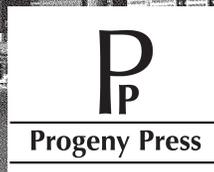
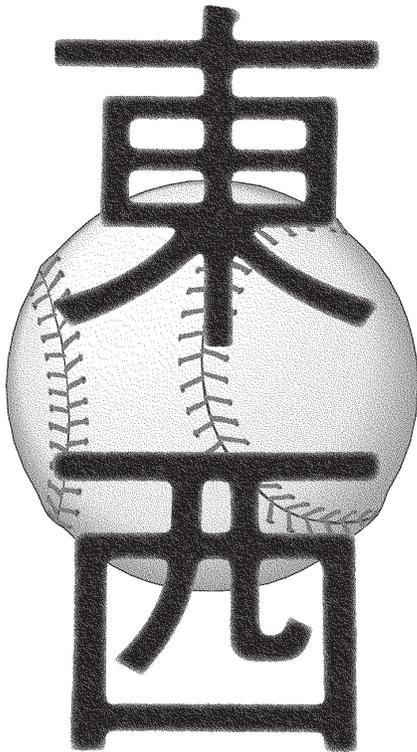


In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson Study Guide

by Andrew Clausen

For the novel by
Bette Bao Lord

CD Version



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In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson Study Guide

A Progeny Press Study Guide

by Andrew Clausen

with Rebecca Gilleland

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Synopsis

In the year 1947, Shirley Temple Wong and her mother receive a letter from her father. He asks them to come and join him halfway around the world in New York City where he has been working and preparing a home for them. New York is a long way from Chungking, China, but Shirley is excited that her family will be together again at last.

To Shirley, America is a strange new country, but she is anxious to prove to her parents—and to herself—that she can adapt. Although she receives a warm welcome at her new school, Shirley has trouble making friends. She doesn't speak English well, and she doesn't understand many of the customs.

Then Shirley discovers baseball, and she learns about Jackie Robinson, the first African American to play baseball in the major leagues. Shirley begins to understand that America is truly a land of opportunity, and how, in America, one person can make a difference.

February & March

Vocabulary:

A word is *in context* if we see it in the sentence where it was written. It is *out of context* when it is by itself. The following underlined words are shown in the context of the sentences in which they appear in the book. See if you can figure out from reading the sentences what the underlined words mean, then write the meaning from the dictionary.

1. Shirley knew better than to ask Mother to remove a splinter. Even a droplet of blood made her cringe.

Your Definition:

Dictionary Definition:

2. Leaping off the train, she ran to the dapper man in a bow tie.

Your Definition:

Dictionary Definition:

3. “What disgraceful behavior!” he exclaimed in a mocking tone so familiar that it made her teary.

Your Definition:

Dictionary Definition:

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4. In the taxi her parents talked in whispers while Shirley ogled the tall buildings. But no matter how she scrunched, she could not see if their roofs curved skyward like the temples of China . . .

Your Definition:

Dictionary Definition:

5. “What is it?” Shirley finally asked, hoping not to appear ignorant, . . .

Your Definition:

Dictionary Definition:

6. They were all men working in America, anxious for news of home and family. Eagerly they queried Mother, . . .

Your Definition:

Dictionary Definition:

7. But instead of giving her the cigarettes, he rattled off a string of nonsensical sounds.

Your Definition:

Dictionary Definition:

8. Utterly ashamed, she hid her face in her arms. . . . Looking up, she saw Father. He offered his hand, but not a word of rebuke.

Your Definition:

Dictionary Definition:

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9. It dwarfed the bamboo cane the teacher in Chungking had used to punish Four Hands whenever he stole a trifle from another.

Your Definition:

Dictionary Definition:

10. What if the teacher found out about her escapade? There would go her ambassadorship.

Your Definition:

Dictionary Definition:

Point of View:

In this section of reading, Shirley arrives in a new country and encounters many unfamiliar things. To help readers understand and perhaps experience Shirley's confusion, the author describes familiar things from Shirley's point of view.

The underlined words below describe some of these new things that Shirley encounters. Try to identify each of these objects based on its description from the novel. One is done as an example:

Example: A stamp with an ugly, bald bird on it.

A bald eagle

1. A large white box that is very cold inside. (Chapter 2: February)
2. A smaller white box out of which comes blue flame. (Chapter 2: February)
3. A white tub with a metal can inside that bounces and bangs against the walls of the tub. (Chapter 2: February)

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4. A bottle of orange-colored water. (Chapter 3: March)
5. Pictures of men swinging a stick or wearing one huge glove. (Chapter 3: March)

Questions:

1. How long had Shirley and her mother been separated from her father?
2. What happens to Shirley when she goes to the store for Father's cigarettes?
3. When Shirley's father finds her, he doesn't say a word, and together they walk back home. Along the way they meet all of Father's guests. The author writes "Not a one was unkind enough to mention why he was out roaming the streets." Why *were* they out "roaming the streets"?
4. When Shirley and her mother go to enroll her in school, Shirley gives her age as 10 years old. Note how Shirley counts her years. How old is she really?

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5. After lunch, why does Shirley expect to be punished?

6. Mrs Rappaport sends a letter home to Shirley's parents. What does Mrs. Rappaport suggest in the letter? Why does Mrs. Rappaport suggest this?

Thinking About the Story:

7. The author writes, "It was so like Mother to tame a den of tigers and then jump at the sound of a kitten's meow." Explain what the author means by this.

What examples does the author give to show this side of Shirley's mother's character?

8. Why do you think Shirley wanted to go to the store by herself to get cigarettes for her father?

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Dig Deeper:

9. Look again at the meeting between Shirley's mother and father at the train station. Notice that they do not embrace or kiss. How can we tell they love each other? (Write down the words or phrases that tell you this.)

10. Because it is not a Chinese custom, Shirley's father teases her about embracing in public. How do you express love to members of your family? Do you think it's possible to express love for someone without embracing or other physical contact? Explain your answer.

11. Shirley's mother tells her,

“Remember, my daughter, you may be the only Chinese these Americans will ever meet. Do your best. Be extra good. Upon your shoulders rests the reputation of all Chinese. . . . You are China's little ambassador.”

What is an *ambassador*? In what way is Shirley an ambassador for China?

12. Read 2 Corinthians 5:20, Ephesians 6:19, 20, and Colossians 3:17. In what way are we ambassadors for Christ? As ambassadors for Christ, how should we act?

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13. Thinking that she will be punished, Shirley prays to the Goddess *Kwan Yin* for mercy. Kwan Yin is the Buddhist Goddess of compassion. Shirley also occasionally invokes the name of the Buddha *Amitabha*, who promised to help those who called upon his name.

Read Exodus 20:2, Psalm 116:1–7, and 1 Timothy 2:5, 6. What do these verses tell us about God?

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Dig Deeper:

12. Our words should be free of obscenity or foolishness. Instead our words should build others up instead of tearing them down.
13. Answers will vary.
14. Shirley covered over the offense and refused to tattle on Mabel. Because of this, Shirley and Mabel became friends.

July & August

Vocabulary:

Part 1:

1. b; 2. c, d; 3. a; 4. d; 5. c; 6. d; 7. a

Part 2:

1. refrain: to restrain or hold oneself back; acquiring: to gain possession of
2. lolled: reclined in a relaxed manner
3. jaunty: stylish, dapper, or self-confident
4. alchemy: the seeming magical power of changing one thing into another; ingenuity: cleverness; transmuted: changed from one thing into another
5. adept: skilled
6. meticulous: extremely careful
7. vermin: various small animals or insects that are considered destructive, annoying, or hazardous to health; callously: carelessly, without careful consideration
8. talisman: some object said to have magical powers
9. gallows: a structure from which a noose is suspended and which is used for executions
10. figment: something invented or imagined

Drawing Conclusions:

1. e; 2. b; 3. g; 4. h; 5. a; 6. j; 7. d

Questions:

1. Shirley decides to take Toscanini for a walk. She cleans his cage and takes him outside to soak up the sunshine.
2. The Señora says that if she leaves there will be no one to care for the building or collect the rent. Shirley says that she and her family will care for the building so that Señora Rodriguez can visit her family.
3. Shirley and her father go to work on the basement of the building, cleaning it, repairing what can be repaired, throwing out what can't, and then painting the hallways.
4. The "treasure" was old junk that had been discarded. Shirley's father had fixed what he could and presented various items to the residents of the building.
5. The sticky goo was wet paint.

Dig Deeper:

6. Shirley's family is very kind and generous. They are willing to do much more than is required of them.
7. Shirley's father was an engineer, and according to Shirley, he "knew how everything worked." He put his skills to use repairing things in the basement, and turned a lot of discarded junk into useful items for people in the building.
8. Answers will vary.

September

Vocabulary:

1. progressives; 2. solemn; 3. sanitize; 4. cello; 5. counterfeit; 6. molt; 7. alms; 8. precautions; 9. chamber music; 10. vials; 11. solace; 12. valor

Questions:

1. Shirley recognized that she had changed over the summer, and she was afraid her friends had changed, too.
2. Shirley shows Emily where to buy lunch tickets, she takes Emily through the cafeteria line, she lets Emily know which counter ladies give the most generous portions, and what is good to eat. Shirley sits with Emily at lunchtime.
3. Answers will vary. Accept reasonable responses. Some suggestions: troublesome, distracting, noisy, difficult.
4. Shirley earns 30 cents each time she babysits. She saves the money in a piggy bank.