

Literacy Skills Teacher's Guide for Where the Mountain Meets the Moon by Grace Lin

Book Information

Grace Lin, Where the Mountain Meets the Moon

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278 Pages

Book Level: 5.5

Interest Level: MG

Minli, an adventurous girl from a poor village, buys a magical goldfish and then joins a dragon on a quest to find the Old Man of the Moon in hopes of discovering how to change her family's fortune.

Award: ALA Notable/Best Books; E.B. White Award; NCTE Notable Children's Books in the Language Arts; Newbery Honor

Topics: Adventure, Quest; Common Core State Stds Appendix B Titles, CCSS Grade Band 4-5; Fantasy/Imagination, Magic; Popular Groupings, Middle Grades Popular Authors/Starred Reviews; Recommended Reading, Book Links Lasting Connections

Main Characters

A-Fu and Da-Fu a sister and brother who are twins, also called Da-A-Fu because they are always together

A-Gong the grandfather of Da-Fu and A-Fu, who helps heal Dragon

Amah the grandmother of Da-Fu and A-Fu, who cares for Minli in the Village of Moon Rain

Aunt Jin the goldfish Minli sets free, who becomes the orange dragon

Ba Minli's father, who keeps Minli's excitement and wonder alive with his stories

Dragon a dragon Minli saves and befriends, who accompanies her on her journey so he can find out how to fly

Green Tiger a beast that injures Dragon but is outwitted by A-Fu and Da-Fu

guardian lions a family of lions guarding the city gate who give Dragon a red thread

Jade Dragon a dragon from one of Ba's stories, whose heart, broken from losing her children, becomes Fruitless Mountain

Ma Minli's mother, known for her impatient sighs

Magistrate Tiger a powerful, greedy official

Minli a young girl from a poor family and village

Pearl, Yellow, Long, and Black Jade Dragon's children, who turn themselves into rivers to help the people on Earth

the buffalo boy a boy who lives in the City of Bright Moonlight and helps Minli on her journey

the goldfish man a man who peddles goldfish and counsels Ma and Ba to trust Minli

the King of the City of Bright Moonlight a ruler who gives Minli a page torn from the Book of Fortune

the Old Man of the Moon the Guardian of the Book of Fortune, who lives on Never-Ending Mountain and determines people's destiny by binding lives together with red threads

Vocabulary

barren not able to bear young; unable to yield or produce crops or fruit; not fertile

brocade made of a thick, heavy, expensive material with a raised pattern; made of fabric woven with gold and silver threads or ornamented with raised flowers or foliage

disbelief a feeling that something is not or cannot be true; shock or amazement; doubt

emissary a representative sent on a mission; someone sent on a mission to represent the interests of another, especially to carry messages or to discuss issues

fragrant having a pleasing smell; sweet-smelling

frustration helpless anger; annoyance or irritation at being thwarted, hindered, or criticized; anger resulting from failure or from being slowed down or prevented from doing something

magistrate a person given authority by a government or monarch to oversee and carry out the law; a powerful public official

meager lacking in quality, quantity, or extent; scanty; having little; thin or lean; small; neither offering nor providing much

pavilion a temporary movable habitation; a large tent; a simple building with simple walls and a single roof; a shelter, covering, or canopy

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wry intended to express bitter or biting humor; expressing sarcasm or irony; cynical; mocking; scornful; twisted

Synopsis

Minli and her family, Ma and Ba, live a hard life in a poor village near Fruitless Mountain. Through Ba's stories, Minli learns that the Old Man of the Moon has the answers to important questions, so she decides to find him to learn how to improve her family's fortune. On the way, she rescues Dragon, who wants to learn how to fly, and together they seek the Old Man of the Moon. On their journey, they are helped by the buffalo boy, the King of the City of Bright Moonlight, the guardian lions of the city, and the people of the Village of the Moon Rain, all of whom relate stories of their past.

When Minli finally reaches the Old Man of the Moon, she learns that she can ask only one question of him, and she struggles with which one to ask. When she sees the word "thankfulness" in a book on his lap, she realizes she has the answer to her question and decides to ask Dragon's question about flying instead. As she solves Dragon's problem, she comes into possession of a Dragon Pearl, which her family gives to the king, who rewards the village with seeds and farm equipment. The village prospers and becomes known as the Village of Fruitful Mountain.

Open-Ended Questions

Use these open-ended questions as the basis for class discussions, student presentations, or extended writing assignments.

Literary Analysis

How does the author use the character of the goldfish man to tell the story?

The goldfish man appears at three times and helps move the story along. In the beginning, he sells a goldfish to Minli, and the fish tells Minli how to find the Old Man of the Moon. Later, he appears as Ma and Ba search for Minli, and he gives them guidance and comfort. Finally, he appears at the end of the story in the revived village, and the reader learns through his questions how and why the village has changed.

Inferential Comprehension

The concept of greed appears several times in the story. Which characters are greedy, and why are they greedy? How, if at all, do they change in the course of the story?

Magistrate Tiger is particularly greedy as he seeks power and wealth for himself and his family. Ultimately, he is doomed as his spirit, in the form of the Green Tiger, leaps into a well. Ma is somewhat greedy as the story begins. She is bitter, and her sighs about the state of the family drive Minli to look for a better fortune for all of them. The monkeys in the forest are greedy and become victims of their greed as Minli tricks them so she and Dragon can travel through the forest.

Teachable Skills

Describing Actions or Events Describing Events

Understanding Hist./Cultural Factors

Understanding Historical & Cultural Factors

Comparing and Contrasting Compare & Contrast

Deriving Word or Phrase Meaning Deriving Word or Phrase Meaning