Discussion Questions for *The Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* by Jamie Ford

1. When Henry Lee, as an adult, walks through downtown Seattle, he passes the Panama Hotel, a symbol of the Japanese people who disappeared into the internment camps during World War II. Like Henry we see around us remnants of history in statues, plaques, buildings, bridges, etc., history that has touched us, our families and/or our friends. Explore the impact history has had on Henry and on those you know.

2. *The Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* tells a story about the demands of loyalty, self-sacrifice and tradition. Perhaps it is easy to see what Henry is asked to give up. What does he gain?

3. While life confronts us with many trials and challenges, it also provides us with mentors, teachers, friends and tools that help us endure, grow and hopefully even thrive. Make a list of the people who help each other in the novel and the tools they use.

4. The arts (in all their forms – music, dancing, painting, drawing, literature, poetry, etc.) are great levelers, touching us and helping us bridge the differences that separate us. The arts give us a universal language to express our humanity—our fears, our joys—and to help us establish communication and trust. Would the characters in *The Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* agree?

5. In many ways we live most fully when bitter and sweet intersect. Consider some of those moments in your own life or in the lives of your family or friends and try to explain why those moments become so meaningful.

6. Writers often struggle with the endings of their stories because it is their last chance to convey their vision, their understanding, of the way life works. What statement about life does the narrator of *The Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet* make in the closing chapters of the novel?

7. In an interview, Jamie Ford quoted an old saying, “Everyone has two chances at a parent/child relationship, once as a child and once as a parent.” How has this story made you more understanding of your parents?