*The Thief* Discussion Questions

1) Fuminori Nakamura’s novels are often written about in the context of their genre. They are frequently described as defying genre classification; he has been recognized by different institutions as a literary fiction, mystery, noir, and horror writer. How accurate do you think it is to describe *The Thief* as a work of either crime fiction or literary fiction? How does the novel conform to or reject those genres? Do you believe there is value in discussing a book’s genre? Does that part of the literary conversation help interpret a book’s content, quality, and ideology, or does it distract from those things?

2) On page 209, Kizaki says, “Was your fate controlled by me, or was being controlled by me your fate? But in the end, aren’t they just two sides of the same coin?” What scenarios does *The Thief* present to support or challenge this notion? Or does the Thief, in fact, control his own fate?

3) On page 85, the Thief says of the boy, “I felt as though the course of his life had been determined at birth, that he was constantly pushing against a powerful current.” By helping the boy, does the Thief change the boy’s course of life? Does this mean just as the Thief’s fate is written by Kizaki, the boy’s fate is determined by the Thief?

4) What is the significance of the tower? What does it mean when the Thief sees the Tower at the end of the book?

5) In what ways does style and clothing reflect socioeconomic status in *The Thief*? Are there times in which expensive clothing and accessories do not accurately reflect a person’s status?

6) What is the role of women in *The Thief*? Why is it the Thief never steals from a woman?

7) On page 26, Ishikawa claims, “Obviously if there was no concept of ownership there’d be no concept of stealing, would there? As long as there’s one starving child in the world, all property is theft.’” In what ways does *The Thief* challenge or support the concept of ownership?

8) The Thief notes that by stealing, it takes away an object’s value. Is this why he steals, to somehow level out the world? Does he succeed in doing so?

9) What does it mean that when he is caught as a young boy, the Thief feels a sense of freedom and liberation? Is it possible that being exposed gives him a sense of connection that he strives to find again throughout the book?

10) In numerous interviews, Fuminori Nakamura has cited his literary inspirations, who include Fyodor Dostoevsky, Osamu Dazai, Franz Kafka, Agatha Christie, and Yukio Mishima. How has Nakamura melded these influences? Do you see any particular traces of their DNA in *The Thief?* For you as a reader, what has Nakamura done with this book that sets it completely apart from the works of the writers who have influenced him?