



TeachersFirst **READING TREKS**

American Born Chinese

[TeachersFirst Reading Treks Link](#)

Synopsis of Book

In this graphic novel, Gene Luen Yang, author and illustrator, weaves together the stories of Jin Wang, the American born son of Chinese immigrants; a modified version of the Monkey King; and the story of “Danny” and cousin Chin-Kee. These stories portray cultural racism and stereotypes, as well as each individual’s journey to discover their identity and purpose while highlighting both obvious and very 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 of true identities revealed. (It is important to note that this is not autobiographical although Jin’s story is similar to Yang’s own experiences and Yang’s version of the Monkey King reflects his Catholic beliefs.)

Using a TeachersFirst Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks are a way of creating a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or 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 a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this Instructional Guide and the accompanying Reading Trek 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!

Grade Level & Content Areas

Ages 12-18, Grades 7-12. English/ language arts, reading, literature, social studies, including individual development and identity, and geography. RL: 7th grade. Lexile: GN530L. Guided Reading Level: Z. DRA: 70

Common Core State Standards for MS/HS

Reading

- **Literature** (key ideas and details, craft and structure, and integration of knowledge and ideas)

Writing

- **Text Types and Purposes**
- **Research** (to build and present knowledge)

ISTE: Student Standards

- (1) Empowered Learner: Students leverage technology to take an active role in choosing, achieving and demonstrating competency in their learning goals, informed by the learning sciences.
- (3) Knowledge Constructor: Students critically curate a variety of resources using digital tools to construct knowledge, produce creative artifacts and make meaningful learning experiences for themselves and others.
- (6) Creative Communicator: Students communicate clearly and express themselves creatively for a variety of purposes using the platforms, tools, styles, formats and digital media appropriate to their goals.

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- **Theme: CULTURE**
- **Theme: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE**
- **Theme: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENT**

National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- **CREATING**
- **RESPONDING**

Using the Reading Trek in Class

This title has connections to culture, and people, places, and environment; additionally, this text has history connections in the realm of time, continuity, and change.

1. Introduce the book to the whole class on an interactive whiteboard using the Reading Trek map, and highlighting the various layers. The schools identified in the text as well as the cafe are fictitious.
2. Discuss the demographics of the classroom and school, “The elephant in the room,” and how stereotypes and cultural racism impact the individual and group academic performance and social and emotional development.
3. Discuss the bullying observed by the Monkey King, Jin, Jin’s classmates, Wei-Chin, Danny, and Chin-Kee as each character seeks acceptance from their peers. The discussion can be virtual, providing for anonymity of individuals who might be shy or uncomfortable speaking in class, using [Backchannel Chat](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)).

4. Write and illustrate in comic format another chapter to show how the friendship between Jin and Wei-Chin changes after meeting for pearl milk tea, using [Make Beliefs Comix](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
5. Reflect on the characters shown in the Journey to the West. Create illustrations that mirror personal ideas.
6. Discuss social equality and civil rights of immigrants and their families and create posters to promote unity within the community, possibly including animal rights and testing. For online, interactive posters use [Adobe Spark](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
7. Read the original account of the Monkey King, the story of Sun Wukong, from Wu Cheng'en's novel *Journey to the West*, written during the Song Dynasty.

Additional Activities

1. Make Pearl Milk Tea as a class. The recipe per serving is ½ cup tapioca pearls (as found in Asian groceries), 2 cups freshly brewed black tea, 1½ teaspoon sugar or more to taste, ¼ 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 warm tea so that it will completely dissolve.
2. Listen to a 2015 interview with Lark Pien with [The Yam](#).
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 a [CBR interview](#).
5. Create a database of resources and organizations within the community that could be shared with new students enrolling in your school, using [Flexlists](#) ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
6. Discuss how image sizing, even to the point of exaggeration, and placement impacts the reader's response to the accompanying text.

Helpful Resources

- [Gene Luen Yang, Cartoonist and Teacher](#)
- [Monkey Kingdom](#)
- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Google MANIA - Google Maps: Make Learning a Journey with Reading Treks](#)