



# In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson

by Bette Bao Lord

## Teacher's Guide

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## Synopsis

### Chapter 1

Bandit, also known as Sixth Cousin, lives in China in the Year of the Dog, 4645. She is ten years old. One winter morning, a letter arrives from her father, who is living in America. Bandit is mystified by the letter because it makes Mother smile, Grandmother cry, and Grandfather angry. Bandit tries to solve the mystery, but her closest friend Fourth Cousin is no help at all. When Bandit leaves her toys on the floor, the servant Awaiting Marriage slips on the toys and breaks a pitcher. Bandit is summoned to her Grandmother's room soon after, so she is sure that she will be punished for causing Awaiting Marriage to have an accident. Bandit brings her adorable young male cousin Precious Coins with her to melt the adults' hearts. Bandit is shocked when Grandmother tells her that Father's letter is summoning her and her mother to America to join him. The relatives bemoan their departure to a land devoid of clan members and culture. During the New Year's Celebration, Grandfather allows Bandit to pick a new name for her new life. First she picks Uncle Sam, to everyone's mockery. Then she settles on Shirley Temple. Grandfather approves, so Bandit becomes Shirley Temple Wong.

### Chapter 2

Shirley and her mother take the month-long boat journey from China to San Francisco. Then they take a train across the country, finally arriving in Brooklyn and Father's waiting arms. Shirley is initially shocked that Father's apartment is so small; Mother is equally surprised that she is now expected to cook, clean, and do laundry. All of these chores were handled by servants in China. Shirley's father takes her and her mother on a tour of the neighborhood. Later, when some guests come over, Shirley volunteers to get her father's ciga-

rettes. She is sure that she can get back to the apartment, but she gets lost. Her father finds her and takes her home without a word of rebuke.

### Chapter 3

The principal places Shirley in the fifth grade, even though she doesn't speak a word of English. Shirley likes her teacher Mrs. Rappaport very much. Since Shirley does not understand American customs, she tries to copy the principal's wink, convincing Mrs. Rappaport that she cannot see well and needs glasses!

### Chapter 4

Shirley doesn't make friends because she isn't good at sports and doesn't understand enough English to communicate easily. Shirley memorizes a poem and everyone laughs at her because it is a humorous verse. Nonetheless, she is mortified. Mrs. Wong arranges for Shirley to take piano lessons with their landlady Señora Rodriguez, whose parrot Toscanini gets involved as well. Shirley is crushed when a new student who appears to be Chinese was born in Tennessee and doesn't speak Chinese. Shirley's parents, seeing her loneliness, buy her roller skates, but when Shirley injures herself learning how to skate,

her mother takes the skates away.

### Chapter 5

In May, Shirley accidentally breaks up a baseball game and gets into a fight with Mabel, a fellow classmate, who blackens both of Shirley's eyes. Shirley refuses to tattle to her parents, even when they take her to the police station. Mabel befriends Shirley and makes the other kids accept her on the baseball team. Mabel teaches Shirley how to roller skate, too. At last, Shirley has a friend.

### Chapter 6

Mrs. Rappaport explains that Jackie Robinson is a symbol of America and the opportunity that our country offers to everyone.



### Chapter 7

On the last day of school, Shirley sees Señora Rodriguez crying because she misses her daughter in their native country. Señora Rodriguez wants to go home, but has no one to be the landlord in her absence. Shirley volunteers her parents and everyone is happy. The Wongs get to live for free in exchange for taking care of the building.

### Chapter 8

Mr. Wong uses their first free month of rent to buy Shirley a bed. Shirley and her father clean the basement. Mr. Wong takes all the junk, repairs it, and gives it to the tenants who need it. Everyone is delighted with the arrangement. Then he paints the building. When the fuses go out, Shirley goes to repair them but smudges all the wet paint.

### Chapter 9

Shirley finds that she is losing her Chinese speech and language. She is delighted to have the same teacher for sixth grade and makes a new friend, Emily Levy. They share each other's books, and Emily shows Shirley her father's copy of *Gray's Anatomy*. Shirley baby-sits for Mrs. O'Reilly's triplets, a real handful. In between feeding and diapering, Shirley stays glued to the radio to hear the Dodgers play, as she has become a rabid Dodgers' fan. Shirley's parents get her a piggy bank and a bank account so she can save her baby-sitting money for her college fund. Shirley realizes how hard her parents work.

### Chapter 10

Brooklyn goes berserk when the Dodgers become the champions of the National League. This means that the Dodgers will play the Yankees in the World Series. Shirley and her friends follow the games closely and despair when the Dodgers lose to the Yankees.

### Chapter 11

The Wongs are upset that they have failed to celebrate the fullest moon of the year, so they hold a ceremony a bit late. They recall one of Grandfather's fables and pretend they are back in China.

### Chapter 12

All the tenants assist with the turkey costume for the school Thanksgiving pageant. Shirley helps her friend Emily get elected class president, even though Emily is not popular. Mrs. Rappaport announces that Jackie Robinson is coming to school and the 6th grade class president will make a speech and presentation to him. Shirley is very resentful of Emily's role, but to her sur-

prise, Emily suggests that Shirley be the one to make the presentation because she is such a baseball fan. Everyone agrees. Shirley makes a wonderful speech and the day is a great triumph. Shirley is delighted as she looks back at her first year in America.

## Timeline of Immigration to America

- 1786** U.S. establishes first Native American reservation and policy of dealing with each tribe as an independent nation.
- 1790** Federal government requires two years of residency for Naturalization.
- 1808** Congress bans importation of slaves.
- 1816** American Colonization Society forms to assist in repatriating free African-Americans to a colony named Liberia on the west coast of Africa.
- 1819** Congress establishes reporting on immigration.
- 1830** Congress passes the Removal Act, forcing Native Americans to settle in Indian Territory west of the Mississippi River.
- 1838** Cherokee Indians forced on thousand-mile march to the Indian Territory. Approximately 4,000 Cherokees die on this "Trail of Tears."
- 1845** Irish potato famine kills one million people and prompts almost 500,000 survivors to immigrate to America over the next five years.
- 1848** Mexican-American War ends: U.S. acquires additional territory and people under its jurisdiction.
- 1849** California Gold Rush sparks first mass immigration from China.
- 1860** Poland's religious and economic conditions prompt immigration of approximately two million Poles by 1914.
- 1862** Homestead Act allows any male over the age of 21 and the head of a family to claim up to 160 acres of land and improve it within five years or to purchase the land at a small fee.

<p><b>1864</b> Congress legalizes the importation of contract laborers. The Njavo take the "Long Walk," a three-hundred mile forced march from a Southwest Indian territory to Fort Sumner, New Mexico. Japanese laborers arrive in Hawaii to work in sugar cane fields.</p> <p><b>1876</b> California Senate committee investigates the "social, moral, and political effect of Chinese immigration."</p> <p><b>1877</b> Congress investigates the criminal influence of Chinese immigrants.</p> <p><b>1880</b> Italy's troubled economy, crop failures, and political instability spark mass immigration, with nearly four million Italian immigrants arriving in the U.S.</p> <p><b>1881</b> The assassination of Czar Alexander II prompts civil unrest and economic instability throughout Russia.</p> <p><b>1882</b> Russia's May Laws severely restrict the ability of Jewish citizens to live and work in Russia. The country's instability prompts more than three million Russians to immigrate to the U.S. over three decades. Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 suspends immigration of Chinese laborers under penalty of imprisonment and deportation.</p> <p><b>1885</b> Congress bans the admission of contract laborers.</p> <p><b>1887</b> Dawes Act dissolves many Indian reservations.</p> <p><b>1889</b> Unoccupied lands in Oklahoma are made available to white settlers.</p> <p><b>1898</b> The Spanish-American War ends with Cuba's independence and the U.S. acquisition of Puerto Rico and Guam.</p> <p><b>1900</b> Congress establishes a civil government in Puerto Rico, and the Jones Act grants U.S. citizenship to island inhabitants.</p> <p><b>1907</b> U.S. and Japan form a "Gentleman's Agreement" in which Japan ends issuance of passports to laborers and the U.S. agrees not to prohibit Japanese immigration.</p>	<p><b>1911</b> The Dillingham Commission identifies Mexican laborers as the best solution to the Southwest labor shortage. Mexicans are exempt from immigrant "head taxes" set in 1903 and 1907.</p> <p><b>1913</b> California's Alien Land Law, aimed at Japanese, rules that aliens "ineligible to citizenship" are ineligible to own agricultural property.</p> <p><b>1915</b> Supreme Court rules in <i>Ozawa v. U.S.</i> that first-generation Japanese are ineligible for citizenship and cannot apply for naturalization.</p> <p><b>1917</b> U.S. enters WW I and anti-German sentiment swells at home. The names of schools, foods, streets, towns, and some families are changed to sound less Germanic.</p> <p><b>1924</b> Immigration Act of 1924 establishes fixed quotas of national origin and eliminates Far East immigration. President Calvin Coolidge signs a bill granting Native Americans full citizenship.</p> <p><b>1929</b> Congress makes annual immigration quotas permanent.</p> <p><b>1941</b> Japan's surprise attack on Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, propels the U.S. into WW II. More than 1,000 Japanese-American community leaders are incarcerated because of national security concerns. President Roosevelt signs Executive Order 8802, forbidding discrimination in federal hiring, job-training programs, and defense industries. The newly created Fair Employment Practices Commission investigates discrimination against black employees.</p> <p><b>1942</b> President Franklin Roosevelt signs Executive Order 9066, authorizing the building of "relocation camps" for Japanese Americans living along the Pacific Coast. Congress allows for importation of agricultural workers from within North, Central, and South America. The Bracero Program allows Mexican laborers to work in the U.S.</p> <p><b>1943</b> Magnuson Act repeals the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, establishes quotas for Chinese immigrants, and makes them eligible for U.S. citizenship.</p>
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- 1945** The War Bride Act and the G.I. Fiancées Act allows immigration of foreign-born wives, fiancé(e)s, husbands, and children of U.S. armed forces personnel. Affects mainly Chinese.
- 1948** Supreme Court rules that California's Alien Land Laws prohibiting the ownership of agricultural property violate the 14th Amendment; this mainly affects Japanese immigrants. U.S. Immigration authorities admit persons fleeing persecution in their native lands, allowing 205,000 refugees to enter within two years.
- 1950** Bureau of Indian Affairs terminates federal services for Native Americans in lieu of state supervision.
- 1952** Immigration and Nationality Act allows individuals of all races to be eligible for naturalization. The act also reaffirms national origins quota system; limits immigration from the Eastern Hemisphere while leaving the Western Hemisphere unrestricted; establishes preferences for skilled workers and relatives of U.S. citizens and permanent resident aliens; and tightens security and screening standards and procedures.
- 1953** Congress amends the 1948 refugee policy to allow for the admission of 200,000 more refugees.
- 1959** Castro's Cuban revolution prompts mass exodus of more than 200,000 Cuban and Puerto Rican people within three years.
- 1961** Cuban Refugee Program handles influx of immigrants to Miami with 300,000 Cuban and Puerto Rican immigrants relocated across the U.S. during the next two decades.
- 1965** Immigration Act of 1965: Preference is given to immediate families of Chinese immigrants and skilled workers. "Freedom flight" airlifts begin for Cuban refugees, assisting more than 260,000 people over the next eight years. The Bracero Program ends after employing almost 4.5 million Mexican nationals.
- 1966** Cuban Refugee Act permits more than 400,000 people to enter the U.S.

- 1980** Refugee Act redefines criteria and procedures for admitting refugees.
- 1986** Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA) legalizes illegal aliens residing in the U.S. unlawfully since 1982.
- 1988** The Civil Liberties Act provides compensation of \$20,000 and a presidential apology to all Japanese-American survivors of the WW II internment camps.
- 2001** Memorial honoring Japanese-American veterans and detainees opens on the edge of the Capitol grounds in Washington, D.C.

### Author Sketch

Bette Bao Lord was born in 1938 in Shanghai, China. Her life bears several striking similarities to the life of her fictional creation Shirley Temple Wong. First, both came from elite families: Bette Bao's father was a Nationalist Chinese government official, while Shirley's parents were members of a cultured, wealthy clan. Second, both immigrated to the United States in 1946. Third, both worked hard in school and came from families that valued education. As a result, Bette Bao earned her B.A. from Tufts University in 1959 and her M.A. from the Fletcher School of Law and Diplomacy the following year.



In 1963, Bette Bao married Winston Lord, an assistant secretary for Asian and Pacific affairs and a U.S. ambassador to the People's Republic of China. The following year, Bette Bao Lord became a naturalized U.S. citizen. The couple had two children.

Lord has had a rich and varied career. From 1961 to 1962, she worked as a writer and lecturer at the University of Hawaii's East-West Cultural Center in Honolulu. The following year, she worked for the Fulbright Exchange Program as an officer. She taught and performed modern dance in Geneva, Switzerland, and Washington, DC, from 1964 to 1973. She was also the conference director of the National Conference for the Associated Councils of the Arts, 1970-1971 and a member of selection committee, White House Fellows, 1979-81.



In a striking difference from Shirley Temple Wong's life, however, Bette Bao Lord's sibling was born in China, not in America. Further, Lord's infant sister, Sansan, remained in China and was forced to stay with foster parents when the Communist revolution broke out. Lord had no contact with her sister until Sansan finally rejoined her family in 1962. Because she thought that Sansan's experiences in China—years of hard manual labor and waiting in long food ration lines—would provide readers with stories and insights they might never encounter otherwise, Lord tried to find someone to write her sister's biography. When Lord couldn't find anyone to take on the task, she decided to write the book herself. Thus Lord's writing career was born.

Lord originally planned her next book as a nonfiction account of a trip she took to China in 1973. However, afraid that her relatives would be punished by the Communist government because of details in the book, Lord created her first novel instead. The result, *Spring Moon*, traces the destruction of the country's upper-middle-class structure and the traditional family system by concentrating on five generations of the aristocratic Chang family. The book was well received by critics.

Next came *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*. Based on Lord's own life, the novel was a success. Lord continued with several other well-received books, both fiction and nonfiction. No matter how great her success with her writing, however, Lord has never lost sight of the opportunities that America gave her. This remains the focus of her work.

## Critic's Corner

Lord has earned several impressive awards in a number of different fields. First, she received the National Graphic Arts prize in 1974 for a photographic essay on China. In 1982, she earned an American Book Award nomination for her first novel, *Spring Moon*. Tufts University gave her an honorary law degree the same year, and several other colleges followed suit with honorary degrees of their own. The Chinatown Planning Council named her Woman of the Year in 1982 as well.

*In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* received the Jefferson Cup Award from the American Library Association (1985) and a Book of the Year citation from the Child Study Association of America (1987). Lord was inducted into the International Women's Hall of Fame in 1989.

*School Library Journal* called *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* "Poignant but outrageously humorous." In its *Booklist* citation, ALA said, "Lord writes with a warm authenticity and sparkling humor."

## Other Books by the Author

(With sister Sansan Bao) *Eighth Moon: The True Story of a Young Girl's Life in Communist China* (1964)  
*Spring Moon: A Novel of China* (1981)  
*Legacies: A Chinese Mosaic* (1990)  
*The Middle Heart* (1996)

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### Books

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*Contemporary Literary Criticism*, Volume 23, Gale, 1983.  
 Fox, Mary Virginia with Paris H. Chang, *Bette Bao Lord: Novelist and Chinese Voice for Change*, Children's Press (Chicago), 1993.

### Periodicals

*Best Sellers*, September 15, 1964.  
*Chicago Tribune*, July 10, 1986; April 1, 1990, p. 5; June 3, 1990, section 6, pp. 1, 8.  
*Chicago Tribune Book World*, November 22, 1981.  
*Christian Science Monitor*, November 9, 1981.  
*Globe and Mail* (Toronto), June 9, 1990.  
*Insight on the News*, April 1, 1996, p. 32.  
*Los Angeles Times*, September 7, 1987; November 24, 1988.  
*Los Angeles Times Book Review*, October 18, 1981; April 29, 1990, pp. 2, 9.  
*New York*, March 26, 1990, p. 84.  
*New Yorker*, November 23, 1981.  
*New York Times*, August 30, 1981; December 2, 1981; October 14, 1986; March 26, 1990.  
*New York Times Book Review*, September 27, 1964; October 25, 1981; November 11, 1984, p. 47; April 15, 1990, p. 9.  
*People*, November 23, 1981.  
*Publishers Weekly*, October 20, 1981; December 4, 1995, p. 52.  
*Saturday Review*, October, 1981.  
*Time*, March 12, 1990, p. 75.  
*Washington Post*, September 2, 1987.  
*Washington Post Book World*, October 11, 1981; January 13, 1988, p. 9; April 22, 1990, pp. 1, 14.

### General Objectives

1. To understand a semiautobiographical novel
2. To visualize upper-class life in China in the 1940s
3. To trace the Wongs' journey to America
4. To understand how the Wongs stand for generations of immigrants
5. To appreciate a close and loving family
6. To understand the novel's title
7. To see how Shirley tries to adapt to American life
8. To describe the novel's setting
9. To analyze cultural similarities and differences
10. To see how the plot is resolved

### Specific Objectives

1. To appreciate the Wongs' rich cultural heritage
2. To understand why Shirley Temple Wong and her parents immigrate to America
3. To analyze the difficulty Shirley has in fitting in and making friends
4. To visualize life in Brooklyn in the 1940s
5. To appreciate the role of sports, especially baseball, in assimilating newcomers
6. To understand the Wongs' values of hard work and education
7. To see the role that Mabel and Emily play in Shirley's assimilation
8. To probe the difficulty of adopting a new culture while maintaining your birth culture
9. To appreciate the author's humor
10. To analyze the role of Jackie Robinson in the plot and to understand what he symbolizes

### Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Bette Bao Lord's style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

**Humor:** parts of a story that are funny or amusing. *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* is a very amusing novel, often because of cultural misunderstandings. For example, it is amusing that even though Shirley doesn't understand the principal's wink, she tries to copy it. As a result, the teacher assumes that Shirley has a vision problem and sends a letter home to that effect. The scene with the washing machine is also amusing, as Shirley assumes that her father intends for her to bathe with the machine.

**Description:** a word picture of what something or someone is like. Description is made up of sensory details that help readers form pictures in their minds. *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* is rich in descriptions such as this one of the joyous Chinese New Year celebrations: "Many in his audience were fighting sleep. Their stomachs were filled with sweets, . . . their pockets with red envelopes containing money from the elders, . . . their heads with stories of monkey kings and fox fairies, noble ministers and celestial foods, loyal sons, forgetful magpies, and the weaving maid who lived on the far side of the River of Stars." Notice how this description appears to the senses of touch and taste as well as the sense of sight.

**Characterization:** the different ways an author tells readers about characters. Sometimes, writers tell about characters directly. Other times, writers let readers reach their own decisions by showing the comments, thoughts, and actions of the other characters. Lord uses both methods to make Shirley a three-dimensional character. Lord shows that the other characters do not want Shirley on their team, so we conclude that she is not very good at sports. Lord also directly describes Shirley's unwillingness to tattle on Mabel to show us that she is not a snitch. She also describes Shirley's hard work and appreciation of her parents to show that she is a good daughter.

### The Importance of Setting

*In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* is set mainly in Brooklyn, New York, in 1947. Brooklyn is one of the five boroughs of New York City. An independent city until its consolidation with New York in 1898, Brooklyn is New York's most populous borough, with 2.6 million residents. In spite of its consolidation with New York, Brooklyn maintains a strongly distinct character of its own. Various called the "City of Trees," "City of Homes," or the "City of Churches" in the 19th century, Brooklyn is now sometimes called "The Planet," a nickname coined by rap duo Gangstarr for the borough's diversity, large population, and size.

Brooklyn has many well-defined neighborhoods. For example, Borough Park is largely Orthodox Jewish, Bedford-Stuyvesant is African-American, Bensonhurst is Italian-American, and Fort Greene is home to many middle-class black professionals. Since 1990, Brooklyn has seen a rise in new immigration to neighborhoods like Sunset Park, home to flourishing Hispanic and Chinese

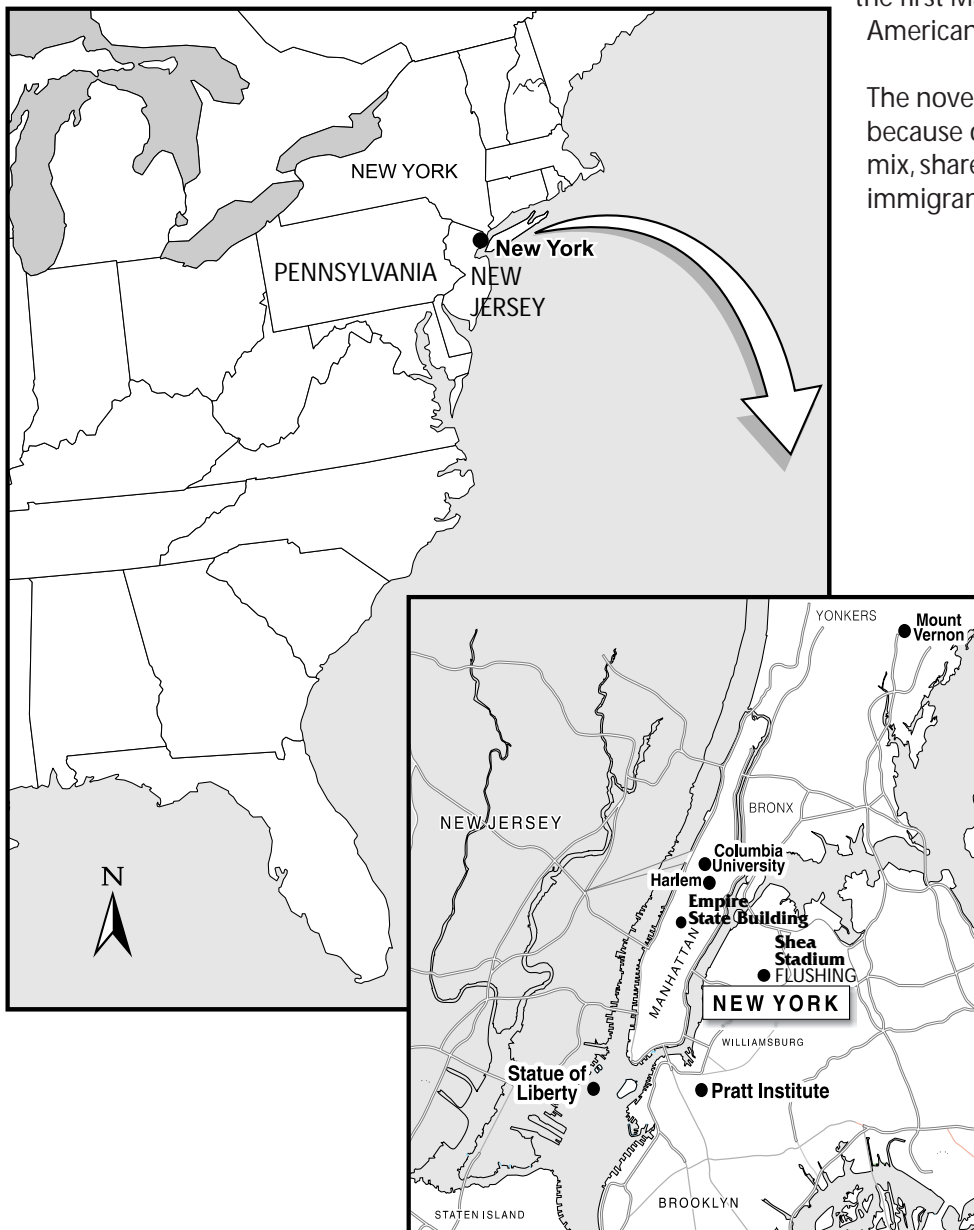
American communities. Brooklyn's population continues to grow because there is more in-migration than out-migration.

To promote the borough, the current administration has posted distinctive traffic signs along major traffic arteries at Brooklyn's border crossings. They incorporate colorful ethnic expressions associated with Brooklyn, including: "Fugheddaboudit," "Oy Vey!," and "How Sweet It Is." One sign identifies the borough as: "Home to Everyone From Everywhere!"

Brooklyn's diversity is evident in *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* and plays a key role in the narrative: Shirley is Chinese, Mabel is African-American, Emily is Jewish, and Señora Rodriguez is Hispanic, for instance. Nonetheless, the different cultures come together, as the novel shows, largely through sports.

Brooklyn has a storied sports history. It has been home to many famous sports figures, including Joe Paterno, Joe Torre, Larry Brown, Mike Tyson, Paul Lo Duca, and Vince Lombardi. Brooklyn's most famous team, the Dodgers, played at Ebbets Field. As the novel highlights, the Dodgers' greatest achievement came in 1947 when Jackie Robinson took the field in a Dodgers uniform, the first Major League African-American player of the modern era.

The novel's setting is important because of the characters' rich ethnic mix, shared working class status, and immigrant roots.



## Cross-Curricular Sources

### Fiction

Shirin Yim Bridges, *Ruby's Wish*  
Pearl Buck, *The Good Earth*  
Da Chen, *Wandering Warrior*  
Sook Nyul Choi, *The Year of Impossible Goodbyes*  
Barbara Cohen, *Thank You, Jackie Robinson*  
Dan Gutman, *Jackie and Me*  
Erik Christian Haugaard, *The Samurai's Tale*  
Jeanne Lee, *I Once Was a Monkey: Stories Buddha Told*  
Edgar Snow, *Red Star Over China*  
Amy Tan, *The Joy Luck Club*  
Gloria Whelan, *Homeless Bird*  
Lawrence Yep, *Spring Pearl: The Last Flower*

### Nonfiction

John King Fairbank, *The United States and China*  
John King Fairbank, *The Cambridge History of China*

### Audiocassettes

*In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*

### Videos/Films

*China*  
*China Rising: The Epic History of 20th Century China*  
*China: Century of Revolution*  
*China: Dynasties of Power*  
*Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon*  
*Families of China*  
*High Road to China*  
*The Last Emperor*  
*Raise the Red Lantern*  
*Sesame Street: Big Bird in China*  
*The Yellow Earth*

### Internet

Bette Bao Lord: Teacher Resource Unit  
[falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/lord.htm](http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/lord.htm)

AILF - Immigrant Achievement Awards - Betty Bao Lord  
[www.aifl.org/notable/baolord.html](http://www.aifl.org/notable/baolord.html)

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[www.gale.com/free\\_resources/whm/bio/lord\\_b.htm](http://www.gale.com/free_resources/whm/bio/lord_b.htm)

Bette Bao Lord: Information From Answers.com  
[www.answers.com/topic/bette-bao-lord](http://www.answers.com/topic/bette-bao-lord)

*In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*  
[www.cedu.niu.edu/~carger/culture/boar.html](http://www.cedu.niu.edu/~carger/culture/boar.html)

Bette Bao Lord  
[en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bette\\_Bao\\_Lord](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bette_Bao_Lord)

*Bridging Two Worlds: A Conversation with Bette Bao Lord*  
[www.neh.gov/news/humanities/2005-11/bridging.html](http://www.neh.gov/news/humanities/2005-11/bridging.html)

## Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Bette Bao Lord's *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* should include these aspects:

### Themes

- baseball
- China
- culture
- families
- fitting in
- friendship
- immigration
- responsibility
- roller skates
- school

### Motifs

- being secure as part of a large clan
- knowing your place in the social structure
- experiencing cultural dislocation as a result of immigration
- learning a new language through total immersion
- admiring a great cultural icon, Jackie Robinson
- learning many new skills
- developing a love of baseball
- making new friends
- adopting a new culture but retaining your old one
- learning to fit in

## Meaning Study

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have particular meaning in the novel. Explain the meaning of each. Page numbers indicate the context from which the item is taken.

1. One winter morning, a letter arrived at the House of Wong from her father, who had been traveling the four seas .... The paper was blue. When Mother read it, she smiled. But the words made Grandmother cry and Grandfather angry. (p. 2)  
(*This is the novel's inciting incident: Father has summoned his*



wife and daughter to join him in America now that he is settled. It was commonplace for men to go ahead and set up the family's new life before having their families join them. This is still common today, as new immigrants come to America.)

2. "Your teacher suggests we take you to a doctor. She thinks there is something wrong with your eyes." (p. 49)  
(The principal had winked at Shirley. Not understanding the gesture, Shirley nonetheless decides that it is friendly and does her best to copy it. Unfortunately, she can only squint, which she does at the teacher several times during the day. The teacher assumes that Shirley has a vision problem. This incident represents Shirley's first cultural misunderstanding, but far from her last one. It shows the difficulty of blending into a new culture.)
3. The clansmen were right after all. America was foreign, so foreign. (p. 65)  
(Shirley mistakenly assumes that a Chinese-looking girl must be a newcomer to America as she is. Nothing can be further from the truth: the girl comes from Chattanooga and doesn't even speak Chinese. This shows that even appearance can't be trusted. Shirley feels more adrift than ever.)
4. "Who says my friend Shirley here can't play?" (p. 79)  
(After Mabel blackens both of Shirley's eyes in a fight and Shirley refuses to tattle, the two girls become friends. Mabel helps Shirley make friends and learn American customs, including baseball and roller skating, which Shirley loves.)
5. "Hey, hey, you're just great/Jackie Robinson crossed the plate./Hey, hey, you're a dream/Jackie Robinson's on our team." (p. 82)  
(Shirley crosses home plate to bring in the runs. Her teammates shout with happiness and pat her on the back. Then they break out in this celebratory chant. By learning baseball, Shirley becomes accepted and makes friends. She is delighted.)
6. "And Jackie Robinson is making a better America. And so can you!" (p. 93)  
(Mrs. Rappaport exhorts her students to follow Jackie Robinson's lead and make America a better place. By breaking the color line in baseball and acting with grace under pressure, Robinson began a seismic shift in American life. Shirley is inspired by Mrs. Rappaport's words and realizes that she is very fortunate to be an American.)
7. "What is it?"  
"Your own savings account at the Brooklyn National Bank. Open it." (p. 139)  
(Shirley's parents plan ahead and take very good care of their daughter. Here, they have opened a bank account so they can all

save for her college education. This shows how much they value education. It makes them admirable role models.)

8. Once again, her parents had slept through the alarm. But only now did she realize it was because of the long hours they worked. (p. 140)  
(Shirley suddenly realizes how long and hard her parents are working to build a new life in America. They work without complaining, always with a cheerful attitude. Shirley realizes how fortunate she is to be part of such a wonderful family.)
9. She had begun to make serious plans. . . . But as soon as possible, she would also teach him. How to speak—not just English but Chinese. How to write—not just the alphabet but characters. (p. 164)  
(When Shirley learns that her mother is having a child, she decides that it will surely be a boy and vows to help take care of him. She wants to teach him Chinese culture as well as American culture. This shows that Shirley has found a way to blend the two cultures into a new identity.)
10. "Remember what I said in my talk—excel. For someday you will hold all the keys to making America the greatest country in the world." (p. 167)  
(Jackie Robinson fires the audience up by explaining that they are the future of America. And as our future, the children can do anything they want to do to help keep our country the world's leader.)

## Comprehension Study

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

### Questions 1-5 (Literal Level)

1. Where does the story take place?  
(The story takes place in China and in Brooklyn, New York, in the 1940s.)
2. Why has the Wong family moved to America?  
(They want to get ahead and have greater opportunity than they could have in China.)
3. How do Shirley and Mabel become friends?  
(Mabel blackens both of Shirley's eyes when Shirley interrupts a baseball game. When Shirley doesn't tattle, Mabel befriends her and shows her the "ropes" that a ten-year-old girl in Brooklyn in 1947 would need to know—how to play baseball, how to use roller skates, and so on.)

4. What secret does Emily share with Shirley?  
(Emily shows Shirley her father's copy of Gray's Anatomy. Shirley does not care about it at all.)
5. How does Shirley deceive her parents and why?  
(She spends her baby-sitting money on candy to bribe the triplets into behaving well. She puts three buttons in her piggy bank instead of the dimes.)

### Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. Describe Shirley's nightmare. What do you think it means?  
(She dreams that she is back in China, walking up the Mountain of Ten Thousand Steps. She gets lost and none of her relatives will let her in. They mock her and do not understand her. Grand-grand Uncle shows her a picture he is painting of a strange creature with scanty green feathers and red palms. It appears that Shirley fears that she has become an odd creature who no longer fits with her relatives in China. But because of her odd appearance, she does not fit anywhere.)
7. How does Shirley change from the beginning of the novel to the end?  
(She learns to fit into American culture and realizes how lucky she is to be an American. At the same time, she also realizes the importance of maintaining her Chinese culture so she can take the best of both worlds.)
8. In what ways is this book humorous?  
(Shirley's cultural misunderstandings—such as bowing during a baseball game—are amusing in a gentle, affectionate way.)

### Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. What qualities make the Wongs admirable?  
(They are ambitious and hard-working, but also kind and generous people. They treat their daughter to be kind as well. They have a deep respect for America's laws and gratitude toward America for offering them opportunity.)
10. What does Jackie Robinson symbolize in the novel?  
(He stands for opportunity and achievement through courage and class.)

### Questions 11-13 (Creative Level)

11. Working with a small group of classmates, discuss what challenges you think would be most difficult for you to adjust to if you moved to a new country.
12. Decide which aspects of the novel you think are autobiographical and why.

## Across the Curriculum

### Art/Music

1. Play three of the top ten songs from 1947, the year that Shirley came to America. Describe how the songs are similar.
2. Make a model of the Wong compound in China. Begin with descriptions in the novel. Do additional research as necessary.
3. Create a board game based on the characters and events in *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*.
4. Using scenes from the novel, create a mural that shows its main events.
5. Share some traditional Chinese songs with your classmates. Compare and contrast them to traditional American songs.

### Language Arts

1. Each year in the Chinese calendar has specific qualities. Thus, people born that year are supposed to have many of those qualities. Figure out what year you were born in the Chinese calendar. In an essay, decide if your characteristics match those of the year in which you were born.
2. During the Chinese New Year, one of the activities is writing rhyming couplets. Working with a partner, write a series of rhyming couplets that tell the story of Shirley's life in America.
3. Bandit gets to choose a new name, and she chooses Shirley Temple Wong. Choose a new name for yourself. Explain what the name symbolizes and why it suits you.
4. Shirley does not know any English when she arrives in America. Make a glossary of the 50 English words that all immigrants to American should know to be able to communicate on a basic level.
5. In October, Shirley realizes how hard her parents work for her future and their own. Write a thank you note to one or both of your parents for all that they do for you.

## History/Social Studies

1. Many of the Chinese women in the novel play Mah-Jong. Trace the history of this game and learn how to play it.
2. Create a Chinese calendar for one year. Show how it is similar and different from the calendar that we use in America.
3. Shirley refers to her Confucian upbringing. Write a biography of the philosopher Confucius and explain his beliefs.
4. Celebrate the Chinese New Year in your class, following the guidelines that the author explains in Chapter 1. Do additional research to fill in any gaps in your knowledge. Invite friends, other teachers and classes, and family to join the fun as well!
5. Bandit chooses “Shirley Temple” for her new name. Report on Shirley Temple, focusing on her famous movies. Be sure to explain why Bandit—and everyone else—would know about Shirley Temple.
6. Shirley does not understand the Pledge of Allegiance and so misstates the words. Trace the history of the pledge and explain its meaning.

## Speech/Drama

1. Give an oral report on Jackie Robinson. Explain his importance to sports and the civil rights movement.
2. Shirley memorizes a poem and recites it for the class. Choose a poem of at least fourteen lines, memorize it, and recite it for the class.
3. Videotape one or two innings of a baseball game or a few minutes of your favorite sport. Then provide observations and explanations for the game, as though you were the commentator.
4. With a team of classmates, debate whether or not baseball is still “America’s pastime.” Be sure to provide specific details to prove your point.
5. In a roundtable discussion, explore the challenges that immigrants face when they come to America.

6. Working with some classmates, act out the scene where Jackie Robinson comes to visit the school.
7. Debate whether students who don’t speak English should be forced into regular classes, as Shirley was, or placed in English as a Second Language classes so they can gradually learn English.

## Science/Math

1. Shirley’s mother prepares herbal remedies for her family and even the neighbor’s bird. List at least three commonplace American folk remedies, such as chicken soup for people who have a cold. Then research whether or not these remedies really work.
2. Shirley compares the ocean to “deep green jade.” Report on jade, concentrating on its appeal to Chinese people.
3. Shirley’s family lives in Chungking. Calculate the distance from Chungking to San Francisco. How long does it take to travel that distance today by ship? By air?
4. The class discusses air currents and cloud formation. Make a chart showing their relationship.
5. Explain why you see lightning before you hear thunder, as Maria asks in Mrs. Rappaport’s class.

## Alternate Assessment

1. Create a scene in which Shirley goes back to China in ten years and visits her relatives.
2. Write a character sketch for Shirley.
3. Make a poster for a movie version of *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*.
4. On a chart, show how many immigrants have come to America in the past decade. Indicate the different countries represented.

## Vocabulary

Write synonyms (words that mean the same thing) and antonyms (words that mean the opposite) for each of the following words from *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson*. Try to write as many synonyms and antonyms as you can.

Vocabulary Word	Synonyms	Antonyms
1. falter	_____	_____
2. torrential	_____	_____
3. fret	_____	_____
4. dapper	_____	_____
5. solemn	_____	_____
6. rebuke	_____	_____
7. trifle	_____	_____
8. forlorn	_____	_____
9. feeble	_____	_____
10. mayhem	_____	_____



## Comprehension Test A

### Part I: Matching (20 points)

Complete each of the following descriptions with a name from the list that follows. Place the letter of your answer in the blank provided at left.

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| _____ 1. Emily Levy          | A. Bandit                                       |
| _____ 2. Father              | B. piano teacher and landlady                   |
| _____ 3. Awaiting Marriage   | C. Señora Rodriguez's daughter                  |
| _____ 4. Shirley Temple Wong | D. Shirley's teacher                            |
| _____ 5. Mrs. Rappaport      | E. Shirley's friend who blackens both her eyes  |
| _____ 6. Mabel               | F. Shirley's adorable two-year old cousin       |
| _____ 7. Toscanini           | G. Shirley's friend with "progressive" parents  |
| _____ 8. Nonnie              | H. servant in China                             |
| _____ 9. Señora Rodriguez    | I. parrot                                       |
| _____ 10. Precious Coins     | J. engineer who also serves as a building super |

### Part II: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements either T for true or F if any part is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. When the novel opens, Shirley lives with her relatives in Japan in the Year of the Rabbit.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Shirley is only two years old when she comes to America.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. The first American name that Shirley chooses for herself is "Uncle Sam."
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Shirley is shocked that Father's apartment is so small; Mother is equally surprised that she is now expected to cook, clean, and do laundry.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. In her new neighborhood, Shirley gets lost while buying her father some cigarettes. When her father finds her, he yells at her and she bursts into tears.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Since she doesn't understand American customs, Shirley tries to copy the principal's wink, convincing her teacher that she can't see well and needs glasses.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Shirley's parents, seeing her loneliness, buy her roller skates, but when Shirley injures herself learning how to skate, her mother takes the skates away.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. When the fuses go out, Shirley repairs them all by herself. She also paints the entire apartment building on her own.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Shirley's parents get her a piggy bank and a bank account so she can save her baby-sitting money for her college fund.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. At the end of the book, Shirley decides she wants to be president of the United States when she grows up.

## Comprehension Study (Page 2)

### Part III: Identification (20 points)

Explain why each is important in the story.

1. fables and stories
2. class elections
3. education
4. baseball
5. piano lessons

### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Describe the values in the Wong household. Include at least three values the family upholds.
2. Trace how the Wongs came to America. Include all the steps in their journey.
3. Show how the novel illustrates this saying: "Make new friends but keep the old. One is silver and the other gold."
4. Explain how Shirley Temple Wong changes as she experiences the events described in the novel.

## Comprehension Test B

### Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Circle the correct word or phrase to complete each of the following statements.

1. When the novel opens, Shirley lives in **(San Francisco, China)** in the Year of the Dog.
2. Then she and Mother join Father in **(Brooklyn, Texas)**.
3. Shirley is **(ten, sixteen)** years old at the time.
4. At first, Shirley doesn't make friends because she isn't good at **(school, sports)** and doesn't understand enough English to communicate easily.
5. Mrs. Wong arranges for Shirley to take **(flute, piano)** lessons with their landlady.
6. Shirley's parents, seeing her loneliness, buy her **(roller skates, a video game system)** so she can play with her classmates.
7. Mr. Wong uses their first free month of rent to buy Shirley a **(bed, bookcase)**.
8. As with all her classmates, Shirley is an enthusiastic **(Yankee, Dodger)** baseball fan.
9. Shirley's parents get her a piggy bank and a bank account so she can save her baby-sitting money for **(a car, college)**.
10. Shirley helps her friend Emily get elected **(class president, graduation speaker)** even though Emily is not popular.

### Part II: Matching (20 points)

Match the following descriptions with the names of characters from the list below. Place the letter of each response in the blank provided at left.

- |                   |                      |
|-------------------|----------------------|
| A. Emily Levy     | F. Awaiting Marriage |
| B. Toscanini      | G. Bandit            |
| C. Joseph         | H. Nonnie            |
| D. Mrs. Rappaport | I. Señora Rodriguez  |
| E. Mabel          | J. Precious Coins    |

- \_\_\_ 1. Sixth Cousin
- \_\_\_ 2. toddler who clings to Bandit's leg
- \_\_\_ 3. Shirley's friend with the "progressive" parents
- \_\_\_ 4. Shirley's teacher
- \_\_\_ 5. servant who tattles about the broken pitcher
- \_\_\_ 6. male classmate whose hair is always slicked down; has a pure white face
- \_\_\_ 7. parrot's owner
- \_\_\_ 8. Señora Rodriguez's daughter
- \_\_\_ 9. parrot
- \_\_\_ 10. girl who blackens both of Shirley's eyes but then becomes her friend

## Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

### Part II: Quote Identification (20 points)

Briefly explain why each quote is important in the novel.

1. One winter morning, a letter arrived at the House of Wong from her father, who had been traveling the four seas .... The paper was blue. When Mother read it, she smiled. But the words made Grandmother cry and Grandfather angry.
2. Suddenly Shirley understood why her father had brought her ten thousand miles to live among strangers. Here, she did not have to wait for gray hairs to be considered wise. Here, she could speak up, question even the conduct of the President. Here, Shirley Temple Wong was somebody.
3. "College is expensive, but it is the most valuable treasure a person can have. With a proper education, you can aspire to do anything you desire in America."
4. Most importantly, she would tell him about the life he would probably never know, the life she had once lived in Chungking.
5. "Remember what I said in my talk—excel. For someday you will hold all the keys to making America the greatest country in the world."

### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. The Wongs work their way up the social ladder in America. What qualities do you think enable them to succeed? List three of their qualities and describe them in detail.
2. The novel contains several traditional Chinese fairy tales and legends, such as the one the family recalls as they celebrate the longest moon of the year. What purpose do these legends serve in the novel? Why did the author include them?
3. Shirley Temple Wong worries that she is losing her heritage. Argue in an essay that newcomers to America should or should not leave behind all their old cultures and traditions to adopt the new ones they find in America.
4. Trace the novel's plot. Include the rising action, climax, and resolution.



## Answer Key

### VOCABULARY

Vocabulary Word	Synonyms	Antonyms
1. falter	hesitate, totter	hasten
2. torrential	stormy, inclement	calm
3. fret	worry	relax
4. dapper	neat, spruced up	messy
5. solemn	grave, serious, dignified	flippant, impudent
6. rebuke	condemnation, scolding	praise
7. trifle	trinket	important object
8. forlorn	desolate, forsaken	merry, happy, joyful
9. feeble	weak, enervated	powerful, robust
10. mayhem	commotion, bedlam	calm, peace and quiet

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Matching (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. E  |
| 2. J | 7. I  |
| 3. H | 8. C  |
| 4. A | 9. B  |
| 5. D | 10. F |

#### Part II: True/False (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. T  |
| 2. F | 7. T  |
| 3. T | 8. F  |
| 4. T | 9. T  |
| 5. F | 10. F |

#### Part III: Identification (20 points)

- Shirley has been raised on fables and stories. As a result, they form an important aspect of her cultural background and identity. She vows to share these fables and stories with her younger sibling to help him or her keep anchored in Chinese culture.
- Shirley convinces everyone to vote for Emily in the class elections. Emily wins, and therefore should be the one to make the presentation to Jackie Robinson. However, Emily gives the honor to Shirley, showing Emily's appreciation and fine character.
- The Wongs believe very strongly in education. They start saving very early for Shirley's college education and have her save for it as well. They give her piano lessons, too, as part of her education. This shows their fine values and belief in the importance of education and knowledge.
- Baseball is the key metaphor in the novel, standing for being a "real" American. The kids play baseball every chance they get; eagerly follow their home team, the Brooklyn Dodgers; and worship the players.

- Shirley's parents give her piano lessons although money is very tight. This shows that they believe in culture and the finer things in life.

#### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- |             |                     |
|-------------|---------------------|
| 1. China    | 6. roller skates    |
| 2. Brooklyn | 7. bed              |
| 3. ten      | 8. Dodger           |
| 4. sports   | 9. college          |
| 5. piano    | 10. class president |

#### Part II: Matching (20 points)

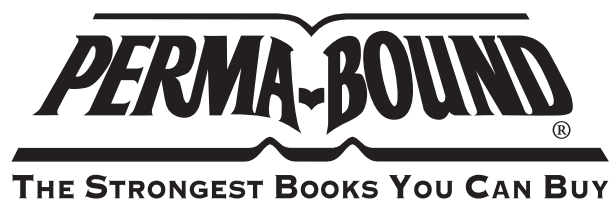
- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. G | 6. C  |
| 2. J | 7. I  |
| 3. A | 8. H  |
| 4. D | 9. B  |
| 5. F | 10. E |

#### Part III: Quote Identification (20 points)

- This is the novel's inciting incident: Father has summoned his wife and daughter to join him in America now that he is settled. It was commonplace for men to go ahead and set up the family's new life before having their families join them. This is still common today, as new immigrants come to America.
- Mrs. Rappaport exhorts her students to follow Jackie Robinson's lead and make America a better place. By breaking the color line in baseball and acting with grace under pressure, Robinson began a seismic shift in American life. Shirley is inspired by Mrs. Rappaport's words and realizes that she is very fortunate to be an American.
- Shirley's parents plan ahead and take very good care of their daughter. Here, they have opened a bank account so they can all save for her college education. This shows how much they value education and makes them admirable role models.
- When Shirley learns that her mother is having a child, she vows to help take care of him. She wants to teach him Chinese culture as well as American culture. This shows that Shirley has found a way to blend the two cultures into a new identity.
- Jackie Robinson fires the audience up by explaining that they are the future of America. And as our future, the children can do anything they want to do to help keep our country the world's leader.

#### Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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