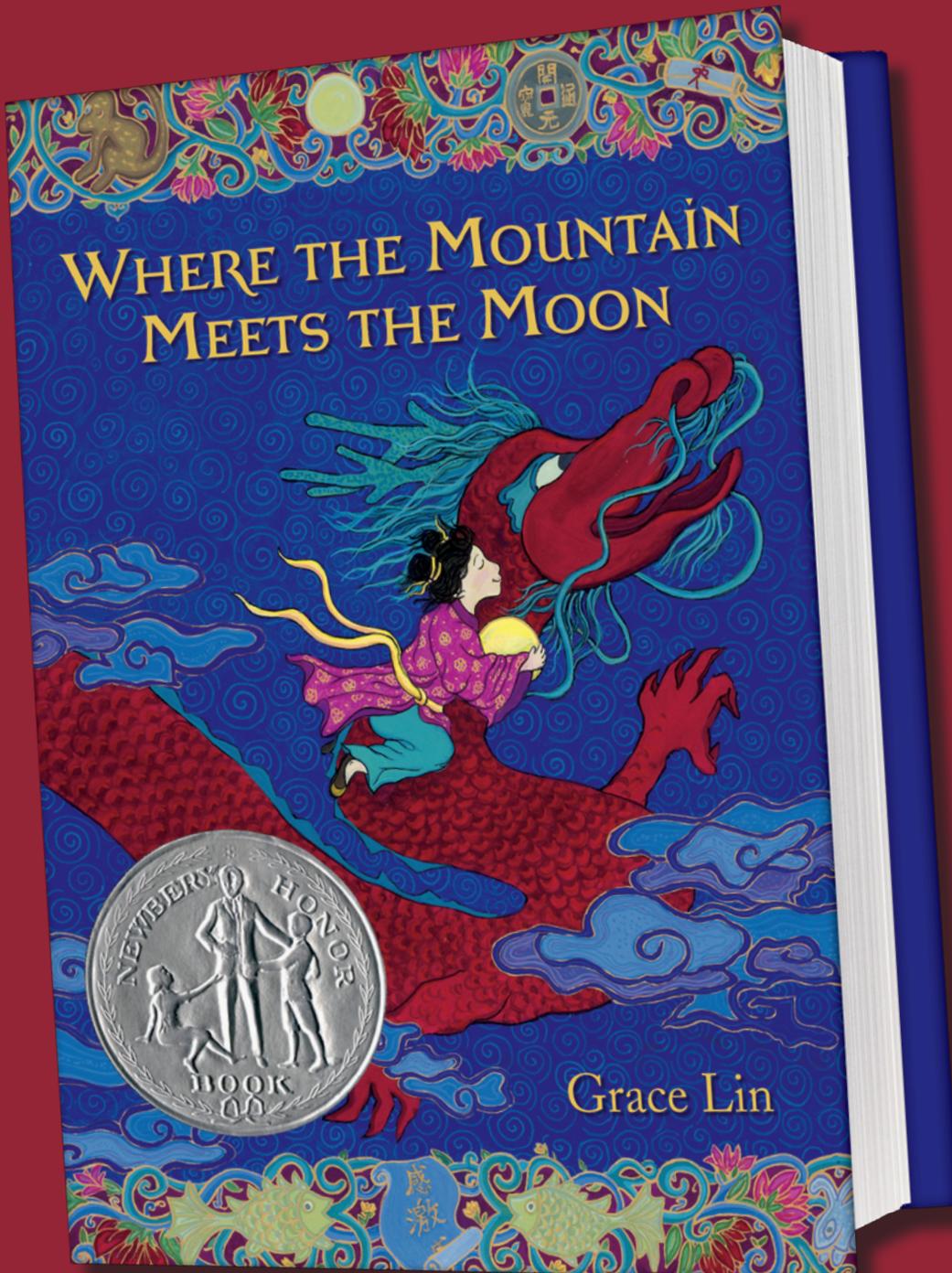


educator's guide

# WHERE THE MOUNTAIN MEETS THE MOON

By Grace Lin



## Curriculum connections

- ❖ **Family**
- ❖ **Loyalty**
- ❖ **Traditions**



## RESEARCH IN PRACTICE: QUESTIONING

Questioning is a skill and strategy that helps readers gain a deeper understanding of a book. It can take the form of predicting what will happen next, pondering why a character might choose a particular action, or be an inquiry about an author's motivation to write a particular book. At its simplest level, it can elicit a brief summary of events in order to help readers assess their literal understanding. At its most complex, it can help readers make strong connections that lead to personal revelations. Questioning is at the heart of comprehension.

### DISCUSSION GUIDE:

#### Chapters 1-3

Jade Dragon's children do not want to disobey their mother, but they want to save the people. What do they do? Is this an act of disobedience? Why or why not?

Why does Minli buy the goldfish? What does she hope will happen?

Stories are an important part of Minli's life. What does Ma think about stories? Why do you think she feels this way?

Ba tells the story of how Magistrate Tiger tried to arrange his son's future by outsmarting the Old Man of the Moon. In some ways Magistrate Tiger succeeds, but he also fails. Explain how he both succeeds and fails. What does his son think of his actions?

#### Chapters 4-6

Minli decides to release the goldfish into the river. Why did she make this decision? Do you think it was a good decision? Use evidence from the story to support your answer.



Minli writes a letter to Ma and Ba, and she signs it "Love, your obedient daughter." Is Minli being disobedient? In what ways are her actions similar or different from the actions of Jade Dragon's children?

As Minli left the house on her journey, nobody seemed to notice her leaving. What does this tell you about where she lives? What conclusions can you draw?

As Minli sets off, following the needle in her bowl, she says goodbye to Jade Dragon. Why do you think she does this?

#### Chapters 7-9

When Ma and Ba discover Minli is gone, they react in different ways. How does Ba react? How does Ma react? Use details from the story to explain your answer. Be sure to explain what is meant by, "Her words cut into Ba like slices from a knife."

Ma and Ba see footprints and a line in the dirt that they think might lead them to Minli. Do you think these footprints belong to Minli? Why or why not?

Minli hears a strange sound. Her curiosity makes her forget about her thirst. How do you think Minli feels when she discovers what is making the sound? How would you react if you were in Minli's place?

What did Ma and Ba discover when they followed the noise in the forest? How do you think they felt when they discovered this person?

The author uses a writing technique that involves changing perspectives between chapters. Why do you think the author chose to do this? How does it help the reader draw connections between and among characters? How does it add suspense to the story?

### Chapters 10-13

After Minli tells the dragon her story, she invites him to come with her to see the Old Man of the Moon. What does the dragon hope to learn from the Old Man of the Moon?

Minli asks the dragon his name, and he tells her his story. Minli learns that he was painted without eyes and on the ground instead of in the air. The artist said, "Perhaps the Magistrate will see how his wealth weighs him down." What do you think he meant by this statement?

After Dragon finishes his story, he seems sad that he is not a "real" dragon. Minli tries to cheer him up by saying that he feels real to her and they can at least be real friends. What does it mean to have a real friend? What qualities do you look for in a real friend?

When Ma and Ba encounter the goldfish man, they tell him they are looking for Minli. When he suggests that Minli might achieve her goal of reaching Never Ending Mountain, both Ma and Ba say it is impossible. The goldfish man gazes at them and makes them feel "like freshly peeled oranges." What does this mean? How did Ma and Ba feel? Why would they feel this way?

In the story told by the goldfish man, Ma and Ba learn that he once read from the Book of Fortune. If you had the chance to read from the Book of Fortune, would you do it? Why or why not?

Minli and Dragon hear the cries of the monkeys. As Minli looks around, the monkeys appear to be everywhere. Dragon asks what they are going to do. If you were Minli, what would you do? Consider the list of items Minli packed. How would you use these to develop a plan?

### Chapters 14-16

Minli uses the items she brought with her in a clever way. Describe how she outsmarts the monkeys. How did her memory of the children fighting over mud pies help her think of this idea? Was this similar to the plan you developed?



As Ma and Ba think about whether or not they should let Minli try to change their fortune, Ba says it is like trying to find the paper of happiness. In the story he tells, the secret of happiness is shared, but it is lost. What do you think was written on the missing paper? What one word might be the secret to happiness? Why do you think this?

Minli and Dragon meet a fish that thinks Dragon might be its Aunt Jin. The fish then tells a story about the Dragon Gate. Why does Minli think she might have met Aunt Jin?

### Chapters 17-19

When Minli meets the Buffalo Boy and is taken to his home, she feels a tightness in her throat when she thinks of her home in contrast to the boy's home. What does she have that Buffalo Boy does not have? What does Buffalo Boy have that she does not have?

Buffalo Boy tells the story of his friend. What is his friend like? Who do you think she might be?

### Chapters 20-23

Ma offers to carry the goldfish and she feeds the goldfish from her own rice bowl. In what ways does Ma seem to be changing? What has caused this change?

Minli offers the Buffalo Boy her last copper coin, but he does not take it, even though he is very poor. Why does the Buffalo Boy tell Minli he does not need it?

Minli uses the coin to purchase a peach. What happens to the peach she buys? How does this act of kindness help her reach her goal of finding the king?

The king tells Minli a new version of the Old Man of the Moon story. In this version, Minli learns that Magistrate Tiger tore a page from the Book of Fortune. The king guesses this page might be the



“borrowed line” Minli is looking for on her journey. The message on the page changes depending on the situation. What does the message say as the king reads it to Minli? What do you think this means? Use examples from your own life or other books you have read to explain your answer.

#### Chapter 24-26

Dragon also believes he has discovered the borrowed line. Why does he think he has the borrowed line? Where does he get this string?

When Minli meets Dragon they each share their stories, but they conclude they will have to ask the Old Man of the Moon to determine which one of them has the real borrowed line. Given what you know from the story, which one do you think is the real borrowed line? Support your answer with evidence from the story.

#### Chapters 27-29

Minli and Dragon encounter a tiger, but it is not an ordinary tiger. How does the author describe the tiger? What word choices help you visualize the tiger?

When Minli realizes Dragon is badly injured, what does she decide to do? Why is this a difficult decision?

#### Chapters 30-34

Minli hears a young girl tell a story to the Green Tiger. What story does she tell? How does this story help the girl defeat the Green Tiger?

When Minli enters the village with A-Fu and Da-Fu she is told the story of how the village got its name. Why is it called the Village of the Moon Rain?

#### Chapters 35-39

After Minli rests, she has the opportunity to hear more about Green Tiger. What does she discover about the origins of the Green Tiger? How do the villagers discover the tea used to cure the tiger’s poison?

After Dragon is well again, it is time to continue their journey. The people of the Village of the Moon Rain make Minli a warm coat. What do they use to make this coat? Why is this gift an example of true generosity?

On the journey, Minli and Dragon hear the story of Da-A-Fu’s ancestors. How does this story help you understand an earlier story in this book? Why do you think the Old Man of the Moon moved their home? When Minli and her traveling companions arrive at Never Ending Mountain, it seems too far away for them to reach. What idea does Minli put into action in order to get a message to the Old Man of the Moon?

When Minli suggests Da-A-Fu could ask the Old Man of the Moon how to change their fortune, they laugh. Why do they laugh? Does this remind you of the reaction of any other character in this book? Which character? How is this character similar and different from Da-A-Fu?

#### Chapters 40-43

Ba tells Ma they are like “the dragon waiting for a sign of his pearl.” After reading the story about the dragon’s pearl, explain what Ba meant by his statement.

After Minli crosses the bridge on her own, she encounters the white rabbit. The rabbit tells her the story of Wu Kang. What lesson does the Old Man of the Moon hope to teach Wu Kang? What lesson can you learn from Wu Kang's story?

Minli is faced with a difficult decision when she reaches the Old Man of the Moon. She can only ask one question. What question does she ask? Why does she ask that question? What details in the story help you understand her decision?

#### Chapters 44-46

Ma finally tells her own story. How does her story show how she has changed from the beginning of the book? What is different now?

When Minli returns to Dragon, she is able to show him why he can't fly. What does she do?

When Dragon discovers Minli sacrificed her opportunity to ask her own question in order to ask his, he wants to fly her back to the Old Man of the Moon. Minli replies that she does not have to ask the question because she already knows the answer. She realized fortune and gold do not make a fortune; it is something else. What does Minli mean? Do you agree with her? Why or why not?

On the way back home, Minli and Dragon see another dragon. Minli thinks the dragon looks familiar. Why does she think this?

Dragon begins to act a bit strange. He seems reluctant to leave Fruitless Mountain, and Minli agrees to walk home from there. Why do you think he was acting this way? Why do you think he said he felt he was home?

#### Chapters 47-48

When Minli returns to her home, Minli and her parents discover several different types of good fortune. What good fortune do they discover? Which of these is the most valuable of all to Minli and her parents?

Compare and contrast the Village of Fruitless Mountain from the beginning of the book with the Village of Fruitful Mountain at the end of the book. In what ways are they the same? In what ways are they different? How do the illustrations reflect the change?

#### Reflection:

Ma said stories were worthless, but stories play an important role throughout Minli's adventure. Using examples from the book, how did stories help Minli and others reach their goals? How did stories help characters change and develop throughout the book? Do you think stories are important?



## BUILDING BACKGROUND

### Schema Sketch

*Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* is a fantasy story, but it takes place in China. To help students understand the setting, ask students to think about what they already know about China, and then create a “schema sketch.” A schema sketch is a drawing that allows students to show what they already know. Share pictures or other stories about China. As students expand their knowledge, have them add to their sketch using different colors. After reading *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*, ask students to create a new sketch or add to their original sketch in a brand new color. Was the setting similar to what they predicted? What was the same? What was different?

## PREDICTING

### Before, During, and After Reading

Minli places a number of items in her blanket to bring on her journey. She packs a needle, a pair of chopsticks, her white rabbit rice bowl, a small piece of dried bamboo, a hollow gourd full of water, a small knife, a fishnet, some uncooked rice, a large pot, and one copper coin. List all of the items and have students predict how she might use each item on her journey. Which item do they think will be most important? As students read, have them refer back to the list and record how Minli really used each item. After reading, ask students to reflect on their original predictions. Were they surprised by the ways the items were used? Is it possible to determine which one was most important? Why or why not?

## VISUALIZATION

### Key Moment

The beautiful illustrations and artwork throughout *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* allows readers to see what the author imagined her words to convey, but not every scene is illustrated. After students finish reading the book, challenge them to pick one “key moment” in the story, a part of the story that seems to be a turning point or that captures the essence of the book. Brainstorm ideas as a class, then choose three or four to illustrate. As a class, choose the visualization that seems to capture the point of



the book the best. Display this on the wall of the room. Use this same process with other books the class reads, and there will be a visualization gallery to remind students of the incredible literature they have experienced.

## VOCABULARY

### Vocabulary Hunt

Grace Lin paints pictures with her words, not only through the use of figurative language, but with the specific vocabulary words she chooses. Help students make these words their own by giving them the task of collecting vivid vocabulary words as they read the book. Have students record the word, the page they found it on, and how it was used. Create a class list of vocabulary words, then work together to categorize them. For example, many of the words used to describe the Green Tiger such as malevolent, malicious, and vicious might be categorized together as synonyms. Challenge students to use the new words in their writing and conversation.

### Sensational Similes

Carefully crafted similes and metaphors are present throughout the story. Have students collect their favorite similes as they read the book, then vote on the class favorites. Discuss why these similes and metaphors are so effective. Then, give students the opportunity to create their own. Provide pictures from magazines or have students choose one of the pictures in the book. Finally, have them write several similes or metaphors that might be used to describe something in the picture.

## MAKING CONNECTIONS

### Red Thread Connections

Grace Lin refers to the Chinese legend describing how the red threads connect people. In *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* these red threads make a

bridge leading Minli to the Old Man of the Moon. Discuss with students how connections to personal experiences, other books, and background knowledge can help them understand this book and other pieces of literature. Ask students to record their connections and observations as they read the book, or as they read a particular chapter. On a piece of paper, have students write the title of the book or the chapter. Then, have them write their connections around the book title. Use red yarn or string to visually link their experiences with the book title. After students complete this individually, have them share their connections with the class. Did they have more connections to their personal experiences, other books they have read, or what they know about the world around them? How do these connections create a bridge of understanding? As an extension, students can write a written reflection.

### Connecting to Characters

Have students choose a character from the story. Ask students to identify the character's attributes and share examples from the story that show these attributes. Then, have students identify which character they are most like and give an example from their life that shows how they are similar to this character.

## WRITING

### Persuasive Writing

Throughout the story there are differing viewpoints. In the beginning of the story, Ma thinks stories are a waste of time, but Ba thinks they are not. Jade Dragon thought the people should be punished for not appreciating her, but her children wanted to save the people. These are just a few of the examples in the book that show one point of view contrasted against another. Have students choose two characters with differing viewpoints and write a persuasive letter from each character's perspective, asking the reader to agree with their view.

### Author Study

Grace Lin is a gifted writer and illustrator. Have students choose other books of hers to read. Compare and contrast them with this book. In what ways are they similar? In what ways are they different?

Have students compile a list of questions they would like to ask the author. Use the library and Internet to discover the answers. For any that cannot be answered easily, consider writing a class letter to the author.

## SUMMARIZING

### Selling the Setting: Minli Realty

Have students identify one of the various villages or settings from the book and pretend they are realtors attempting to sell the property to others. What are the highlights of this particular place? What type of person would be happiest here? If there are negatives, how can they be turned into positives? Begin by showing examples of brochures realtors might use to advertise a property, particularly a vacation property. A short mini-lesson on media and advertising techniques might also be given. Then, working in small groups, have students create a presentation or brochure to "advertise" their property. Integrate technology by making this a multi-media presentation.

## SOCIAL STUDIES AND SCIENCE

### Impossible Dreams

Ma scolds Ba and tells him that his stories make Minli dream of impossible things. Ask students to research an invention in history or an achievement that was once considered an impossible dream. They may want to research the invention of the airplane, laser, computer, or other technological innovation, or think about human rights gains. What would the world be like today without the invention or achievement they researched? How has it changed the world? Bind the papers together to create an "impossible dreams that became possible book." As an extension, have students sketch or describe one of their own ideas that may seem impossible today. When they look back on it years later, they may discover it was not so impossible after all.

### Finding Your Way

Minli is instructed by the goldfish to use the rice bowl, water, and bamboo, along with a piece of the mountain, to make a compass. Give students the opportunity to create their own compass. Provide students with a small bowl or pie plate, a piece of





foam, cork, or plastic (something that will float), a needle, and a magnet. Have students rub the needle across the magnet (in the same direction) about 10 times. Then, place the cork or foam in the water, and place the needle on top. The needle should slowly turn and point north. Ask students to think about why this was helpful for Minli. What if they wanted to travel east? How would knowing how to find north be helpful? Would this type of compass be helpful on a ship or airplane? Why or why not? Have students research how compasses have changed over time and report to the class on their discoveries.

## ART AND MUSIC

### Dragon Drawings

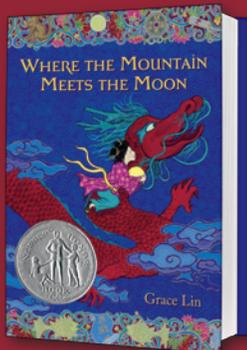
Dragons are found throughout many different types of literature and depicted in the artwork of many cultures. Have students work together to research and identify some examples. They should be sure to include historical depictions as well as present-day versions in cartoons or other books. Then, have them create their own dragon using any medium. They should be able to identify how

their dragon is similar and different from the dragons they researched. As an extension, they may want to compare their dragons to Dragon in *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*.

### Story Telling

The art of story telling is important in Chinese culture. Stories are told orally, using the face and hands of the storyteller to make the story more dramatic. They use few props. Discuss with students or encourage them to research the importance of storytellers in Chinese culture. A list of stories consulted by Grace Lin are included in the back of *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*. Choose several Chinese folk tales for students to read and retell. Encourage students to use their voices and movement of their hands to keep their audience engaged. After students practice, host a storytelling event. Students can drink tea and enjoy the dramatic productions of their classmates. As an extension, ask students to research storytelling traditions in other cultures. Why are stories important? What is similar and different about Chinese storytelling compared to storytelling traditions in other cultures?

## ABOUT THE BOOK



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In the valley of Fruitless Mountain, a young girl named Minli lives in a ramshackle hut with her parents. In the evenings, her father regales her with old folktales of the Jade Dragon and the Old Man on the Moon, who knows the answers to all of life's questions. Inspired by these stories, Minli sets off on an extraordinary journey to find the Old Man on the Moon to ask him how she can change her family's fortune. She encounters an assorted cast of characters and magical creatures along the way, including a dragon who accompanies her on her quest for the ultimate answer.

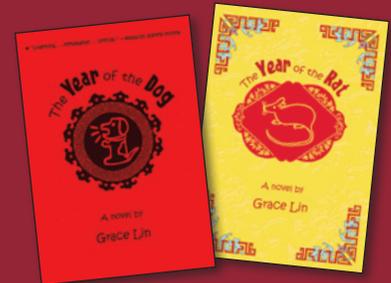


### ABOUT THE AUTHOR/ ILLUSTRATOR

Grace Lin is a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design. She is the author and illustrator of three novels and ten picture books, and the illustrator of nine more. She grew up in upstate New York and now lives in Massachusetts.

She received a Newbery Honor for her novel *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*.

### ALSO BY GRACE LIN



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