

# ONE | ONE BOOK | COMMUNITY

## PACHINKO READING GUIDE



# CHARACTERS

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## HOONIE

Born with a cleft palate, married Yangjin at age 28. They have a happy marriage, and he dotes on his one surviving child, Sunja. Hoonie dies of tuberculosis when Sunja is 13.

## YANGJIN

Hoonie's wife and Sunja's mother. Yangjin helps with Sunja's confectionery business and lives with Kyunghee until she dies of cancer in 1979.

## SUNJA BAEK

The family matriarch, the only surviving child of Hoonie and Yangjin. She is born in Yeongdo, Korea, around 1916. Sunja has an affair with Koh Hansu and becomes pregnant. She marries Baek Isak and has her son Noa. She has another son, Mozasu with Baek Isak.

## KOH HANSU

A fish broker with ties to the yakuza, the organized crime syndicate in Japan. Hansu has an affair with Sunja, but cannot marry her because he has a wife and family in Japan. Hansu is the father to Sunja's son, Noa.

## ISAK BAEK

A pastor, marries Sunja when he finds out she became pregnant by Koh Hansu. Isak raises Noa as his own son. He and Sunja also have their own son, Mozasu. Isak's brother is Yoseb.

## NOA BAEK

The son of Sunja and Hansu, the adoptive son of Isak. He has one brother, Mozasu. He marries Risa Iwamura and has four children.

## MOZASU BAEK

Six years younger than his half brother Noa; Sunja and Isak's only surviving biological child. Mozasu marries Yumi and they have one son, Solomon, whom Mozasu raises as a single father after Yumi dies. When Solomon is a teenager, Mozasu begins dating Etsuko Nagatomi.

## YUMI BAEK

A seamstress, She marries Mozasu and they have a son together, Solomon. When Solomon is three and a half, Yumi is killed by a drunk driver, pushing Solomon to safety at the last moment.

## SOLOMON BAEK

Mozasu and Yumi's son. After Yumi's death, he is raised by Mozasu, his grandmother Sunja, and Mozasu's girlfriend Etsuko. When he's 14, he falls in love with Hana, Etsuko's daughter.

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## CHARACTERS cont.

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### YOSEB BAEK

Isak's older brother. He has been living in Osaka with his wife, Kyunghee, for the past ten years when Isak and Sunja arrive to live with them in 1933. He was a beloved uncle to Isak and Mozasu, having never had children of his own.

### KYUNGHEE BAEK

Yoseb's wife and best friends with Sunja.

### ETSUKO NAGATOMI

Becomes Mozasu's girlfriend several years after Yumi's death. Her daughter from her first marriage, Hana, comes to live with her and starts a relationship with Solomon.

### GORO

A pachinko parlor owner in Osaka who gives 16-year-old Mozasu a job to keep him off the streets. He remains lifelong friends with Mozasu.

### HANA

Etsuko's teenage daughter. She lives with Etsuko and becomes lovers with Solomon.

### TAMAGUCHI

Runs a sweet potato farm in the Japanese countryside, living there with his wife and two sisters-in-law. Hansu shelters Sunja and her family on Tamaguchi's farm during the American bombing of Japan.

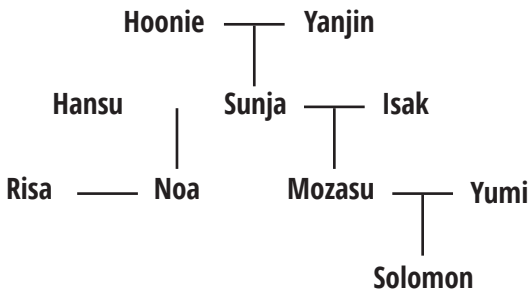
### RISA IWAMURA

Head filing clerk at Cosmos Pachinko in Nagano where she meets Noa. They get married and raise four children together before Noa commits suicide.

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## FAMILY TREE

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## — PLOT SUMMARY —

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At the turn of the twentieth century, in a small Korean village, Hoonie marries a woman named Yangjin. However, Hoonie dies of tuberculosis when his beloved daughter, Sunja, is only 13.

When Sunja is about 17, she becomes pregnant - months earlier, she'd fallen in love with Hansu, a wealthy fish broker. However, he refuses to marry her, explaining that he already has a wife and children in Japan. Sunja eventually marries a visiting pastor named Isak.

After they're married, Isak and Sunja move to Osaka, Japan, living with Isak's brother Yoseb and sister-in-law, Kyunghee. Soon, Sunja gives birth to a son, Noa, and later have another son, Mozasu. World War II is underway and Isak is arrested during a Shinto ceremony. Three years later, a starved, sick and tortured Isak is finally released from prison in time to die at home.

Near the end of the war, Hansu reappears, and warns Sunja that Osaka will be bombed soon, and he arranges for Sunja and her whole family to flee to a farm in the countryside, where they will be safe and well fed.

After the family is resettled in Osaka, bookish Noa works hard to get accepted to Waseda University, and Mozasu takes a job at Goro's pachinko parlor in order to stay out of trouble.

One day, Noa's then-girlfriend, Akiko, points out his obvious resemblance to Hansu. Noa confronts Sunja and is distraught to confirm that Hansu is in fact his father. Noa drops out of Waseda and moves to Nagano to begin a new life in which he passes as Japanese. He runs the business office of a pachinko parlor, marries a woman named Risa, and has four children. For 16 years, he successfully lives as a middle-class Japanese family man, but after Hansu and Sunja track him down in 1978, he commits suicide, not able to get over his past.

Mozasu marries Yumi, a Korean seamstress, and they have a son, Solomon. When Solomon is young, Yumi is killed by a drunk driver. By the time Solomon is a teenager, Mozasu is dating Etsuko, a Japanese divorcee. Solomon is in love with Etsuko's troubled daughter, Hana.

After college Solomon gets a job at a British banking firm, however, he's fired after Goro helps him on a business deal and Solomon's boss gets suspicious.

With the encouragement of a dying Hana, Solomon goes to work for his dad's pachinko business. At the end of the novel, Sunja visits Isak's grave and learns that Noa had visited the grave until his death, confirming that despite his anger at Hansu, he still loved Sunja and honored her and Isak's sacrifices for him.