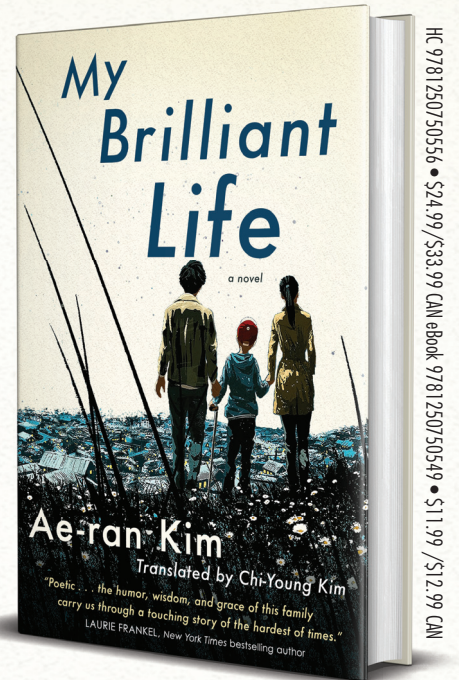


READING GROUP GUIDE

QUESTIONS AND TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1. How did the novel change the way you perceive the aging process and the tradeoffs between physical limitations and wisdom? Is Areum the most mature person in the novel despite his young chronological age?
2. What were your first impressions of Areum's mom and dad (Mira and Daeho)? How did parenthood transform them? When Mira tells her friend Sumi that she fell in love with Daeho because they were both "hiding" on the margins of life, what do we learn about the heart of their marriage?
3. What is it like to read this storyline entirely from Areum's point of view, especially in light of his role as a writer who is hard at work on a meaningful manuscript? How might the narrative have been different if Mira or Daeho had been the narrator?
4. Daeho has the strong body of an athlete and Tae Kwon Do practitioner. Yet he has trouble controlling his temper. Is his contrary personality a sign of weakness, or is it actually evidence of additional strength?
5. Why is Sumi obsessed with grades and conventional definitions of success? How is she able to be close friends with the more fun-loving Mira? Did you grow up in a community with similar beliefs about the schooled versus the unschooled?
6. When Seungchan agrees to feature Areum on his show, does the production process reveal truths or distort reality?
7. The failed Nike store gives Areum's family a glimpse of prosperous neighborhoods. What does the novel demonstrate about the roots of poverty and its impact on access to healthcare?
8. Mira sometimes blames herself for her son's progeria, though the disorder is attributed to a random genetic mutation. Is it a blessing that Areum is not religious?
9. One of the things Areum feels sad about is that he will not become old enough to fail at anything, and that he will miss out on feeling major disappointments like others who enter adulthood. How would you answer the novel's question about who is more unfortunate: someone who misses something they've had or the person who imagines something they've never had?
10. Is Little Grandpa Jang as self-centered as he appears to be? What does he ultimately teach Areum about love?
11. As much as Areum never liked the word "understanding," he badly wants to be understood. Did his experience with Lee Seoha ultimately make him feel understood? As you read Areum's list of what makes him want to live, what did you discover about the real cause of loneliness and how to soothe it?
12. When you saw the vivid words about things that bring Areum joy—including his favorite poetry and music, and LittleBigPlanet—how did those details bring him to life in your mind?
13. What does the closing scene say about the nature of life and hope? In your opinion, does *My Brilliant Life* have a happy ending? Or is it bittersweet?



ON SALE 1.26.21



AE-RAN KIM was born in Incheon, South Korea, the youngest of three daughters. She has won the Hankook Ilbo Literary Award, Kim Yu-jeong Literary Award, Lee Hyo-seok Literary Award, and the Prix de l'Inaperçu, among others, for her short fiction and collections. *My Brilliant Life* is her first novel.

CHI-YOUNG KIM (translator) is based in Los Angeles, California. She has translated more than a dozen books, including *Please Look After Mom* by Kyung-sook Shin (Man Asian Literary Prize winner and *New York Times* bestseller), and works by You-jeong Jeong, Young-ha Kim, and J. M. Lee.



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