" (p. 79). What do you think of this motto? How does Yumi apply it to her life? How might you apply it to your own life?
9. According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, gentrification is "the process of repairing and rebuilding homes and businesses in a deteriorating area (such as people and that often results in the displacement of earlier, usually poorer residents.\*)" What are some examples that suggest Yumi's neighborhood is undergoing these changes? How is gentrification affecting Yumi's family and how are they responding to it? Where else do you see this happening, and what can you do?
10. Many Asian foods, such as Korean barbecue, Taiwanese boba, and Japanese sushi, have become popular among non-Asians. How can we learn about various cultures through food? What role does food play in building community? How do you see that happening in Yumi's life and in your own life?
11. Early on in the story Yumi says she can "hardly get through a conversation without a stomachache" (p. 83). How does she grow in communicating by the end of the story?



# Meet Jessica Kim

Jessica Kim writes about Asian American girls finding their way in the world. Before she was an author, Jessica studied education at UC Berkeley and spent ten years teaching third, fourth, and fifth grades in public schools. Like Yumi, Jessica lives with her family in Southern California and can't get enough Hot Cheetos, stand-up comedy, and Korean barbecue.



## Praise for *STAND UP, Yumi Chung!*

★ “With wonderful supporting characters, strong pacing, and entertaining comedy bits, debut author Kim has woven a pop song of immigrant struggle colliding with comedy and Korean barbecue.”

—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “Kim has taught school, and it shows, both with the spot-on dialogue and the up-to-date social media references...This will certainly remind readers of Kelly Yang’s *Front Desk* (2018).”


—*Booklist*, starred review

★ “A must-read.”

—*School Library Connection*, starred review



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