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English 112B-01

Prof. Mary Warner

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***American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang**

[**http://geneyang.com/**](http://geneyang.com/)

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| Image result  (<https://www.amazon.com/Gene-Luen-Yang/e/B001JP26JI>) | * Asian-American cartoonist * Lecturer on topics such as graphic novels and comics * Was a Professor of Computer-Science at a high school in Oakland,California * In 2016, he was the 3rd novelist to receive the MacArthur Fellowship   (<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gene_Luen_Yang>) |

**Summary:**

*American-Born Chinese* is a novel that revolves around three main characters, Jin Wang-an American-Born Chinese who is in the pursuit of trying to fit in that struggles with an identity crisis, The Monkey King-who forgets to be grateful for who is in trying to become someone greater, and Chin-Kee-known as the “ultimate negative Chinese stereotype” who acts in a way that continually embarasses his American cousin, Danny to the point where Danny has to change schools every year since the 8th grade after Chin-Kee returns to his home country. Each character is trying to be someone different, someone greater in the hopes of being happier by thinking it’ll help “fit in” but along the way forgets what makes a person great is who he/she truly is.Yang writes the stories of these three characters separately and interweaves them together to tell a bigger story.

**Quotes:**

1. **“It’s easy to become anything you wish..so long as you’re willing to forfeit your soul.” (Page 29)**
   1. I chose this passage because it is an vital link to the connection of the three stories. Also, it stood out to me before I got to the part that connected it to the other two stories. It stood out to me because many people that have fame, popularity, and richness have gotten that status because of a lot they have had to let go and sometimes the things we let go are not for our best. They may give “success” in the material world but spiritually there’ll be an emptiness.
2. **“When the class finally figured out that we aren’t related, rumors began to circulate that Suzy and I were arranged to be married on her thirteenth birthday.” (Page 31)**
   1. This passage reminded me of a particular very similar experience I had in the 6th grade- there was a boy in my class with the same last name as mine and the teacher thought it was funny to ask if we were going to get married when we got older. I did not find that funny at all and especially it coming from a teacher made me feel even more upset. However, I do not think that this is the fault of students or teachers to say such remarks but it is a lack of knowledge of other cultures. But then again many people have the same last name so this is not just limited to a cultural thing but more so of kindness.
3. **“Where did you think you could hide from me? Where can you flee from my presence….” (Page 80)**
   1. This is my favorite passage from the story. It’s where the Monkey King tries to show his superiority to his creator, Tze-Yo-Tzuh. The Monkey-King believes that by mastering different disciplines he has become greater than God. Tze-Yo-Tzuh challenges the Monkey King in a way that shows the Monkey King that no matter where he goes he will always return to his creator because without Tze-Yo-Tzuh he can not be anything. Here the significance of showing rather than telling is greater-”actions speak louder than words.” I chose this passage because in life many people get entangled in worldly things andoften forget that there is a power/energy/God/Universe that is greater than us.

**Which category of books from Adolescents in the Search for Meaning might this book fit into?**

**Chapter 6-** Books about Identity, Discrimination, and Struggle with Decisions.

**Why give this book to Young Adults**

-because people in the U.S. sometimes have difficulty accepting people from other nations, a book like this can let young adults know what their peers who immigrated from another country are experiencing.

-because many students are international and all students need to learn more about different cultures and their peers who come from different countries

-because they might be struggling with body image, feeling embarrassed by who they are

-because identity and recognition of who you are is one of the most important things in life

(Warner, Mary L. *Adolescents in the search for meaning: tapping the powerful resource of story*. Scarecrow Press, 2006.)

Teenagers often find themselves struggling to fit in during middle school and high school years and grappling in the clutches of peer pressure during their teen years so this story can really shine light onto the importance of finding what matters to you and appreciating where you come from and just being yourself.

**Book related activity for teaching:**

For an activity, I would have students draw a face/head shape and write down as many thoughts as they can recall having gone through their minds when trying to ‘fit in’ inside the shape. Later, I would have them do a pair share and ask if any volunteers would like to share aloud to the class. This type of activity would help student bonding and increase a sense of empathy towards others.

**Exeter Qualities:**

**1.)** Characters who go beyond typical experiences so that readers can use the fictional experiences to learn and develop in their own lives.

**2.)** Themes that inform truthfully about the wider world so as to allow readers to engage with difficult and challenging issues relating to immediate interests and global concerns.

**3.)** Themes that allow the possibility of emotional and intellectual growth through engagement with personal issues.

**Analysis:**

Lexile Number- GN530L

According the Dale-Chall Readability Index this novel would be good for the grade level 7-8

*American-Born Chinese* is a novel that is quite complex because readers have to keep up with three different stories and since it is a comic, readers also have to make out in which order the characters are speaking. It is also a good pick for improving comprehension skills.

The grade level I think this story would be best suited for would be 8th grade to 10 grade so 14-16 year olds.



(<https://books.google.com/books?id=--F86OyX3BMC&printsec=frontcover&source=gbs_ge_summary_r&cad=0#v=onepage&q&f=false>)