



TeachersFirst READING TREKS

American Born Chinese

Teacher Guide

Access Reading
Trek Map

Grade Level & Content Areas

Ages: 12–18

Grades: 7–12

Reading Level: 7th Grade

Lexile Measure: GN530L

Guided Reading Level: Z

Developmental Reading

Assessment (DRA): 70

Content Areas: English/ language arts, reading, literature, and social studies, including individual development, identity, and geography.

Synopsis of Book

In this graphic novel, author and illustrator Gene Luen Yang weaves together the stories of Jin Wang, the American-born son of Chinese immigrants; a modified version of the Monkey King, a figure from Chinese culture; and Danny, who struggles with his cousin Chin-Kee's yearly visits. These stories portray cultural racism and racial stereotypes that impact each individual's journey to discover their identity and purpose, while highlighting both obvious and subtle struggles faced by those of non-European descent in America. In the final chapters, the three stories are brought together with a surprise twist ending where true identities are revealed. (It is important to note that although Jin's story is similar to Yang's own experiences and Yang's version of the Monkey King reflects his Catholic beliefs, this story is not autobiographical.)

Standards

Common Core State Standards for 6–12

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Theme 1: CULTURE
- Theme 2: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE
- Theme 3: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS

National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- CREATING
- RESPONDING

Using a TeachersFirst® Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks create a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or a text using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to the contents of a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this teacher guide and the accompanying [Reading Trek map](#) as you and your students explore this book. And, if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

Using This Reading Trek in Class

Below is a list of ideas for how to use this Reading Trek in your educational setting.

Working with the Map:

1. Introduce the book to the whole class on an interactive whiteboard using the Reading Trek map, highlighting its various layers. Note that the schools and the cafe identified in the text are fictitious.
2. Discuss the demographics of the classroom and school, “The elephant in the room,” and how stereotypes and cultural racism impact individual and group academic performance and social and emotional development.
3. Discuss the bullying the Monkey King, Jin, Jin’s classmates, Wei-Chin, Danny, and Chin-Kee observe as they seek acceptance from their peers. The discussion can be virtual, providing for anonymity of individuals who might be shy or uncomfortable speaking in class, using YoTeach! ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
4. Use Make Beliefs Comix ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to write and illustrate another chapter of the book in comic format that shows how the friendship between Jin and Wei-Chin changes after they meet for pearl milk tea.
5. Read the original account of the Monkey King from *Journey to the West*—the story of Sun Wukong—written during the Song Dynasty by Wu Cheng’en.

6. Reflect on the characters shown in the *Journey to the West*. Create illustrations that mirror personal ideas.
7. Discuss social equality and the civil rights of immigrants and their families and create

posters to promote unity within the community. To create online, interactive posters, use Adobe Express ([TeachersFirst review](#)).

Extension Activities:

1. Make Pearl Milk Tea as a class. Make a serving by combining $\frac{1}{2}$ cup tapioca pearls (as found in Asian groceries), 2 cups freshly brewed black tea, $1\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoon sugar or more to taste, $\frac{1}{4}$ cup whole milk or milk substitute, and ice. Prepare the tapioca pearls according to the package directions and be sure to add the sugar to the tea while it's warm so that it will completely dissolve.
2. Listen to a 2015 interview with comic creator Lark Pien from [The Yarn](#).
3. Learners can also visit [Lark Pien's blog](#). Note: There is some content that might be offensive or objectionable to some individuals.
4. Learn about another text by Gene Yang and Lark Pien by reading this [CBR interview](#).
5. Use Flexlists ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to create a database of resources and organizations within the community that could be shared with new students enrolling in your school.
6. Discuss how image sizing, even to the point of exaggeration, and placement impacts the reader's response to the accompanying text.

Helpful Resources

From TeachersFirst:

- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Engage & Inspire with Reading Treks](#)

Other Resources:

- [Gene Luen Yang, Cartoonist and Teacher](#)
- [Monkey Kingdom](#)