

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson

by
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Book Information

Bette Bao Lord, In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson

Quiz Number: 229

HarperTrophy, 1984

ISBN 0-06-440175-8; LCCN

169 Pages

Book Level: 4.6

Interest Level: MG

In 1947, a Chinese child comes to Brooklyn, where she starts to feel at home and makes friends when she discovers baseball and the Brooklyn Dodgers.

Topics: Adventure, Life Changes; Family Life, Moving to a New Area; People, Chinese American; Read Now with Power Up Recommended Lists, Onward and Upward: Change; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 3-5; Recommended Reading, California Recommended Lit., English, 6-8; Sports/Recreation, Baseball

Main Characters

Emily Levy a new student in Shirley's sixth-grade class who becomes one of her best friends

Father Shirley's dad; an engineer who moved to America to seek his fortune

Fourth Cousin Shirley's cousin and best friend in China

Grandmother and Grandfather Father's parents, who dislike Father's move to America

Mabel a classmate who bullies Shirley, and then adopts her as a friend

Mother Shirley's mom, who gives up a traditional Chinese way of life for her husband

Mrs. Rappaport Shirley's teacher in Brooklyn

Senora Rodriguez Shirley's piano teacher

Shirley Temple Wong (Bandit) the principal character in the story; a ten-year-old girl who, along with her mother, leaves China to join her father in America

ambassador a person who represents his country in a foreign place

futility uselessness

pessimistic a tendency to expect failure

progressive favoring progress or change

Synopsis

Shirley Temple Wong cannot help smiling when she learns that she and her mother will be joining her father in America. Once Shirley arrives in Brooklyn, she can't help comparing her new neighborhood to her home in China.

There are many differences between Shirley's life in China and America. She struggles to belong in her classroom and make friends. Finally, after Mabel hits Shirley and gives her two black eyes, Mabel and Shirley become good friends.

During her first summer in America, Shirley becomes infected with Dodger fever. She also volunteers her family to take over Senora Rodriguez's landlady responsibilities, enabling her to return to the old country to visit her daughter.

When Shirley begins school in September, she becomes good friends with Emily Levy, a new girl. Shirley urges Emily to run as a representative for the sixth grade and is thrilled when she wins. When Emily discovers she will have the honor of presenting a key to Jackie Robinson, she humbly hands the honor over to Shirley.

After Shirley talks with Jackie Robinson about opportunities in America, she realizes it has been a year of dreams come true.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Vocabulary

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Initial Understanding

What do you think would make Shirley feel smug in front of her classmates?

She would love to be able to speak fluent Chinese to someone else who had grown up in China and knew the traditions of her homeland.

Literary Analysis

What do you think might cause Shirley trouble in the future?

She will probably run into people who are prejudiced against Chinese people or who might stereotype her.

Inferential Comprehension

Why do you think Shirley had a nightmare before going back to school in the fall?

She was unsure if her classmates would act differently toward her, or if she appeared different to them. She was aware of leaving the old ways behind, but uncertain of her new life.

Constructing Meaning

Think of someone who reminds you of Shirley, and describe how they are alike.

Answers will vary, but the person should be compared to Shirley, who is quiet and polite, but very determined and hardy.

Shirley has adjusted to life in a foreign country. Have the students imagine that they are moving to China or another foreign land. They should try to predict how they would feel. What problems do they see in their future? How would they handle the communication barrier? Would they offend people by some of their actions? Have them write a short story based on their thoughts.

Identifying Reasons Have the student pretend he or she is the publisher of *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*. The student needs to sell two hundred copies before making any money. The student should give his or her classmates as many reasons as possible to convince them to buy the book. How many reasons were listed?

Responding to Literature In her new school, Shirley faces many situations similar to those faced by all schoolchildren, but also has unique challenge of learning a new language and culture. Have the students find a part of this book that can be related to a personal experience of their own. Let them explain specifically how they think their experiences relate. Perhaps they have been hit by a bully or have felt left out at school. Were their feelings, actions or responses similar to Shirley's?

Teachable Skills

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors This book makes many interesting references to Chinese culture and traditions. An interesting activity would be to eat out at a Chinese restaurant and compare how many things are different from the way the students eat at home. Perhaps they received a fortune cookie for dessert. What did it say? Have them find out more about Confucius and his teachings. Is there anyone in the class who has a Chinese background? Talk to them about their family traditions.

Making Predictions This story is about how