

Special Note About *The Cricket in Times Square* and This Revised Edition Study Guide

Since its initial publication in 1960, the publishers of *The Cricket in Times Square* have slightly updated some of the language and characteristics of a couple of the characters, leading to small differences between printings of the story. Recently, the publishers decided to more thoroughly update the characterization of Mr. Fong and his Chinese companion for the 2022 printing of *The Cricket in Times Square*, making them more realistic and less stereotypical—the vast majority of the book remains unchanged.

However, the recent changes left Progeny Press with a dilemma—there are now two versions of the book in circulation. For buyers of new books, some of the questions in the original study guide are no longer applicable and would be confusing; but because *The Cricket in Times Square* is such a beloved story and so many people and schools already own copies of the book, simply changing questions in the study guide would also be inaccurate and confusing to those who already own the older versions of the novel.

Therefore, in *The Cricket in Times Square Study Guide, Revised Edition*, we made the decision to include alternate sections for Chapters 5 and 6. The section for the new 2022 edition of the novel is titled “Chapters 5 & 6 (2022 Edition)” and the section for older versions is titled “Chapters 5 & 6 (Pre-2022 Editions).” We have also made some minor adjustments to a few questions to avoid confusion where there are other small differences in the story. In this way, users of this study guide will have appropriate questions no matter which version of the novel you use.

There are two easy ways to check which edition of *The Cricket in Times Square* you own. The 2022 edition says on the cover and title page “Foreword and Updates by Stacey Lee,” and the copyright page will carry the copyright notice “Foreword copyright © 2022 by Stacey Lee. All rights reserved.” If your book does not have these designations, you own the older version of the novel.

Again, the only time this is important in this study guide is for Chapters 5 & 6. The rest of the study guide is the same for both versions. Some much older copies of the book may have Mr. Fong speaking in an older dialect, but the wording differences will be small and not affect the use of the study guide.

Like millions of other readers before you, we hope you enjoy getting to know Mario, Chester, and their friends and family!

Chapters 5 & 6

(2022 Edition)

Vocabulary:

Write down the definition of each underlined word as it is used in the sentences below.

1. Every Saturday during the winter, when the opera was broadcast, they would sit clustered around the radio in the newsstand, straining to hear the music above the din of the subway station.
2. “Perhaps some day your cricket will play as well. I prophesy great things for a creature of such ability, Mario.”
3. He was staring at an old lady wearing a straw hat, wondering if the flowers on it were real, and if they were what they would taste like, when the train lurched to a halt.
4. Like most people who first ride the subway, Chester wasn’t used to abrupt stops.

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5. Chester craned his head out as far as he could to get his first look at New York by day.
6. The man stopped wiping the window and appraised Mario through his spectacles.
appraised

spectacles

7. Beside the counter, a porcelain vase with chrysanthemums painted on the side held bamboo flutes. Mario stooped to examine them.
8. Mr. Fong returned, carrying a red-and-green cricket cage in the shape of a pagoda.
9. The roof consisted of seven tiers, each one a little smaller than the one below, with a golden spire poking out the top.
tiers

spire

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10. “Are crickets lucky?” “Very. We like to say, ‘a little body often harbors a great soul.’”

Questions:

1. What was Chester’s diet before he came to New York? What new things to eat has he tried since coming to New York?
2. What talent does Mr. Smedley discover that Chester has?
3. Why does Mario go to Chinatown?

Thinking About the Story:

Foreshadowing:

4. *Foreshadowing* is a hint or clue an author gives about something that will happen later in the story. What is foreshadowed in the following passages from the story?
 - a. “That must have been awfully good playing,” [Mario] said finally.
Mr. Smedley smiled. “It was,” he said. “Perhaps some day your cricket will play as well. I prophesy great things for a creature of such ability, Mario.”

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Mario . . . remembered what Mr. Smedley had said later on that summer. But right now he had other things on his mind.

- b. “This is a very special cricket cage. It was the home of a just and brave fighter who brought much luck to its owner.”

“Are crickets lucky?”

“Very. We like to say, ‘a little body often harbors a great soul.’”

5. In these two chapters, how do each of the following characters show kindness to Chester and Mario?

Mickey:

Mr. Smedley:

Mr. Fong:

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Dig Deeper:

6. In Chapter 2, Mario told his mother that crickets were good luck. Later, Mr. Fong tells Mario that crickets are very lucky.

Below, list a few things that are said to bring good luck. One example is given.

<u>Finding a four-leaf clover</u>	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Look at your list above. Do you think these things *really* bring good luck? Why or why not?
8. Read 1 Timothy 4:7. What do these verses tell us about believing such things?
9. Read Luke 6:31, Hebrews 13:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:11. How do these verses tell us we should treat other people?

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10. We have already seen that Mickey, Mr. Smedley, and Mr. Fong showed kindness in these chapters. Next to their names below, explain how their actions demonstrate what these verses tell us.

Mickey:

Mr. Smedley:

Mr. Fong:

Additional Information—Fighting Crickets!

When Mr. Fong sees Chester, he says that he “looks like a real fighter” and calls him a Black Head General. When he brings out the cricket cage, he says it was “the home of a just and brave fighter who brought much luck to its owner.” Chester thinks he is more of a singer than a fighter. There is a long tradition in China of keeping pet crickets for their singing and also raising male crickets for cricket fighting.

Cricket fighting appears to have begun about 1,000 years ago, long after they were kept as singing pets. Only male crickets fight, and they are carefully chosen and cared for, being fed special diets to keep them healthy and large. The best qualities of a fighting cricket are a large head, large legs, and a loud chirp. They are kept in special cages for their comfort.

Before each fight, they are carefully weighed and put into special weight categories to make the competition as fair as possible, just as human boxers or wrestlers are. Two crickets are put into a small clear-sided arena and agitated with tiny brushes

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or puffs of air to get them annoyed enough to fight. Most fights end when one of the crickets turns to run away from the other, but there are occasional injuries. People often gamble on the fights.

Crickets are separated into a number of varieties based on their fighting skills, with the Generals being the top. It is quite a compliment for Mr. Fong to say Chester looks like a Black Head General!

[Source: wikipedia.org and <https://scroll.in/magazine/832574/more-dangerous-than-bodyline-the-violent-history-of-cricket-fighting-in-china>]

Optional Writing Assignment:

A *legend* is a traditional story or set of stories handed down from earlier times about a particular subject. Sometimes legends spring up around historical figures, such as the story of George Washington chopping down the cherry tree. The story Mr. Smedley tells Mario about Orpheus is a legend. Other legends or myths are told to explain or illustrate why things in nature are the way they are.

Write your own legend about how the cricket got its song, or choose something else from nature to explain in a legend.