

## Themes

### Title Significance- Pachinko Meaning

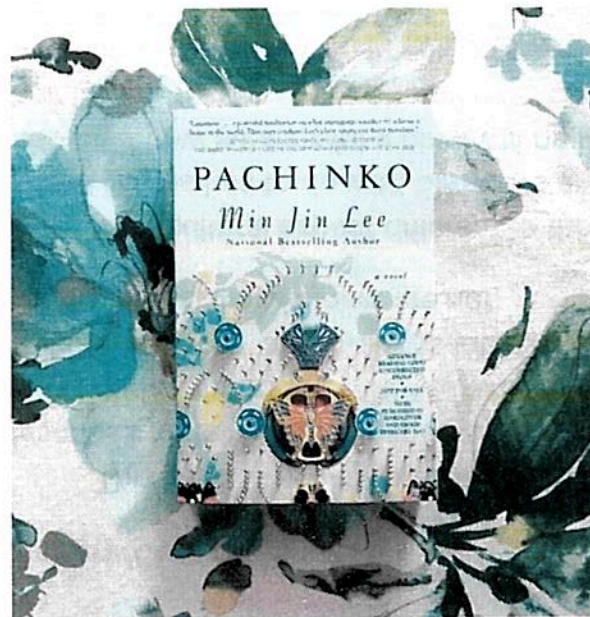
Pachinko parlors was a consistent theme throughout this story. Although the term Pachinko, only started coming up about a quarter of the way through the book, there was a clear significance of the word. Pachinko parlors are parlors that house pachinko machines, an arcade-like game used for gambling. This was a very profitable business to be apart of for Koreans during this time period, often the only business Koreans could do given the Japanese more often then not during this time period refused to hire Koreans for certain jobs. This idea of Pachinko, a gambling game, is the title of this novel. I believe that Lee chose this title because for Koreans their whole life was a mystery, it was dangerous because of the war and at times, it felt like these characters were gambling with their own life. The last couple pages of this novel focus on the Pachinko business, and the negative look it gives people who own these parlors; "You don't want to do this. You don't know what people will say." (474). Working in the Pachinko business is looked down upon in this culture during this time period, although Solomon (the son who wants to participate in this business) went to an American University, he still wants to work in the Pachinko burins despite his fathers disagreement.

## Sources page

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Min\\_Jin\\_Lee](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Min_Jin_Lee)

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/06/books/book-pachinko-min-jin-lee-japan-korea.html>

<https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/02/books/review/pachinko-min-jin-lee.html>

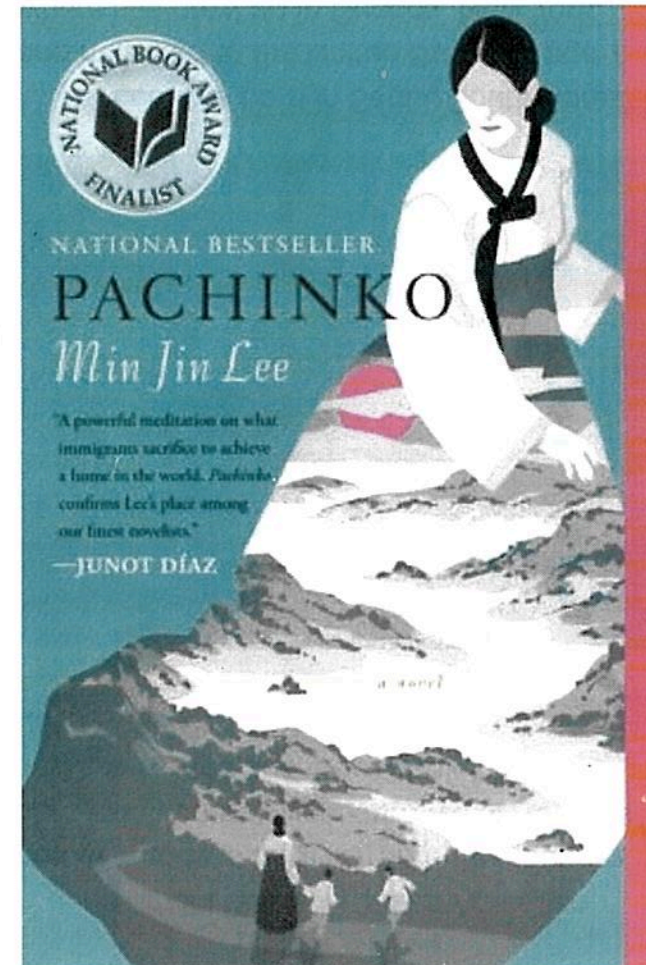


# Pachinko

Min Jin Lee

By Sophie Alphonso (6th hour)

"An addictive family saga packed with forbidden love, the search for belonging, and triumph against the odds"-*Esquire*





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## Mini Book Review

One interesting aspect of this book, *Pachinko*, is that it spans over generations of characters. In other words, there is not just one main character. Author, Min Jin Lee, chronicles us through the lives of generations of Koreans starting from before World War II, in Japanese-occupied Korea, to the 1980s.

A happy arranged marriage begins this novel, producing Sunja, a daughter and the book continues with life of these three at the boardinghouse they run in Korea. Unplanned pregnancies and unexpected deaths turn the book in a completely different direction as 16 year old Sunja moves with the “foreign” pastor to his home to get married to him, although he is not the father of her child. Leaving her widowed mother to run the boardinghouse Sunja’s life is told as she feels like and outsider in her new home, and the powerful, actual, father of her child seems to always show up...

This book is full of emotions and lessons. This book offers a different look at war-torn Asia during this time and the (surprising) discrimination and danger that comes with it.

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## Country/Cultural Elements

This book is set in Korea and describes certain cultural aspects about Korea during the mid 1900s. Many of these “cultural aspects” are similar to ideals in the United States, while others are not.

One cultural aspect different to the United States has to do with birthdays and predicted how successful a child will be in their future; “On his first birthday ceremony, Solomon clutched the crisp yen note over the ink brush, string, or cakes- signifying that he would have a rich life.” (339)

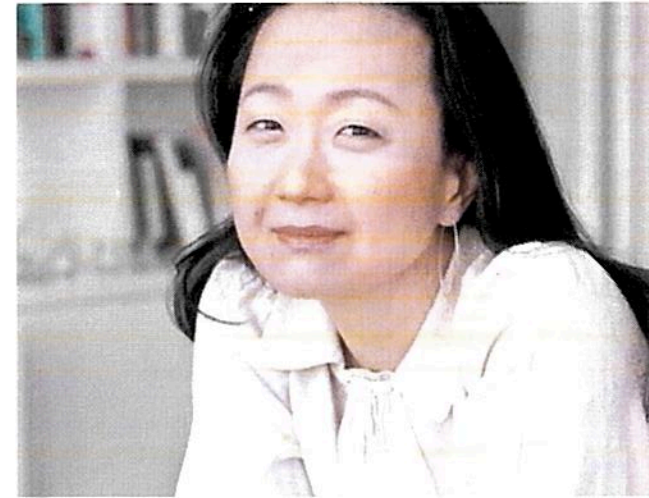
One of my favorite quotes of the book has to do with learning/knowledge, a fact that I think also applies to children in the United States as well as other countries; “Learn everything. Fill your mind with knowledge- it’s the only kind of power no one can take away from you.” (275)

Similar to the United States, education is very important and can be a way for people at a lower advantage to climb up the ladder, and get out of jobs that focus on hard labor, or other difficult jobs their parents may of had to do

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## Author Min Jin Lee

Min Jin Lee is a Korean American author who was born in 1986. She focuses her writing on the lives/journeys of Koreans and has written one other book in 2007 titled “Free Food for Millionaires”.



Lee was born in Seoul, South Korea and migrated to the United States at age 7 where she grew up in Queens, New York. She grew up loving to both read and write and was very academically driven. She attended the Bronx High School of Science and then continued her studies to Yale, then Georgetown University where she studied law. She worked as a corporate lawyer in New York City, and then became a writer. She lived in Japan for four years during her adult life.