

The Chin Kiss King

1. When *The Chin Kiss King* opens, Cuca smells the scent of honeysuckle before her great-grandson is born. What is your first impression of her and her feelings for what is to come? Do you believe in premonitions?
2. The story is about three women bonded together by blood and, now, by the birth of a child. Who do you identify with most? Why? Are their personalities determined by age and generation, or by something else?
3. Veciana-Suarez uses Maribel's, Adela's, and Cuca's viewpoints to tell the story. Would the story — and the message — have been different if told by Maribel's husband? By Caleb? How would it have changed if the telling happened many years later, by a much-older Maribel?
4. Discuss why Maribel continues to hope for a cure for her son when she has already been given medical information about the inevitable. Is it natural to continue hoping until the very end? Is misplaced hope an effective coping mechanism?
5. The book takes place in an ethnic Miami community that is predominantly Cuban. What role does the neighborhood play in the storyline? If it were set in another neighborhood or in another city, how would the characters react?
6. Mother-daughter relationships are at the heart of this story. Why is each connection — Maribel-Adela, Adela-Cuca, Maribel-Cuca — so different? Do you think Maribel's personality was a reaction to Adela's? Was Adela's a reaction to Cuca's?
7. Caleb, Maribel's boss, is in love with her. What do you think makes Maribel attractive to him? Do you think the two of them would ever get together in the future?
8. Adela is having an affair with Carlos, who happens to be married to her friend Fefa. Why do you think she breaks it off? Has she grown tired of the excitement or does she feel guilty? How does this underscore her change in attitude?
9. In Chapter 6, Cuca reacquaints herself with a list of ideas to live by. Of the eight, which one is your favorite? Would you add one of your own?
10. Chapter 19 breaks away from the general narrative by offering thoughts from Cuca's husband. He writes, "With all its anguish and convoluted turns, there is a certain majesty to life." What does he mean?
11. Games, nursery rhymes, and songs are sprinkled throughout the story. In fact, the book's title comes from a game Maribel plays with son Victor. Why? What do they represent?
12. If you were the writer, would the book's ending be different? How? Why?