

The voices in the novel

Look through the list of voices below which all appear in the novel, then discuss the questions that follow:

Maryam
Bitsy
Dave
Ziba
Jin-Ho
Anne Tyler

1. Whose voice do we hear most in the novel? Why do you think this is?
2. Who is the most humorous and who is the most poignant of the speakers? Why is this?
3. Who do you think Anne Tyler wants us to like best, if any, of the speakers?
4. How does Dave's part of the text compare to the others? Does Tyler convey his voice effectively: do you, for example, find him believable? Do you feel sympathy for him or does he irritate you or bore you or something else?
5. Do you think there are times when Anne Tyler's voice appears over the voice of the characters or does she only 'speak' through the characters?
6. How are our perceptions of characters changed through what the various speakers say? For example, do you feel a particular way about Maryam which is changed by Bitsy's comments? Why do you think Tyler does this and is it successful?
7. Why do you think Tyler gives these characters voices but not the other characters in the novel? What sort of information do we get about the characters who are voiceless?
8. How effective do you find each of the speakers? Explain your reasons. Which speaker do you find the most effective and which the least effective?