

American Born Chinese by Gene Luen Yang
Year 3 Summer Reading Guide

In Year 3, Language and Literature students study texts through the following themes:

- Culture & Belonging
- Approaching Adulthood/Taking a Stand
- A Feast of Figurative Language

This novel was chosen because each of the themes can be seen throughout the text. It also connects us globally by studying literature based on issues faced in other cultures. Our MYP focus is to have students think about issues not only locally, but through the lens on global context. Use this guide to pace yourself on our reading and acquaint yourself with the ideas that will be discussed in class. Use text evidence from the novel to support your answers.

*NOTE: Dates are suggested to help spread reading out over the summer. The book could easily and quickly be read in a shorter time frame, even in one sitting (if desired).

WEEK OF JUNE 11--Pages 7-20:

1. **Culture & Belonging:** How does the Monkey King shun his true racial identity of being a monkey? What is he trying to prove?
2. **A Feast of Figurative Language:** How does the author convey emotion in the story? How is it different than in a conventional novel? Why does the author use onomatopoeia?
3. **Culture & Belonging:** Why does the Monkey King beat up the gods? Does he accomplish his goal of proving that he belongs among the gods?
4. What textual and graphic features signal a shift in chapters and/or narratives? (A graphic novel often follows different rules than a traditional novel.)

WEEK OF JUNE 18--Pages 23-40:

1. **Culture & Belonging/Approaching Adulthood:** Explain the quote, "It's easy to become anything you wish, so long as you're willing to forfeit your soul" (p. 29). How does this relate to (a) an immigrant pursuing the American Dream? and (b) growing up?
2. **Culture & Belonging:** Compare the different stereotypes Jin faces on the first day of school (the teacher's, Timmy's, Greg's). The kid who calls Jin "bucktooth" is drawn with buck teeth himself. What purpose does this serve?
3. **Culture & Belonging:** Why does Jin resist friendship with Wei-Chen?
4. **A Feast of Figurative Language:** What features does the author use in the text to show the following: emotion? dialogue in different languages? the parable as separate? Any other features unique to a graphic novel that you notice?

WEEK OF JUNE 25--Pages 43-52:

***In this chapter, we are introduced to the character of Chin-Kee, an incredibly racist depiction of Chinese-Americans that used to be common in pop culture. Even the character's name is related to a racist term for Chinese-Americans. Check out this short video that talks about some of the representations of Asian Americans on film and TV:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zB0lrSebyng>.

1. **Culture & Belonging:** What stereotypes are demonstrated in this chapter? Make a list of them. Include stereotypes of both Chin-Kee and Danny.
2. **Culture & Belonging:** What does Chin-Kee symbolize?
3. **Culture & Belonging/A Feast of Figurative Language:** How does Yang make fun of American pop culture? (Hint: Go back to p. 43. Think about an American sitcom with an applause/laugh track. Find places where Yang alludes to an applause/laugh track in his illustrations. Jot the page numbers down.) How does the laugh/applause track help to develop tension?
4. **Culture & Belonging/Approaching Adulthood:** How does American pop culture help to make stereotypes seem like truth?

WEEK OF JULY 2--Pages 55-84:

1. **Culture & Belonging:** What has the Monkey King changed about himself? How has the Monkey King changed as a character? Why? (What is his reason for changing?) What is the result of this change when he meets Tze-Yo-Tzuh?
2. **A Feast of Figurative Language:** 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 graphics to reflect the content of the story?
3. **Culture & Belonging/Approaching Adulthood:** What is the Monkey King's mental and emotional state at this point? What might he be experiencing here? Has his transformation helped him find what he has been looking for?

WEEK OF JULY 9--Pages 87-106:

1. **Culture & Belonging:** What does Jin mean when he says, "Stop acting like such an F.O.B.?" (p. 89). Why is it pejorative (derogatory and negative)? (There is a sitcom on ABC called *Fresh Off the Boat*. If you have seen it, can you make connections between the book and the show?)
2. **Culture & Belonging:** Look at 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?

3. **Culture & Belonging/Approaching Adulthood:** What differences are there between Jin and Wei-Chen in how they are represented? What can we infer about Wei-Chen when he dates Suzy Nakamura?
4. **A Feast of Figurative Language:** Why are there 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?
5. **Culture & Belonging:** Why does Jin perm his hair? How is he similar to the Monkey King here?

WEEK OF JULY 16--Pages 109-130:

1. **Culture & Belonging:** Why does Danny try to distance himself from Chin-Kee? How does he do it?
2. **Culture & Belonging:** What clues can you find to explain why Chin-Kee comes to visit? Why is it that Chin-Kee comes to visit?
3. **Culture & Belonging/Approaching Adulthood:** Why does Danny say, "So I can pee in it?" when Stever offers to get him a coke? (p. 128). What purpose does this serve in the story?
4. **Culture & Belonging:** Returning to the question of stereotypes, what other stereotypes do you notice in this section? Look at all of the characters.

WEEK OF JULY 23--Pages 133-160:

1. **Culture & Belonging:** Why has Lai-Tsao found favor with Tze-Yo-Tzuh?
2. **Culture & Belonging/Approaching Adulthood:** Why does the Monkey King choose to release himself and follow Lai-Tsao?
3. **Culture & Belonging/Approaching Adulthood:** Why does the monkey take his shoes off? What does this symbolize?

WEEK OF JULY 30--Pages 163-198:

1. **A Feast of Figurative Language:** The author shows kids laughing while Wei-Chen is talking to Amelia (pg. 175, panel #4). What does the pairing of this panel with the other panels on the page do for the reader?
2. **Culture & Belonging:** Why does Jin reject Wei-Chen? What might be going on with Jin?
3. **Culture & Belonging/A Feast of Figurative Language:** What is the significance of Jin's dream on pages 193-194? Make sure you look at all the illustrations carefully and study them for subtle meaning. What part of the story does this scene represent? Why?
4. **Culture & Belonging:** What has happened on page 198? How does the author capture Jin/Danny's point of view? What was your own reaction to this moment when Jin becomes Danny?

WEEK OF AUGUST 6--Pages 201-233:

1. **Culture & Belonging:** Who is Danny?
2. **Culture & Belonging:** Who is Chin-Kee? Now that you have finished the novel, what was the purpose of Chin-Kee in the story? Why did Yang include such a racist stereotype?
3. **Culture & Belonging/A Feast of Figurative Language:** What does the Monkey King mean by "a sign post to your soul" (pg. 221)? Why is it fitting that the Monkey King - a major folkloric Chinese hero who goes through the parallel experience of learning to love his monkey self - comes to Jin as his guide?
4. **Culture & Belonging/Approaching Adulthood:** How does the 4th panel on page 223 apply to Jin?
5. **A Feast of Figurative Language:** This book ends with a conversation about the qualities of good pearl milk tea and then a long shot of Wei-Chen and Jin laughing. Wei-Chen is speaking Chinese and Jin reveals that he can't read the Chinese on the menu. Why does the book end like this?
6. **Culture & Belonging/Approaching Adulthood:** Based on this last scene, what is Yang's message about the hybrid (mixture) of Chinese and American identities? How does this last scene contribute to the theme of constructing one's personal American identity?