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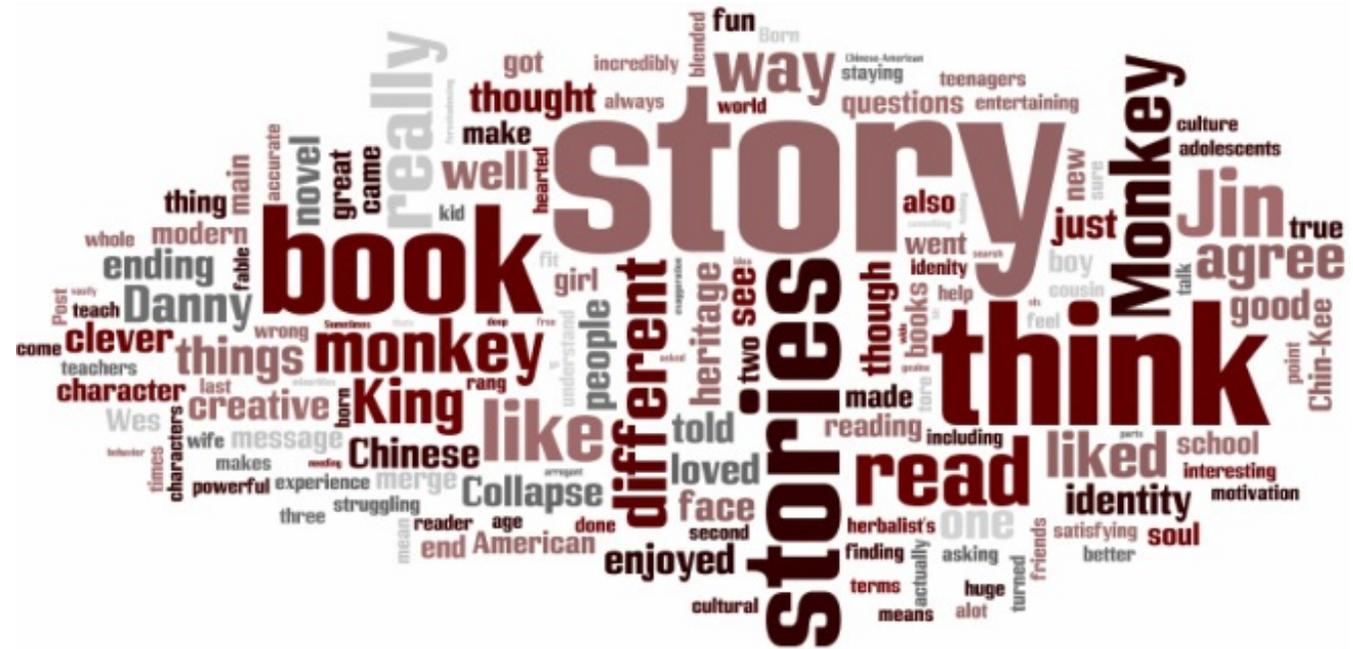
DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Throughout this website are several questions and discussion starters made specifically for the content of each section. Here is a list of general discussion questions that will hopefully help start discussion or help develop discussion in an unexpected and new direction.

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WHAT DO YOUR CLASSROOM DISCUSSIONS LOOK LIKE?

Use websites like wordle.net to create word clusters that can show how often certain words, topics, and themes are brought up in discussions, blog posts, texts, or other items. This tool provides a visual component to plain text and can help students see big ideas within the big picture. For example, this picture made a collection of blog post responses from students talking about *American Born Chinese*. Especially when discussing graphic novels, why not show information in a dynamic way! It's also a more creative alternative to polls, tables, and charts.



Many of these questions have been used by teachers, librarians, and other educators and can be found through a simple online search. (Sources of questions are cited at the bottom of the page.)

CHAPTER-BY-CHAPTER QUESTIONS

CHAPTER 1

1. What are the psychological transformations the Monkey King experiences in the first chapter?

CHAPTER 2

1. What is the message of the parable? What is its relevance to ABC? (pg.s 23 - 24)
2. What is the significance of the conversation with the herbalist? His response? Her "warning?" How does this work as a foreshadowing device? (pg.s 27 - 28)

3. What do we learn about Jin's new life in comparison to his life in San Francisco's Chinatown? (pg.s 30 - 31)
4. The kids who calls Jin "bucktooth" is drawn with buck teeth himself. What purpose does this serve? (pg. 33)
5. What happens that makes Jin want to beat up Wei-Chen? (pg. 36)

CHAPTER 3

1. What does the use of the clap clap clap and ha ha ha mean to you? Why does the author do this? What about the title, "Everyone Ruvs Chin-Kee?"
2. What stereotypes are exploited in this section? Make a list of them. Be sure to note stereotypes for both Chin-Kee and Danny.

CHAPTER 4

1. Examine the way that the Monkey King is illustrated. In what way does his transformed appearance reflect his transformed character? (pg.s 62 - 63)
2. What happens to the Monkey King each time he is laughed at by another god. Can you connect this to question #1 from chapter one?
3. The Monkey King flies through the boundaries of reality itself. How does the author represent this? Is it effective and why? What other ways does the author use the visual language of the comic to reflect the content of the story (notice pages 78 and 79)? (This is related to the idea that form follows function).
4. Explore again the theme of the Monkey King's psychological profile. What might he be experiencing here? (pg.s 80 - 81)

CHAPTER 5

1. Look at the Melanie in the Chin-Kee chapters and Amelia Harris in Jin's chapters; they are nearly identical. What other connections can you trace between these two story lines?

2. What differences are there between Jin and Wei Chen in how they are represented? What psychological information can we infer about Wei Chen when he dates Suzy Nakamura? What lesson is Wei Chen teaching Jin? (pg. 89)

3. Why the dashed lines around the speech balloons? What other kinds of lines are around the speech balloons throughout the story? What information does the line convey? (pg.s 90 - 92)

4. Jin says "everything was a blur." How does the author show this? (pg.s 104 - 105)

CHAPTER 6

1. Returning to the question of stereotypes, what other stereotypes do you notice in this section? Look at all of the characters.

2. Why does he try to distance himself from Chin-Kee? How does he do it? (pg. 123)

3. What clues can you find to explain why Chin-Kee comes to visit? Why, do you deduce, is it that Chin-Kee comes to visit? (pg.s 126 - 127)

4. Why does Danny say, "so I can pee in it?" What psychological impulse might make him say that? (pg. 128)

CHAPTER 7

1. Why has Lai-Tsao found favor with Tze-Yo-Tzuh? (pg. 139)

2. What does Lai-Tsao mean when he talks to the Monkey King in panel #4? (pg. 145)

3. Why does The Monkey King choose to release himself and follow Lai-Tsao?

4. How do the two voices get represented on this page? To whom do they belong? How do they relate to each other? (p. 163)

5. The author shows kids laughing while Wei-Chen is talking to Amelia. What does the juxtaposition of this panel with the other panels on the page do for the reader? (pg. 175 panel #)

6. How does the author emphasize Jin's emotions? What other examples have you noticed from throughout the book? (pg. 180 - 183)
7. Why does Suzy say she feels embarrassed all of the time? Why do you think Jin kisses Suzy? (pg. 187)
8. Why does Jin reject Wei-Chen? What might be going on with Jin, from a psychological point of view? (pg. 191)
9. What is the significance of the dream? Make sure you look at all the illustrations carefully and study them for subtle meaning. (pg.s 193 - 194)
10. What has happened here? What was your own emotional/psychological reaction to this moment? (pg. 198)

CHAPTER 8

1. Who is Danny? Who is Chin-Kee? What does this mean? What are their true forms? (pg. 213)
2. As it turned out, the star was the star of Bethlehem and the three boxes were the three gifts from the three wise men. What significance does this hold for the story *American Born Chinese*? (pg. 215)
3. What does the Monkey King mean by a sign post to your soul? (pg. 221)
4. How might the 4th panel apply to Jin? (pg. 223)
5. Jin reveals that he can't read Chinese. What do you think is significant about that? (pg. 226)
6. Jin doesn't know why he's going to the shop but he goes night after night. Why?
7. This book ends with a conversation about milk tea. Wei-Chen is speaking Chinese. Why does the book end like this? What can we infer about these two characters? What predictions do you make about each of them?

AFTER-READING QUESTIONS

1. *American Born Chinese* is the first graphic novel to win the Printz Award and be a finalist for the National Book

Award. Why do you think it was picked for these awards and honors? Would you have chosen it? Explain.

2. Graphic novels appeal to a variety of people. There are a variety of graphic novel genres such as fantasy, super-hero, non-fiction, etc. Have you read graphic novels in the past? How did *American Born Chinese* compare? Graphically speaking what appealed to you? What did not?

3. Did you find the graphic novel an effective way for Yang to tell his story?

4. Yang uses humor to make light of experiences that are not so humorous for the immigrants that experience them. Often when reading we laugh at painful experiences of the characters. Have you or anyone you've known had experiences that were funny to others, but very painful to you? If possible, explain. Do you think Yang used the technique of humor appropriately?

5. What can be learned from the Monkey King and *American Born Chinese*?

6. Yang uses a television show to tell Chin-Kee's story. Why do you think he does this? Was it effective? Why?

7. The Monkey King chooses to be stuck in the mountain of rocks for 500 years, to escape he must return to his "true form." How do the other characters experience this in *American Born Chinese*? Have you experienced a similar situation in your life?

8. Wei-Chen's transformer robot monkey symbolizes so much in the graphic novel. How do the characters in *American Born Chinese* "transform" themselves for American society? Do you "transform" yourselves? Why?

OTHER QUESTIONS

1. Do you think it would be difficult to move to a new country and try to fit in? How did Jin try to fit in at school?
2. What is a stereotype? What stereotypes do you see used in this book, especially with the character Chin-kee?
3. Why does the Monkey King insist that all the monkeys begin wearing shoes? Do you think wearing shoes helps the Monkey King achieve what he wants?
4. What lesson does the Monkey King learn that he tries to pass onto Jin?
5. This book is a graphic novel. Are you familiar with graphic novels? Have you read one before? How is

reading a graphic novel different from reading a book? How did the pictures add to the story? Do you think this story could have been told without pictures? Why or why not?

6. Why does the Monkey King insist that all the monkeys begin wearing shoes? Do you think wearing shoes helps the Monkey King achieve what he wants?
7. Have you ever wanted to be someone else? What would you change about yourself? What do you like about your-self that you wouldn't want to change? What do you like about yourself that you wouldn't change?
8. The author, Gene Yang, uses humor to make light of experiences that are not so humorous for the immigrants that experience them. Have you or anyone you've known experienced what it's like to be an immigrant or new to a situation?
9. What do you think the Monkey King story was trying to tell the reader?
10. Even though Jin was born in America, he has a hard time fitting in. Why do you think he feels different than everyone else?
11. Jin calls Wei-Chen an F.O.B. (Fresh Off the Boat) because he says and does things that don't conform to social norms. Would it be hard for you to move to a new country, or even just a new school, and try to fit in?
12. Track the use of < > in the story. What role does this play? i.e. when is it used? How does its use change over the duration of the book?

ESSAY QUESTIONS

1. Discuss the psychological development of Jin and the Monkey King. Using the answers to the reading questions above, develop a theory of about how each of these characters responded to their environment. How were they affected by the way they were treated by those around them? Look at what forces were at play to cause them to develop from beginning to middle to end of the story. Discuss the ways in which the development of the Monkey King serves as an allegory for the evolution of Jin.

2. Discuss the ways in which *American Born Chinese* demonstrates that in a work of art form follows function. Look at the formal techniques the author uses such as various speech balloons, interspersing character frames with atmosphere frames, use of the paint (splattered, blurred, blended), the layout and use of panels. Discuss how the visual language conveys emotion, tone, and characterization. Be sure to discuss creative decisions that the author made i.e. making the Chin-Kee chapters a TV show, making Melanie and Amelia the same character (note the similar letters in both names), the use of color ink on glossy paper.

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