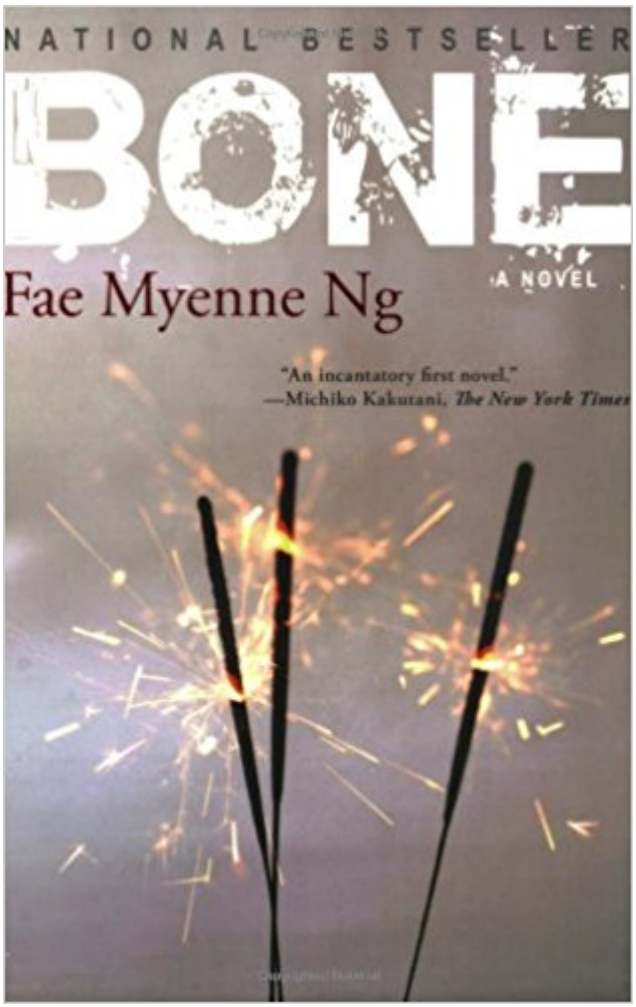
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Synopsis

"We were a family of three girls. By Chinese standards, that wasn't lucky. In Chinatown, everyone knew our story. Outsiders jerked their chins, looked at us, shook their heads. We heard things."In this profoundly moving novel, Fae Myenne Ng takes readers into the hidden heart of San Francisco's Chinatown, to the world of one family's honor, their secrets, and the lost bones of a "paper father." Two generations of the Leong family live in an uneasy tension as they try to fathom the source of a brave young girl's sorrow.Oldest daughter Leila tells the story: of her sister Ona, who has ended her young, conflicted life by jumping from the roof of a Chinatown housing project; of her mother Mah, a seamstress in a garment shop run by a "Chinese Elvis"; of Leon, her father, a merchant seaman who ships out frequently; and the family's youngest, Nina, who has escaped to New York by working as a flight attendant. With Ona and Nina gone, it is up to Leila to lay the bones of the family's collective guilt to rest, and find some way to hope again.Fae Myenne Ng's luminous debut explores what it means to be a stranger in one's own family, a foreigner in one's own neighborhood--and whether it's possible to love a place that may never feel quite like home.

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Customer Reviews

This remarkable first novel chronicles a believable journey through pain to healing, exposing the emotional scars--the bleeding hearts and aching kinship bones--of its characters as they try to survive. The Leong family, based in San Francisco's Chinatown, includes three daughters: educator/community-relations specialist Leila, the narrator; restaurant hostess Ona, whose troubled life ends tragically in early adulthood; and Nina, who eventually takes off for New York, where she

works as a flight attendant. Heading the clan (in an idiosyncratic, maddening fashion) are mother Mah, a seamstress who owns a baby clothing store, and father Leon, a merchant seaman who lives apart from his wife in an SRO-type hotel, keeping his "Going-Back-to-China Money" in a brown bag. Ng summons a quiet urgency from simple language, both in her physical descriptions (such as that of the office of the Hoy Sun Ning Yung Benevolent Association) and in her depictions of the characters' seesawing thoughts and feelings as they move between the Chinese- and English-speaking cultures. She ventures outside the Leong household less often than one might wish, but she lucidly renders those secondary characters, notably Leila's beau, Mason Louie, a mechanic who strives to understand and embrace her relatives but also hopes to convince her to establish a separate family with him. Ng reveals his insight into Leila's moodiness thus: "He says my anger is like flooding--too much gas, killing the engine." With such brilliant details, and in the larger picture of how death and life inform one another, this writer makes a stunning debut. Major ad/promo; author tour. Copyright 1992 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

In sharp contrast to the overdramatized lives of Chinese Americans in Amy Tan's work, Ng's simply written first novel is totally without sensationalism. Yet because her characters are depicted so realistically, the reader cannot but be moved by the hopes, grief, and quarrels of two generations of Chinese Americans in San Francisco's Chinatown. Mah, who has worked hard all her life in garment sweatshops, finally is able to own her baby-clothing store. Her husband, Leon, who used to be a merchant seaman, worked two shifts in ships' laundry rooms to provide for his family. Nevertheless, the family is torn apart after Ona, the middle daughter, jumps from the tallest building in Chinatown. The bones of contention and bones of inheritance come together in great turmoil as Nina, the youngest daughter, leaves Chinatown for New York City and then Leila, the oldest, marries and moves out to the suburbs. Leon, the paper son to old Leung, fails to keep his promise to take Leung's bones back to China. Thus, a family's tragedy is cast in greater historical context, and the reader is rewarded with a rich reading experience. Recommended for all libraries.- Cherry W. Li, Los AngelesCopyright 1993 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Let me start off by saying Bone by Fae Myenne Ng is a good novel. The storyline is interesting, the characters are real, and the choice of words Ng uses to convey ideas to the reader are clean and beautiful. I gave the book 3.5 stars out of 5, though on GoodReads, it will show up as 3 for obvious

reasons.This is the story of two generations in a Chinese family in America. The story is told from the point of view of the eldest child, Leila, who recounts the problems/ issues that plague the family. At the start of the story, we are old that the middle child, Ona, committed suicide. That is not a spoiler- that fact literally hits you in the face on the first page, in the first sentence. But Ona is not the only one with issues in this family. Every single one of them has them, and Leila looks back over the years with her family to understand where it all began.A theme I initially found was the strong desire for the characters to maintain their family. There was the desire to want to impress and feel like family. However, as members took on other members issues, the burdens with time, took their toll and caused each member to ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“drift apartÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â•. Leila, the eldest, internalized her step- father and motherÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s issues. Ona internalized her fatherÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s issues, and Nina, the last -born, felt the burdens and later decided, that her parentsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢ issues should be their OWN issues, not hers. So there is some character development that is observed later in the novel.NgÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s style of writing is expressive, yet not cluttered with words. Her succinct descriptions of characters, events and locations paint a picture for readers, but at the same time, allow for readers to draw on their own personal experiences to help them understand what is taking place. One thing I found unique was how Ng allowed readers into some of the personal issues of the characters, and others she left to be private.Some reviewers noted they were turned off by the narration moving forward and then moving back in history with no warning. I did not have an issue with this and rather saw the transition as a reflection on the current situation. I did not find it distracting, but to each, his own.

This is a beautifully written book. Ng gives us an intimate portrait of a family living in San Francisco’s Chinatown, capturing what, to this reader, feels like completely authentic portraits of various members of the family, the differences of gender and generation and their roles in a complex Chinese community, all handled with admirable economy. I’m in awe of Ng’s ability to give us such a vivid sense experience of life in Chinatown-- the tragic, the comic and the eccentric-- all the while moving deeper into the emotional lives of her characters and moving the story along at a bracing clip. I highly recommend this wonderful book.

I was assigned this novel for an Asian Literature course. I really enjoyed this novel. The type of book I can finish in one sitting! I consider myself a rather slow reader as I like to critique things and make notes, but this novel took me about 6 hours to finish.The story surrounds three daughters, a step-father, and a mother. The male character "Leon" is the biological father of two girls (Ona &

Nina), however, he is the step-father of the central character "Leila," but the two are very close. He is closer to her than to his biological daughters.This is a story about infidelity, life, loss, and self sovereignty. This book tests the strength and bond of a family after the suicide of a daughter/sister, and a cheating spouse.Definitely a good story line!

From its single-word title to its Memento-like structure, Ng's impressive first novel (published nearly twenty years ago) runs the risk of suffering from a case of metaphorical overload. Ostensibly, the title refers to a Chinese immigrant tradition of returning their bones to China for burial. Yet, just as obviously, the prose, the dialogue, the characters--all are stripped to the bone as we read the story of Leila and her family in reverse, layer after layer exposed as we move back to the moment that changed everything, when her sister Ona committed suicide. Exposed again, this family's wound is raw and toxic, but "Bone" is more than a novel about one young woman's suicide; it is a study of three sisters and especially of their parents, who have worked themselves to the bone to survive.With one sister dead and another living in New York, Leila is left to deal with stepfather and mother. Leon had spent most of his life away for months at a time, working as a seaman or on the docks; his lack of business sense and fiscal acumen leads Mah, his wife, to work horrid hours in a San Francisco sweatshop until she is finally able to open her own haberdashery. Their marriage even before the tragedy is a familiar form of dÃƒÂ©tente, a loving and grudging respect that persists in spite of the fact that they drive each other crazy. Mah had married her first husband "to escape the war-torn villages" of China; when he abandoned her, she married Leon to escape disgrace; and, constrained by their parents' immigrant traditions and suffocated by their emotional neediness, their three daughters seek their own forms of escape: "one unmarried, one who-cares-where, one dead."I worry that I've made the novel sound too mawkish and labored; it isn't. For a novel with such a melancholy core, it is surprisingly spry and the prose somehow works an uneasy balance between charming and caustic. There are some lovely set pieces: Ng's wry description of Leila's visit to the Hoy Sun Ning Yung Benevolent Association; a heart-breaking scene in which the suddenly aged Leon can't find the grave of the man who sponsored his American entry papers; and the engaging opening chapter, in which Leila wanders the city streets, interrogating its less industrious denizens to learn the whereabouts of her idle stepfather. Leila's boyfriend, while improbably saintlike and patient, also adds light to the darkness."The oldtimers believe we have a heavenly weight, and that our fates can be divined by the weighing of our bones." But the traditions are falling away, the bones are missing, and (even after we've gone back in time) Ona is still dead. It is only by coming to terms with the past that the members of this family can realize the truth of what Mah's friends had told her

when she returned for a visit to Hong Kong: "to live in America was to have a future."

What an amazing piece of literature!

good book!

Excellent product!

Came in great condition.

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