

In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson Study Guide

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*For the novel by
Bette Bao Lord*



Table of Contents

Note to Instructor	4
Synopsis	5
About the Author	6
Background Information	7
Before-you-read Activities	8
January	9
February & March	14
April	21
Background Information	27
May & June	28
July & August	34
September	41
October, November & December	46
Summary	52
After-you-read Activities	55
Additional Resources	57
Answer Key	Separate File

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.

In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson Study Guide

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)

In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson Study Guide

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?

In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson Study Guide Answer Key

9. In baseball, each player stands up alone to face the pitch. That one person at bat can make a difference and change the outcome of the game. Similarly, in America, each person has every opportunity to make a difference and change what has been.

10. In spite of the hostility and injustice he faced, Jackie Robinson went to college, excelled in sports, served his country in the war, and was now the first African American to play professional baseball. He has made it possible for others to follow in his footsteps. “Jackie Robinson changed what has been.”

11. Shirley realizes why her father brought her to live in America. She realizes that she doesn't have to wait until she is old to be considered wise. She can speak her mind. She can even question the conduct of the president if she wishes. “Shirley Temple Wong was somebody.”

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.