

Far from Home

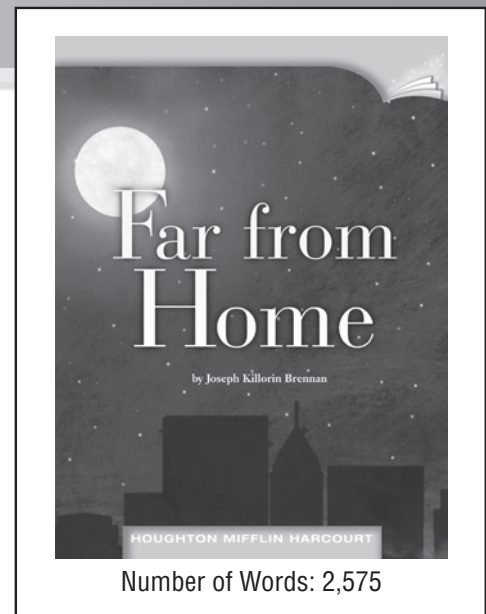
by Joseph Killorin Brennan

Fountas-Pinnell Level W

Realistic Fiction

Selection Summary

A girl is homesick for China after moving to America with her parents. The words of her immigrant grandmother's diary help her adjust. Illustrations show aspects of the two cultures.



Characteristics of the Text

| | |
|---|---|
| Genre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realistic fiction |
| Text Structure | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Third-person continuous narrative describes a girl learning to adjust to a new culture |
| Content | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immigrating to the United States • Chinese cultural customs and traditions • Keeping a diary; making new friends; trying new things |
| Themes and Ideas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change can help people grow. • People everywhere can find things in common. • Keeping an open mind can help you adjust to a new situation. • It's a good idea to accept advice from someone with experience. |
| Language and Literary Features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversational language with dialogue • Slang expressions • The moon as a universal symbol that transcends cultural understanding |
| Sentence Complexity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simple, compound, and complex sentences • Quotations, exclamations • Numbered list in diary • Dramatic, exaggerated language: <i>abandoned; rude, snorting hogs; dismay</i> |
| Vocabulary Words | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chinese character, place, and food names: <i>Chen-chi, Guangzhou, dim sum</i> • Regular adverbs: <i>recently, broadly, typically, simply</i> • Difficult words often defined in context |
| Illustrations | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Realistic illustrations on nearly every page |
| Book and Print Features | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 13 pages of text, with illustrations on most pages |
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Build Background

Help students use their experience with change. Build interest by asking questions such as the following: *Has your parent ever made a decision that made a huge difference in your life? How did you react? Is change good or bad? Explain.* Read the title and author and talk about the cover illustration. Tell students that this story is realistic fiction about a girl, Lian, who moves to the United States from China.

Introduce the Text

Guide students through the text, noting important ideas, and helping with unfamiliar language and vocabulary so they can read the text successfully. Here are some suggestions:

Pages 2–3: Have students read the first two sentences on page 2 (“The sky above me is America,” Lian wrote to her friend, Chen-chi. “It is blue, just like you see in China, but it’s not the same blue.”). **Suggested language:** *Lian is writing to her friend back in China. What do you think Lian means when she says the sky is not the same blue? Explain that Lian’s father works in an embassy.* **Ask:** *What kind of work is done in an embassy?*

Page 4: Explain that Lian’s mother scolds her for writing letters back home in which she complains about how miserable she is. **Ask:** *What kinds of things do you think someone like Lian might do to be happier in her new country?*

Page 6–7: When Lian receives the diary of an immigrant grandmother, Wai Po, whom she had never known while alive, she says to her mother, “I am honored.” **Ask:** *What do Lian’s words tell you about Chinese cultural traditions?*

Now turn back and read to find out what happens to Lian and how she learns to live far from home.

Expand Your Vocabulary

blush – to become red in the face, especially from modesty, embarrassment, or shame; flush, p. 3

embassy – a building containing the offices of an ambassador and staff, p. 2

meteorite – a stony or metallic mass of matter that has fallen to the earth’s surface from outer space, p. 12

scolded – reprimanded or criticized harshly and usually angrily, p. 4

scoring – keeping a numerical record of a competitive event, p. 13

Read

Have students read silently while you listen to individual students read aloud. Support their understanding of the text as needed.

Remind students to use the Visualize Strategy  **TARGET STRATEGY** and to use text clues as they read. Have them tell what Lian discovers about change and people everywhere.

Discuss and Revisit the Text

Personal Response

Invite students to share their personal responses to the book.

Suggested language: *Have you ever had a big change in your life similar to Lian? How did you adjust to the change? Why do you think moving to a country was such a big change for Lian?*

Ways of Thinking

As you discuss the text, help students understand these points:

| Thinking Within the Text | Thinking Beyond the Text | Thinking About the Text |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lian moves from China to America with her parents.• Lian reads rules for living in a foreign country in her grandmother's diary.• Lian learns to bowl and shares a Chinese meal with a new American friend. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Willingness to consider new people and ideas helps people cope with change.• Despite cultural differences, peoples of the world share many traits and values.• Grandparents and other elders may have valuable experiences to impart. | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The plot moves the character from resistance to acceptance of change.• Dialogue reveals cultural differences and the misunderstandings that can occur as a result of not knowing about another's culture.• The illustrations support the text, including the characters' thoughts. |

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Choices for Further Support

- **Fluency** Invite students to participate in a readers' theater using a passage from the text. Remind them to use facial expressions and voice inflections to demonstrate the emotions of the scene.
- **Comprehension** Based on your observations of the students' reading and discussion, revisit parts of the text to clarify or extend comprehension. Remind students to go back to the text to support their ideas.
- **Phonics/Word Work** Provide practice as needed with words and word parts, using examples from the text. Remind students that many words in English have Latin roots, prefixes, and/or suffixes. For example, the word *disgusting* on page 7 is formed from the Latin prefix *dis*, which means *away*, *not*, or *deprived* and the Latin base word *gustus*, which means a *tasting*. Tell students that the word *gustatory* refers to eating or the sense of taste. Explain that dictionaries often provide the etymology, or history, of words.

Writing about Reading

Critical Thinking

Have students complete the Critical Thinking questions on BLM 5.9.

Responding

Have students complete the activities at the back of the book, using their Reader's Notebook. Use the instruction below as needed to reinforce or extend understanding of the comprehension skill.

Target Comprehension Skill

Theme ✓ **TARGET SKILL** Remind students that they can understand theme by looking for details that contribute to the same big idea in the story. Model how to add details to the Graphic Organizer, using a “Think Aloud” like the one below:

Think Aloud

After Lian's mother gives her Wai Po's diary, Lian follows her grandmother's advice to make a new friend. These details about Lian support the theme that it is a good idea to become involved in your new home.

Practice the Skill

Encourage students to share their examples of another story in which the theme is about a character who learns to accept changes in his or her life.

Writing Prompt: Thinking Beyond the Text

Have students write a response to the prompt on page 6. Remind them that when they think beyond the text, they use their personal knowledge to reach new understandings.

Assessment Prompts

- What is the meaning of *instinctively* on page 11?
- How does Tammy explain bowling to Lian?
- Which sentences from page 13 show that Lian is trying to adjust to her new country?

English Language Development

Reading Support Make sure the text matches the student's reading level. Language and content should be accessible with regular teaching support.

Cultural Support The story mentions three sports: football, surfing, and bowling. Invite students to share their knowledge of these sports. Provide illustrations, pictures, and a general description of each sport to supplement students' prior knowledge.

Oral Language Development

Check student comprehension, using a dialogue that best matches your students' English proficiency level. **Speaker 1** is the teacher, **Speaker 2** is the student.

| Beginning/Early Intermediate | Intermediate | Early Advanced/ Advanced |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Speaker 1: Who is the main character?</p> <p>Speaker 2: Lian</p> <p>Speaker 1: Where had Lian lived before the time of the story?</p> <p>Speaker 2: Guangzhou, China</p> <p>Speaker 1: Why did Lian's family move to America?</p> <p>Speaker 2: because her father works in the embassy</p> | <p>Speaker 1: Why does Lian think the man at the party is rude?</p> <p>Speaker 2: Lian thinks the man is rude because he ignores her father and calls her by her first name.</p> <p>Speaker 1: Why does Lian know little about Wai Po?</p> <p>Speaker 2: Lian knows little about Wai Po because she died before Lian was born.</p> | <p>Speaker 1: When does Lian realize that she's starting to forget parts of her life in China?</p> <p>Speaker 2: Lian looks at the backyards in the moonlight and says her memories are becoming dim and fading like the view.</p> <p>Speaker 1: What is the moon a symbol for in the story?</p> <p>Speaker 2: The moon is a symbol for things that stay the same all over the world.</p> |

Responding

TARGET SKILL **Theme** What does Lian do in the story that shows you she misses China? What helps her to feel good about living in America? Copy the chart below. Fill it in to describe things about Lian or things Lian did to help herself and support the theme of the story.

| | | |
|--|---|---|
| <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Detail</p> <p>Lian writes letters home.</p> | <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Detail</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p> | <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Detail</p> <p style="text-align: center;">?</p> |
| <p style="text-align: center; font-weight: bold;">Theme</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Become involved in your new home.</p> | | |

Write About It

Text to Self Think about a time you were homesick. Imagine how you felt. Write a paragraph describing the scene using descriptions of the place, your feelings, and how you thought of your home.

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Name _____ Date _____

Lesson 5
 BLACKLINE MASTER 5.9

Critical Thinking

Read and answer the questions. Possible responses shown.

- Think within the text** Why is Lian upset about the man in the embassy talking to her first instead of to her father?
 In China, it is considered respectful to address the oldest person in the room first. Men and adults also have higher status over women and children, and first names are not used initially.
- Think within the text** Besides giving Lian her grandmother's diary to read, how else do Lian's parents try to help her?
 They take her to eat American food, give her advice about how to adapt to her new situation, and teach her English.
- Think beyond the text** Why do you think Tammy takes Lian to a Chinese restaurant?
 She is trying to make her feel more at home. It also shows Lian that Tammy is interested in learning about Lian's culture.
- Think about the text** What is the author's point of view about adapting to a new environment? Do you agree or disagree? Why?
 The author seems to think that it is important to assimilate as quickly as possible. Some people feel that it is better to adjust more slowly, and to find a balance between preserving the old traditions and relationships and establishing new ones.

Making Connections Lian learns a lot about adjusting to life in America by reading her grandmother's diary. Write about something that you learned from a relative, family friend, or other adult. How did it change your life?

Write your answer in your Reader's Notebook.

Critical Thinking
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Grade 5, Unit 1: School Spirit!

Far from Home

Thinking Beyond the Text

Think about the questions below. Then write your answer in two or three paragraphs.

Remember that when you think beyond the text, you use your personal knowledge to reach new understandings.

Lian faced a big change in her life when she moved to a new country. What do you think Lian’s life will be like in the weeks and months to come? What will happen to her, and why? Be sure to base your predictions on events and ideas in the story.



Name _____ Date _____

Critical Thinking

Far from Home
Critical Thinking

Read and answer the questions.

1. **Think within the text** Why is Lian upset about the man in the embassy talking to her first instead of to her father?

2. **Think within the text** Besides giving Lian her grandmother's diary to read, how else do Lian's parents try to help her?

3. **Think beyond the text** Why do you think Tammy takes Lian to a Chinese restaurant?

4. **Think about the text** What is the author's point of view about adapting to a new environment? Do you agree or disagree? Why?

Making Connections Lian learns a lot about adjusting to life in America by reading her grandmother's diary. Write about something that you learned from a relative, family friend, or other adult. How did it change your life?

Write your answer in your Reader's Notebook.

Far From Home • LEVEL V

Far From Home
Running Record Form

| page | Selection Text | Errors | Self-Corrections |
|------|--|--|--|
| 4 | <p>“Lian, please come inside,” her mother called.</p> <p>Lian put down her letter and went inside, where her mother had set up a small office off of the kitchen. In the few days they had been here, her mother had already established an American version of the mail-order business she had run in China. The little room had neat stacks of the software she had written and marketed herself. Banks of computers flickered on the wall behind her.</p> <p>“Enough with writing letters back home,” her mother scolded.</p> <p>“All you do is tell everyone how miserable you are. No one cares.”</p> | | |
| | Comments: | Accuracy Rate (# words read correctly/99 × 100) _____ % | Total Self-Corrections _____ |

| Behavior | Code | Error |
|------------------------------------|----------|-------|
| Read word correctly | ✓ cat | 0 |
| Repeated word, sentence, or phrase | Ⓜ cat | 0 |
| Omission | ̄ cat | 1 |

| Behavior | Code | Error |
|---------------|--------------------------|-------|
| Substitution | cut cat | 1 |
| Self-corrects | cut ^{sc} cat | 0 |
| Insertion | the ^ cat | 1 |
| Word told | Ⓢ cat | 1 |

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