



# TeachersFirst **READING TREKS**

## *American Born Chinese*

### Teacher Guide

Access Reading  
Trek Map

### Grade Level & Content Areas

**Ages:** 12–18

**Grades:** 7–12

**Reading Level:** 7<sup>th</sup> grade

**Lexile Measure:** GN530L

**Guided Reading Level:** Z+

**Developmental Reading**

**Assessment (DRA):** 70

**Content Areas:** English//language arts, reading, literature, art, 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 three stories of Jin Wang, the American-born son of Chinese immigrants; a modified version of the Monkey King, a figure from Chinese mythology; 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, highlighting both obvious and subtle struggles faced by those of non-European descent in the United States. In the final chapters, the three stories come together in a surprise twist ending that reveals their true identities. (It's 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

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## 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 by displaying the [Reading Trek map](#) on an interactive whiteboard and 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-emotional development.
3. Discuss the bullying the Monkey King, Jin, Jin’s classmates, Wei-Chin, Danny, and Chin-Kee observe and experience as they seek acceptance from their peers. You can use YoTeach! ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to host this discussion virtually, allowing individuals who might be shy or uncomfortable speaking in class to remain anonymous.
4. Have students use Make Beliefs Comix ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to write and illustrate another chapter of the book in comic format, showing how the friendship between Jin and Wei-Chin changes after they meet for pearl milk tea.
5. Read the original account of Sun Wukong (the Monkey King) from *Journey to the West*, written by Wu Cheng’en during the Song Dynasty.

6. Ask students to reflect on the characters in *Journey to the West*, then create their own illustrations that reflect their personal ideas about the story's moral or central point. Use a digital tool like Google Drawings ([TeachersFirst review](#)) or a physical medium like painting or drawing.
7. Discuss social equality and the civil rights of immigrants and their families, then create posters to promote unity within the community. To develop 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 (available at Asian grocery stores), 2 cups freshly brewed black tea,  $1\frac{1}{2}$  teaspoons sugar (or more to taste),  $\frac{1}{4}$  cup whole milk or a 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 still warm so it completely dissolves.
2. Watch the official Disney [TV show trailer](#), then compare and contrast the show and book using the Compare and Contrast Mapping Tool from ReadWriteThink ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
3. Learn about another text by Gene Yang and Lark Pien, *Boxers & Saints*, by reading this [CBR interview](#).
4. Have students use Flexlists ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to create a database of community resources and organizations to share with new students enrolling at your school.
5. Discuss how image size (even to the point of exaggeration) and placement impact the reader's response to the accompanying text.
6. Discuss the use of graphic novels in learning after watching [Gene Yang's TED Talk](#). Have a virtual class discussion using a tool such as Padlet ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
7. Students can learn about *American Born Chinese's* evolution from a self-published comic book to a professionally published graphic novel to a Disney+ television show by reading this [article from the Los Angeles Times](#).

## Helpful Resources

### From TeachersFirst:

- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Building Background Knowledge with Reading Treks](#)
- [OK2Ask: No Passport Required: Cross-Curricular Learning Journeys with Google My Maps](#)

### Other Resources:

- [Gene Luen Yang, Cartoonist and Teacher](#)
- [Monkey Kingdom](#)
- [Using Graphic Novels in Education: American Born Chinese](#)

