



Parachute Kids

Written and illustrated by Betty C. Tang

Grades 6-8

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Reading Guide by Merridith Chou, L.A. Conservancy Volunteer

Discussion Questions

1. Ann (Feng-Li) and her siblings have different reactions to the news that they will be living in America. How do each of them cope with the difficulties initially and as they settle in? How do they create familiarity in a foreign place? Who do they turn to? Can coping mechanisms ultimately be detrimental? If so, how?
2. Ann and her siblings are undocumented immigrants, which means they need to stay out of trouble. How does this affect their ability to stand up for themselves, as they discuss on page 89? If other people discover their immigration status, what would be the implications? How do the scammers (p. 170) manipulate Jessie (Jia-Xi) using their immigration status?
3. On page 21, Ma tells Ann and her siblings that “America is the land of opportunity” and that this is why she and Ba have decided to leave them here. What are some other ideas about America that have drawn and inspired immigrants to come, despite difficulties?
4. In the book, speech bubbles with a yellow background represent words spoken in Chinese, while English is represented by white speech bubbles. We are introduced to Ann and her siblings as they speak Chinese to one another, but as their journey progresses in America, they communicate more in English, which is a new language for them. How does this affect their ability to communicate with others?
5. Why was Jason (Ke-Gang) so upset at the idea of choosing an American name? Does this affect his sense of his own identity? How important is the language you speak when it comes to your cultural identity?



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6. Rebecca is the only Chinese student in Ann’s class, and Ann observes that she may have been the only Chinese student at their school (page 24). Mrs. Fletcher assigns Ann the seat next to Rebecca, and their classmates point out that they are both Chinese. On page 32, their peers make fun of Ann for being Chinese and ask Rebecca if she is also from Taiwan, to which Rebecca responds, “No, I’m American.” What is she trying to do? Is being both Chinese and American mutually exclusive? What does it mean to be American? Would everyone agree with your definition? Is it necessary for everyone to agree on one “correct” definition?

