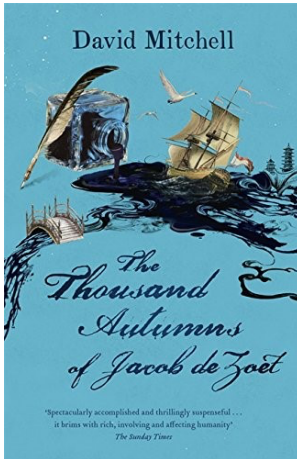


The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet

by David Mitchell



The Thousand Autumns of Jacob de Zoet, is unlike anything you've read. It's a strangely gothic, historical action-adventure romance, set on a Dutch trading outpost in Nagasaki at the turn of the 19th century.

It follows a young Dutch accountant, Jacob de Zoet, as he tries to rescue his love interest, a Japanese midwife named Orito, from the clutches of a villainous abbot; the abbot has imprisoned her in a mountain nunnery dedicated to occult, possibly abominable Shinto rituals ("I overheard some strange rumors about Abbott Enomoto's shrine," one man tells Jacob). Jacob must find a way to save Orito without leaving Dejima, the island trading post where foreigners, by order of the Shogun, are quarantined.

1. The book begins with Orito helping to deliver a still born baby. Do you think this introduction bears any importance on the further development of the plot? Why do you think the author introduced it in the book?
2. The plot of this story is set in Dejima. Why do you think Dejima was created? What do you think is the reason for the Japanese opening to trade with the Europeans?
3. What do you think about Chief Vorstenbach?

4. Jacob de Zoet is portrayed as a character of high morals and religious values. Do you think some of his actions could be morally questionable? Are his religious values challenged or changed in any way? How do the Japanese view the religion of the Europeans?

5. In the book the relationship between the Europeans and Japanese is part of the main plot and the interpreters are key for communication between them. Is the work of the interpreters reliable? Are they biased towards the Japanese?

6. Loyalty is questioned in the book in many ways. What do you think is the best example of loyalty in the book? Which character do you think makes the biggest sacrifice?

7. Over the course of the novel, there is an ongoing game of 'Go', Is there any relation between this game and the plot of the book? What do you think the end of the game means?

8. What do you think is the basis of the relationship between Jacob and Ogawa Uzaemon? Are they friends? What do you think about the choices that Ozawa makes? Are they the right ones?

9. Orito does everything in her power to escape the prison-like nunnery. Why she return? Do you think it is the right decision?

10. At the end of the book, do you think Jacob has had a fulfilling life?