American Born Chinese Reading Guide

About the book

**From the inside cover:** All Jin wants is to fit in. When his family moves to a new neighborhood, he suddenly finds that he's the only Chinese-American student at his school. Jocks and bullies pick on him constantly, and he has hardly any friends. Then to make matters worse, he falls in love with an all-American girl...

Born to rule over all the monkeys in the world, the story of the Monkey King is one of the oldest and greatest Chinese fables. Adored by his subjects, master of the arts of kung-fu, he is the most powerful monkey on earth. But the Monkey King doesn't want to be a monkey. He wants to be hailed as a god...

Chin-Kee is the ultimate negative Chinese stereotype, and he's ruining his cousin Danny's life. Danny's a basketball player, a popular kid at school, but every year Chin-Kee comes to visit, and every year Danny has to transfer to a new school to escape the shame. This year, though, things quickly go from bad to worse...

These three apparently unrelated tales come together with an unexpected twist, in a modern fable that is hilarious, poignant, and action-packed. *American Born Chinese* is an amazing ride, all the way up to the astonishing climax—and confirms what a growing number of readers already know: Gene Yang is a major talent.

About the author

**From the back inside cover:** Gene Yang began drawing comic books in the fifth grade. In 1997, he received the Xeric Grant, a prestigious comics industry grant, for *Gordon Yamamoto and the King of the Geeks*, his first comics work as an adult. He has since written and drawn a number of titles, including *Duncan's Kingdom* (with art by Derek Kirk Kim) and *The Rosary Comic Book*.

He lives in the San Francisco Bay Area with his lovely wife, Theresa, and son Kolbe, and teaches computer science at a Roman Catholic high school.

**Author’s Website:** [http://www.humblecomics.com/](http://www.humblecomics.com/)

The story behind Monkey King

*Monkey King*, or known to the Chinese old and young as Xi You Ji (*Journey to the West*), is one of the renowned classical Chinese novels dated back some four hundred years ago, the other three being *Shui Hu* (*The Water Margins*), *Hong Lou Meng* (*Dream of the Red Mansion*), and *San Guo* (*Romance of Three Kingdoms*).

*Monkey King* is based on a true story of a famous monk, Xuan Zang of the Chinese Tang Dynasty (602-664). After a decade of trials and tribulations, he arrived on foot to what is today India, the birthplace of Buddhism. He was there for the true Buddhist holy books.
When he returned, Xuan Zang translated the Sutras into Chinese, thus making a great contribution to the development of Buddhism in China.

*Monkey King* is an allegorical rendition of the journey, mingled with Chinese fables, fairy tales, legends, superstitions, popular beliefs, monster stories, and whatever the author could find in the Taoist, Buddhist, and Chinese popular religions. While average readers are fascinated with the prowess and wisdom of the Monkey King, many reviewers agree that the protagonist embodies what the author tried to convey to his readers: a rebellious spirit against the then untouchable feudal rulers.

The monkey is indeed rebellious. He was, according to the story, born out of a rock, fertilized by the grace of Heaven and Earth. Being extremely intelligent, he has learned all the magic tricks and gongfu from an immortal Taoist master. Now he can transform himself into seventy-two different images such as a tree, a bird, a beast of prey, or an insect that can sneak into an enemy's body to fight him or her inside out. Using clouds as a vehicle, he can travel 108,000 miles at a single somersault.

He claims to be The King in defiance of the only authority over the heaven, the seas, the earth and the subterranean world -- Yù Huáng Dà Dì, or "The Great Emperor of Jade." That act of high treason, coupled with complaints from the masters of the four seas and the Hell, incurs the relentless scourge of the heavenly army. In fact, the monkey has fought into the ocean and seized the Dragon King's crown treasure: a huge gold-banded iron rod used as a ballast of the waters. Able to expand or shrink at his command, the iron rod becomes the monkey's favorite weapon in his later feats. The first test of its power came when the monkey stormed into hell and threatened the Hadean king into sparing his and his followers mortal life so that they all could enjoy eternity.

After many showdowns with the fearless Monkey King, the heavenly army have suffered numerous humiliating defeats. The celestial monarch has but to give the dove faction a chance to try their appeasement strategy—to offer the monkey an official title in heaven with little authority. When he has learned the truth that he is nothing but an object of ridicule, the enraged monkey revolts, fighting all his way back to earth to resume his original claim as The King.

Eventually, the heavenly army, enlisting the help of all the god warriors with diverse tricks, manages to capture the barely invincible monkey. He is sentenced to capital punishment. However, all methods of execution fail. Having a bronze head and iron shoulders, the monkey dulls many a sword inflicted upon him. As the last resort, the emperor commands that he be incinerated in the furnace where his Taoist minister Tai Shang Lao Jun refines his pills of immortality. Instead of killing the monkey, the fire and smoke therein sharpened his eyes so that he now can see through things that others can not. He fights his way back to earth again.

At his wit's end, the celestial emperor asks Buddha for help. Buddha imprisons the monkey under a great mountain known as Wu Zhi Shan (The Mount of Five Fingers). The tenacious monkey survives the enormous weight and pressure. Five hundred years later, there comes to his rescue the Tang Monk, Xuan Zang, whom we mentioned at the beginning of the story.

To make sure that the monk can make for the West to get the Sutras, Buddha has arranged for Monkey King to become the monk's escort in the capacity of his disciple. soon on their way to the west, two more disciples, also at the will of the Buddha, join their company. One is the humorous and not uncourageous pig transgressed from an inebrious celestial general
for his assault against a fairy; the other a sea monster who also used to be a celestial
general now in exile for a misdemeanor.

The party of four was further re-enforced by a horse, an incarnation of a dragon's son, start
their stormy journey to the West -- a journey packed with actions and adventures that
brought into full play the puissance of the monks' disciples, Monkey King in particular.

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**Awards and honors for American Born Chinese**

- 2007 Michael Printz Award
- 2006 National Book Award Finalist
- American Library Association Best Book for Young Adults, Top 10
- *Publisher's Weekly* Best Book of the Year
- *School Library Journal* Best Book of the Year
- *San Francisco Chronicle* Best Book of the Year
- NPR Holiday Pick
- amazon.com Best Graphic Novel/Comic of the Year

**Interesting websites**

**First Second:** Publisher's website

http://firstsecondbooks.typepad.com/mainblog/

**Interview with Gene Luen Yang**

http://www.the-trades.com/article.php?id=5053

**Read About Comics:** Review of *American Born Chinese*


**More Reviews of American Born Chinese**

http://www.firstsecondbooks.net/reviews/reviewsABC.html
Discussion questions

If you haven't read the book, please read on at your own risk, questions may give away the ending.

1. *American Born Chinese* is the first graphic novel to win the Printz Award and be a finalist for the National Book Award. Why do you think it was picked for these awards and honors? Would you have chosen it? Explain.
2. Graphic novels appeal to a variety of people. There are a variety of graphic novel genres such as fantasy, super-hero, non-fiction, etc. Have you read graphic novels in the past? How did *American Born Chinese* compare? Graphically speaking what appealed to you? What did not?
3. Did you find the graphic novel an effective way for Yang to tell his story?
4. Yang uses humor to make light of experiences that are not so humorous for the immigrants that experience them. Often when reading we laugh at painful experiences of the characters. Have you or anyone you've known had experiences that were funny to others, but very painful to you? If possible, explain. Do you think Yang used the technique of humor appropriately?
5. What can be learned from the Monkey King and *American Born Chinese*?
6. Yang uses a television show to tell Chin-Kee's story. Why do you think he does this? Was it effective? Why?
7. The Monkey King chooses to be stuck in the mountain of rocks for 500 years, to escape he must return to his "true form." How do the other characters experience this in *American Born Chinese*? Have you experienced a similar situation in your life?

Resources


If you would like to link to this page, please use the following link: [http://www.holmen.k12.wi.us/se3bin/clientgenie.cgi?schoolname=school314&statusFlag=goGenie&geniesite=227&myButton=q5plugin&db=q227_b4222](http://www.holmen.k12.wi.us/se3bin/clientgenie.cgi?schoolname=school314&statusFlag=goGenie&geniesite=227&myButton=q5plugin&db=q227_b4222)
Discover how to publish your book. This detailed blog post covers everything you need to know about self-publishing, traditional publishing, and publishing with a small press. How to Publish a Book: The Ultimate Guide to Book Publishing in 2019. 0 comments.

Publishing a book has never been easier, thanks to the internet. You have three main options to consider if you want to publish a book: self-publishing, traditional publishing, and publishing with a small press (an independent publishing company). In this tutorial you are going to learn how to book a flight online as well as how to get a great price for your ticket. Step #1 -- Searching for the Best Value Flight. Before booking the flight it is a good idea to do some research on the best price available. Fortunately there are many websites available that provide this service, here we are going to be using Skyscanner which can be found at "www.skyscanner.com". You will need to choose where you want to fly from and to and a date for your departure and return. Want to learn how to copyright a book? This essential guide includes an explainer video, a free infographic, and tips from practicing attorneys. How To Copyright A Book: A Definitive Guide. Posted in: Understanding Publishing on May 24, 2017 14 Comments 💬. Contents. How To Copyright A Book: A Definitive Guide. What is copyright? What is registered copyright? How to copyright a book. INFOGRAPHIC: Guide to Copyright Registration. VIDEO: Copyrighting a Book (in 60 seconds).