

THE INDIAN IN THE CUPBOARD STUDY GUIDE

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For the novel by Lynne Reid Banks



Progeny Press

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Synopsis

On his birthday, Omri is somewhat disappointed to receive a small plastic Indian from his friend Patrick, but he is pleased when his brother Gillon gives him a white metal cupboard. Omri discovers that a key, once belonging to his great-grandmother, fits the lock on the cupboard perfectly. He puts the plastic Indian in the cupboard for the night and locks the cupboard door.

In the morning Omri is shocked to discover that the cupboard has somehow brought the Indian to life. Keeping it a secret, Omri helps the Indian adjust to his new home in Omri's bedroom, providing him with food and shelter. But Omri learns that the Indian is more than a novelty. He is a real person, an Iroquois brave, he has a name, Little Bear, and he lived in the past over 200 years ago.

But Omri cannot keep Little Bear a secret. He lets Patrick in on the discovery. Patrick does not understand that Little Bear is a real person, not a toy. He demands that Omri use the cupboard to bring a plastic cowboy to life for him. Omri has a hard time convincing the cowboy and Indian to get along, and when Patrick forces Omri to bring the little men to school, neither of them foresees the trouble that results.

Chapters 8, 9 & 10

Vocabulary:

For each of the following vocabulary words, write down a synonym and an antonym.

	<u>Synonym</u>	<u>Antonym</u>
1. mulish	_____	_____
2. warily	_____	_____
3. infuriated	_____	_____
4. dolefully	_____	_____
5. ornery	_____	_____
6. nonplused	_____	_____

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Dialect:

A *dialect* is a regional variety of language. In this story, the spelling and grammar in the sentences spoken by Boone are written in a Western American dialect so that the reader can get a sense of the way he speaks. This can also give the reader a clue about what place and time period he is from.

Using standard spelling and grammar, rewrite the sentences below that were spoken by Boone.

Example: Ah thought Ah smelt some'n good.

I thought I smelled something good.

1. Mebbe Ah drink too much, mebbe Ah cain't hold m'likker.
2. You shore ain't no reg'lar hallucy-nation.
3. Ah jest cain't figger out what's goin' on around here.
4. That plumb ain't no ways fair.
5. Whur's mah cawfee?
6. Less'n mebbe—jest mebbe—you ain't red atall, but yellor?

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Thinking about the Story:

6. When Little Bear gets upset at Omri for ruining the meat, he comes after Omri with an ax. Omri stops Little Bear's rampage by threatening to put him back in the cupboard—sending him back to his own time. Why do you think Little Bear wouldn't want to go back?

7. Little Bear says to Omri, "You no Great Spirit! Only stupid boy!" How has his view of Omri changed? Is there a difference in the way he treats Omri after this incident?

8. Omri seems eager to put Boone back in the cupboard at first, but not Little Bear. Why not?

Dig Deeper:

9. Why do Boone and Little Bear dislike each other?

Do you think it's a good reason to fight? Why or why not?

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10. How does Omri attempt to make peace between Little Bear and Boone?

Do you think this is a good way to bring about peace? Why or why not?

11. Read Matthew 5:9, Romans 14:19, and James 3:18. What is the general idea that is taught in these verses?
12. Think of a time you had a disagreement or fight with someone. What was the reason for the fight? How did you make peace again? If you have not yet made peace with the other person, write down some ways that you can bring about peace. Be willing to put these ideas into action and make peace with that person.

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12. Verses will vary. Some possibilities: Psalm 10:2, 3, Ecclesiastes 4:4, James 3:14–16, Luke 12:15, Ephesians 5:3, Philippians 2:4.

13. Boone and Little Bear began as enemies, but they seem to have become friends by the end of this section of reading. Answers will vary. Because they only had each other to rely on, the dangerous and frightening situation at school caused the two of them to draw closer together.

14. Answers will vary.

15. Answers will vary. They can teach us to rely on each other, to rely on God, to see what is really important in life, etc.

Chapters 14, 15 & 16

Vocabulary:

1. embarrassed and apologetic; 2. constituting a very large, indefinite number; 3. methodically, by procedure; 4. an instrument of wire mesh used for straining, draining, or sifting; 5. a small gardening tool with a scoop-shaped blade; 6. a state of ecstasy; 7. hastily, without caution or thought; 8. a vessel for spitting into; 9. parallel horizontal beams set wall to wall to support a floor or ceiling; 10. eating both plant and animal matter; 11. a person or animal with a deficiency of pigment in the skin, hair and eyes; 12. an antibiotic used to treat or prevent a wide variety of diseases; 13. infected, forming pus, resulting in blood poisoning.

Questions:

1. The cupboard was gone. Adiel had stolen it and had hidden it in the attic.

2. Omri might have learned the importance of keeping things neat and tidy and in their proper place.

3. They are not happy with the news. As much as they seem to enjoy their adventure through the cupboard, they both realize what it means to never go back to their own time periods. Both were given very special treatment. Boone didn't seem to enjoy being in Omri's world very much right from the start. It's a clear change in attitude for Little Bear, who seemed to enjoy being chief by virtue of being the only Indian in Omri's world.

4. This indicates that Omri is more concerned with Little Bear's welfare than his own. As much as he'd like to keep Little Bear, Omri wants to give Little Bear what Little Bear wants.

5. The television show bothers Little Bear because it shows Indians being killed by white settlers. Boone enjoys the television show for the same reason. Little Bear becomes upset with Boone's insults and finally shoots him with an arrow.

6. This indicates that Little Bear is sorry for what he did to Boone.

7. The key had fallen beneath the floorboards in Omri's bedroom. When one board was lifted up, Little Bear went down into the floor to search for the key. Little Bear found the key and was pulled from the hole seconds before Gillon's rat got him.

8. He decides that it would be best to send Little Bear and Boone back to their own times. He kept imagining that no matter what happened, it would end in some sort of disaster. This decision indicates that Omri is becoming less self-ish—that he is willing to lay aside his own desires for the well-being of others.

9. These verses do not say that anger is a sin, but they do indicate that anger is not a good thing. It does not bring about righteousness.

10. To be slow to anger means to not get angry quickly or act rashly. Although he didn't shoot Boone immediately, Little Bear was probably "quickly provoked."

11. Answers will vary.

12. Jesus is teaching that if you want to be great, you need to be a servant—giving to all regardless of their actions and without expecting any repayment.

13. If Little Bear is to be chief he must be a servant—serving both friends and enemies.

14. Answers will vary. Even though he considers Boone his enemy, Little Bear goes under the floor and into danger to get the key. Even though Boone continues to insult him, Little Bear takes care of him and watches over him.

15. Boone's general attitude toward Indians is that they are all murderous savages. His attitude changes only after he and Little Bear become blood brothers. He says that now that he is part Indian, he can no longer say anything bad about them.

16. To become brothers they make cuts on their skin, tie the open wounds together, and let the blood mingle. Considering that there are many blood-borne diseases, this is a dangerous practice.

17. All people are made in the image of God. In that sense all people are "related." The verses in Galatians say that all who have faith in Jesus are children of God, therefore brothers and sisters, descendants of Abraham and heirs to the Kingdom of God. Galatians 3:28 could also read "there is neither cowboy nor Indian."