

CONVENIENCE STORE WOMAN by Sayaka Murata

Book Club Questions

1. Which was your favorite character? Favorite scene or chapter?
2. Which character needs the most therapy?
3. Keiko Furukura finds a sense of purpose and belonging in the convenience store, yet society pressures her to conform to more "acceptable" life paths. How does the novel critique societal expectations of adulthood, work, and relationships? Can Keiko's life be considered fulfilling on her own terms, or is she merely a product of corporate conditioning?
4. Many readers interpret Keiko's character as neurodivergent. How does her way of thinking and processing the world differ from societal norms? How does the novel challenge or reinforce stereotypes about neurodivergence, particularly in relation to employment and social interaction?
5. Murata employs deadpan humor and absurdity to navigate complex and often unsettling themes. How does the novel's tone influence the reader's perception of Keiko and her world? Would the story's impact change if, instead of her first-person perspective, it were presented in a more conventional, dramatic style? Additionally, while Keiko does not perceive herself as having a stable personality, does she maintain a consistent and reliable narrating voice? How does her narration shape our understanding of her reality?
6. Keiko finds meaning and structure through her job at the convenience store, but her dedication is also a sign of her assimilation into a system that values workers primarily for their productivity. In fact, when Shiraha complains about the convenience store job, Keiko tells him, "Shiraha, we're in the twenty-first century! Here in the convenience store, we're not men and women. We're all store workers." How does the novel portray the relationship between identity and labor? Is Keiko empowered by her job, exploited by it, or both?
7. The novel highlights rigid expectations placed on women, especially regarding marriage and career. How does Keiko's decision to remain unmarried and child-free challenge the traditional role of women in Japanese society? How does her interaction with Shiraha reflect broader gender dynamics?
8. Shiraha also rejects societal norms but does so in a vastly different way from Keiko. While both characters are misfits, how do their responses to social pressure differ? Is Shiraha's critique of society valid, or is he simply using his discontent as an excuse for laziness and entitlement?
9. Murata vividly details the store's sounds, routines, and procedures, emphasizing Keiko's deep attachment to its order. What does this suggest about the comfort of

structure and predictability in contrast to the discomfort of societal expectations? When Keiko quits her job, she briefly experiences a “long-forgotten silence that sounded like music” before it is disrupted by the creaking of floorboards under Shiraha’s steps (97). Why might she perceive the silence as musical, and what does its abrupt interruption signify about her circumstances and choices?

10. At the novel’s conclusion, Keiko reaffirms her devotion to the convenience store. Do you interpret this as a moment of triumph, tragedy, or something in between? What does this ending say about the nature of happiness and self-acceptance?

11. The tone of *Convenience Store Woman* has sparked debate—some readers find it humorous, while others see it as deeply sad. How does your perception of Keiko’s struggles and desires shape your reading experience? Does the novel’s balance of humor and tragedy affect how you interpret Keiko’s contentment with her life?

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