



The Indian in the Cupboard

by Lynne Reid Banks

Teacher's Guide

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Synopsis

Chapter 1

To his disappointment, Omri's best friend Patrick gives him only a secondhand plastic toy Indian for his birthday. Omri's older brother Gillon has no birthday present for him either, so he gives Omri an old medicine cabinet he's found. Surprisingly, Omri likes this gift a lot. Omri's mother gives him a key so he can lock the cabinet. The key, which had belonged to her grandmother's jewel box, is small and ornate. That night, Omri puts the plastic toy Indian into the cabinet just before falling asleep and turns the key. In the morning, Omri is shocked to discover that the toy has come to life. The fierce, courageous Indian speaks English. When Omri's mother comes to the bedroom door, Omri quickly locks the Indian in the cupboard again.

Chapter 2

After school, Omri rushes home rather than staying to skateboard with Patrick. He opens the cupboard and is bitterly disappointed to discover that the Indian is made of plastic again. Crying, Omri locks the figure in the cupboard. Later, he opens the cupboard and discovers that the Indian has come alive again. Omri brings food for the Indian. As they talk, the Indian complains that he needs shelter—a longhouse, not a teepee. The Indian identifies himself as Little Bear, an Iroquois brave, and also demands a blanket, fire, meat, and weapons.

Chapter 3

The next morning, the plastic teepee that Omri had placed in the cupboard has turned into a real teepee. Omri discovers that Little Bear had fought with the English against the French. Omri makes a toy horse come alive for Little Bear, to the Indian's great delight. Omri brings the man and horse outdoors.

Chapter 4

Omri's father discovers him outdoors, but doesn't see Little Bear and the horse. On the way inside, the horse kicks Little Bear, causing a bad wound. Omri makes a plastic model of a World War I medic come alive so the medic can treat the wound.

Chapter 5

Tommy Atkins, the medic, is a bit disconcerted with what has happened, but assumes that he is dreaming and treats Little Bear's wound with great skill. Omri brings sticks, bark, and soil into his bedroom, which Little Bear uses to make a longhouse while Omri is in school. The soil belongs to Omri's father, part of his greenhouse. Omri makes a plastic toy knight come alive, takes his ax for Little Bear, and then turns the knight back into plastic.

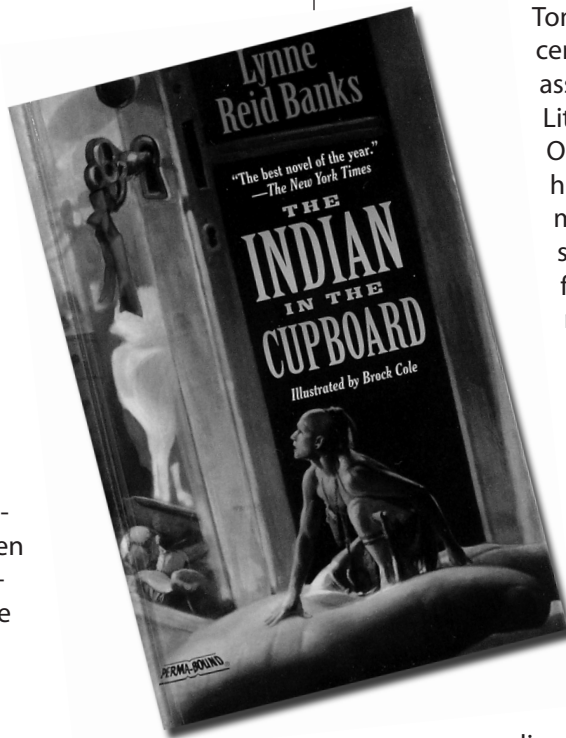
Chapter 6

After school, Omri races home again and finds the beautiful longhouse is completed. Omri makes a plastic toy model of an Indian chief come alive to get his bow and arrow, but the elderly man dies of fright. Little Bear coolly strips the body. Omri's play is interrupted when his father

discovers that Omri took some soil and seeds from his greenhouse.

Chapter 7

Omri bicycles off to buy his father new seed trays and seed. He runs into Patrick, who has bought a plastic cowboy figure at Yapp's, the local store. Omri tells Patrick that the Indian figure has come alive, but Patrick refuses to believe him unless he can see for himself, so the two boys return to Omri's house. There, Omri is frantic when he finds his two older brothers in his room admiring the longhouse, which they naturally assume that Omri has made. He chases his brothers out before they can discover the secret of Little Bear. Patrick meets Little Bear and is shocked to discover that Omri is telling the truth. The boys bring meat and fire to the bedroom for Little Bear to use. Patrick begs Omri to allow him to make the cowboy toy come alive.



Chapter 8

Omri refuses, the boys struggle, and the meat and fire get destroyed. When Omri runs downstairs to get more food, Patrick makes the cowboy toy come alive by locking it in the cupboard for a moment. Terrified, the cowboy shoots his pistol at Patrick, but causes only minor harm. Patrick threatens to tell everyone about the cupboard unless Omri lets him bring the cowboy to school. Patrick doesn't understand that the figures are real people with rights of their own. Omri is forced to give in.

Chapter 9

The cowboy is still terrified, but Little Bear is happily decorating his longhouse with paintings. In the morning, the boys are awakened by shots: the cowboy and his horse have escaped. Soon, the cowboy and Indian are battling each other with bullets and arrows. The boys settle the quarrel and learn that the cowboy is named Boone, nicknamed "Boohoo" because he cries so easily.

Chapter 10

Omri makes breakfast for Boone and Little Bear. At first, Boone refuses to eat with Little Bear because he hates all Indians. After the meal, they try to resolve their differences by wrestling. The match ends because Omri has to go to school.

Chapter 11

Boone and Little Bear wash and then Omri brings the little men to school. Little Bear sticks Omri with his knife because he's bored and wants to leave Omri's pocket and look around. Omri takes Little Bear's knife in exchange for letting Little Bear have Boone's company. Now they are both in the same pocket.

Chapter 12

Patrick insists on having Boone and with great reluctance, Omri hands him over. Patrick hides in the music room for a while so he can play with Boone undisturbed. Later, Patrick and Omri are making such a fuss that Miss Hilton, the teacher, sends them to the headmaster, Mr. Johnson. When Mr. Johnson threatens to call Patrick's father, Patrick shows him Boone. The headmaster collapses with the shock.

Chapter 13

The headmaster goes home. Furious at Patrick's betrayal, Omri demands that Patrick relinquish Boone. Omri can't resist using the little men as well, and so in art class, Omri has Boone draw a scene of his town. The art teacher is amazed and shows the entire class what she

assumes is proof of Omri's extraordinary artistic talent. After school, Omri takes Boone and Little Bear to Mr. Yapp's shop so Little Bear can choose a toy plastic figure to become his wife. When Mr. Yapp sees Omri tucking Boone and Little Bear back in his pocket, he assumes that Omri is shoplifting. Patrick vouches for Omri and Mr. Yapp backs down. Omri invites Patrick to spend the night.

Chapter 14

Believing that Omri took his soccer shorts and hid them, Adel ransacks Omri's room. The key is missing! Later, the figures scuffle and Little Bear shoots Boone with an arrow, leaving the cowboy near death. Little Bear is stoic but clearly guilt-ridden.

Chapter 15

That night, as Omri and Patrick keep watch over Boone, Little Bear goes on a perilous quest to find the key. He succeeds, but only moments before a rat catches him. Omri quickly brings Tommy Atkins to life again and has the medic tend to Boone.

Chapter 16

Omri decides that he must send Boone and Little Bear back to their own times and Little Bear agrees. Omri brings the female toy to life, the beautiful Bright Stars. Boone and Little Bear become blood brothers. Then Little Bear and Omri become blood brothers. At this moment of supreme happiness, Omri sends the three figures back to their own time.

Timeline of Modern Events Impacting Fantasy Fiction

1970 liquid crystal watches go on market

1971 CAT scan becomes available

1972 pocket calculator hits market

1973 car airbags introduced

1974 barcodes added on supermarket products

1975 home computers become available

1976 VHS and Betamax introduced

1977 first complete genetic structure of an organism found (Great Britain)

- first flight of the Space Shuttle
first commercial flight of supersonic *Concorde*
between New York, Paris, London
USA admits testing neutron bomb
Trans-Alaska Pipeline starts oil flowing Prudhoe Bay to Valdez
- 1978** Louise Brown, first baby conceived through in-vitro fertilization, born
- 1979** graphical user interface developed
- 1980** Sony Walkman introduced
- 1981** compact disks hit the market
- 1982** video keyhole surgery first accomplished
- 1983** synthetic human insulin approved for sale
- 1984** DNA fingerprinting introduced
- 1985** first dotcom registered
- 1986** laptop computer available to consumers
- 1987** Prozac hits the market
- 1988** first Internet virus; 10% of online computers disabled
- 1989** toaster becomes first appliance controlled over the Internet
- 1990** first gene therapy (4-year-old girl with an immune disorder)
- 1991** Internet browser developed (spawns World Wide Web)
- 1992** text messaging proliferates
- 1993** Global Positioning Satellite introduced
- 1994** genetically modified tomatoes hit market
- 1995** *Toy Story*, the first entirely computer-generated feature film, is released
- 1996** The Hubble Ultra Deep Field photographs reveal some 10,000 galaxies at a distance between 2.5 billion and 10.5 billion light years from Earth
- 1997** Dolly the sheep, first mammal cloned from an adult cell, is born
- 1998** first segment of the International Space Station launched
- 1999** electronic reusable paper invented
- 2001** implanted microchips give sight to three blind men

- 2002** iris (eye) scanners first used for airport security
- 2003** China becomes the third country to put a human being in orbit
- 2004** Sedna, a large orbiting body, is discovered and revealed as just one of many new planetoids
- 2005** NASA launches Mars Reconnaissance Orbiter
- 2006** Scientists decide that Pluto is not a true planet
- 2007** NASA's Dawn Mission begins eight-year, 3.2 billion mile journey to the beginning of the solar system

Author Sketch

Lynne Reid Banks was born in 1929 in London. Her father was a doctor; her mother, an actress. Early on, Banks decided to follow in her mother's footsteps and tread the boards. To that end, she attended the Italia Conte Stage School in 1946 and the Royal Academy of Dramatic Art from 1947 to 1949. Immediately after graduation, she became an actress with English repertory companies. She noted in an essay: "I adored every minute of it. ... I was going to take the theater world by storm! Little did any of us know the heartbreak and hardships ahead. Very few of us made it. The vast majority left the profession—we simply couldn't make a living." As with the "vast majority" of actors, Banks could not support herself and left acting in 1954. From there, Banks became a freelance journalist for a year, followed by a year as a television news scriptwriter. Her life took an unusual turn in 1963 when she moved to Israel and took a position at Kibbutz Yasur School as an English teacher. Two years later, she married Chaim Stephenson. They had three sons: Adiel, Gillon, and Omri. Banks taught English in Israel until 1971.

Banks' first literary success was the novel *The L-Shaped Room*. The book chronicles the life of unmarried, twenty-seven-year-old Jane Graham who goes to live in a run-down boardinghouse when she becomes pregnant. In 1973, Banks turned to writing for kids. She especially enjoys this audience, she says, because it is "much pleasanter, and easier, thing than writing for adults." The idea for *The Indian in the Cupboard*, Banks' most famous and successful book, came from her son Omri. On her web page, Banks explains: "[That book] came from a little bathroom cupboard we had. Omri thought it looked shabby and wanted to throw it away but I told him it was a magic cupboard and told him a story about it



instead." After the novel's success, the family traveled widely, including trips to India, Africa, and Australia.

Critic's Corner

The Indian in the Cupboard received a veritable slew of awards: an Outstanding Books of the Year Award, *New York Times*, 1981; Young Reader's Choice Award, Pacific Northwest Library Association, 1984; California Young Readers Medal, California Reading Association, 1985; Children's Books of the Year Award, Child Study Association, 1986; Young Readers of Virginia Award, 1988; and Arizona Young Readers' Award, 1988. Reviews were highly laudatory. For instance, a critic for the *Times Literary Supplement* found *The Indian in the Cupboard* to be "original, lively, compulsive writing" that "will well stand through repeated readings." The amazon.com reviewer noted: "*The Indian in the Cupboard* is one of those rare books that is equally appealing to children and adults. The story of Omri and the Indian, Little Bear, is replete with subtle reminders of the responsibilities that accompany friendship and love. For kids, it's a great yarn; for most parents, it's also a reminder that Omri's wrenching decision to send his toy back to its own world is not so different from the recognition of their children's emerging independence." Well-known children's novelist Lloyd Alexander wrote: "Lynne Reid Banks touches a nerve in young people—adults, too—and touches it with wit, excitement, and poignancy."

Other Books by Lynne Reid Banks

Children's Books

One More River (1973)
Sarah and After: The Matriarchs (1975); published *Sarah and After: Five Women Who Founded a Nation* (1977)
The Adventures of King Midas (1976)
The Farthest-Away Mountain (1976, 2003)
I, Houdini: The Autobiography of a Self-Educated Hamster (1978)
My Darling Villain (1977)
The Writing on the Wall (1982)
Maura's Angel (1984)
The Fairy Rebel (1988, 2003)
The Return of the Indian (1986)
Melusine: A Mystery (1989)
The Secret of the Indian (1989)
The Magic Hare, Morrow (1993)
The Mystery of the Cupboard (1993)
Broken Bridge (1994)
Angela and Diabola (1997)
Harry the Poisonous Centipede: A Story to Make You Squirm (1997)
Fair Exchange (1998)

The Key to the Indian (1998)
Maura's Angel (1998)
Alice by Accident (2000)
Harry the Poisonous Centipede's Big Adventure: Another Story to Make You Squirm (2001)
The Dungeon (2002)
The Fairy Rebel (2003)
Tiger, Tiger (2004)
Harry the Poisonous Centipede goes to Sea (2006)

Plays

It Never Rains (produced by BBC, 1954)
(With Victor Maddern) *Miss Pringle Plays Portia* (1955)
All in a Row (1956)
The Killer Dies Twice (1956)
Already It's Tomorrow (produced by BBC, 1962)
The Unborn (produced in London, 1962)
The Wednesday Caller (produced by BBC, 1963)
The Last Word on Julie (produced by ATV, 1964)
The Gift (produced in London, 1965)
The Stowaway (produced by BBC, 1967)
The Eye of the Beholder (produced by ITV, 1977)
Lame Duck (produced by BBC, 1978)
Purely from Principal (produced by BBC, 1985)
The Travels of Yoshi and the Tea-Kettle (produced in London at Polka Children's Theatre, 1991)

Adult Publications

The L-Shaped Room (1960, 1977)
House of Hope (1962)
Children at the Gate (1968)
The Backward Shadow (1970)
The Kibbutz: Some Personal Reflections (1972)
Two Is Lonely (1974)
Dark Quartet: The Story of the Brontës, Weidenfeld & Nicholson (1976)
Path to the Silent Country: Charlotte Brontë's Years of Fame (1977)
Letters to My Israeli Sons: The Story of Jewish Survival (1980)
Defy the Wilderness (1981)
Torn Country: An Oral History of the Israeli War of Independence (1982)
The Warning Bell (1984)
Casualties (1986)
Moses in Egypt: A Novel Inspired by the Prince of Egypt and the Book of Exodus (1998)

Further Readings About the Author

Books

Contemporary Literary Criticism, Volume 23, Gale (Detroit), 1983.
Twentieth-Century Children's Writers, St. James Press (Detroit), 1989.
Twentieth-Century Young Adult Writers, St. James Press, 1994.

Periodicals

Best Sellers, March 1987, p. 458.

Booklist, September 15, 1986, p. 122; January 15, 1987, p. 750; September 1, 1988, p. 70; April 1, 1993, p. 1430; September 15, 1993, p.149; March 15, 1995, p. 1321; March 15, 1996, p. 1306; June 1, 1996, p. 1745.

Books and Bookmen, September 1968; November 1976; July 1985, p. 25; September 1986, p. 36.

British Book News, November 1986, p.653; October 1987, p.704.

Christian Science Monitor, May 7, 1993, p. 10.

Commonweal, November 11, 1977.

Contemporary Review, April 1977, p. 213.

Emergency Librarian, March 1993, p. 20; March 1994, p. 45; November 1995, p. 25; March 1996, p.22.

Horn Book, August 1977; October 1977; November 1986, p. 743; July 1988, p. 493; July 1993, p. 483.

Kirkus Reviews, September 1, 1986, p. 1367; November 1, 1986, p. 1596; August 1, 1987, p. 1084; May 1, 1988, p. 688; June 15, 1988, p. 886; September 1, 1988, p. 1319; April 15, 1993, p. 524; July 15, 1993, p. 930; June 15, 1997, p. 946.

Kliatt, March 1996, p. 41; July 1996, p. 9.

Library Journal, January 1987, p. 104; September 15, 1987, p. 92; August, 1988, p. 153.

Listener, April 11, 1974, p. 477.

Los Angeles Times, December 27, 1986.

Los Angeles Times Book Review, November 12, 1960, p. 754; July 26, 1968, p. 116; April 18, 1975; October 16, 1981, p. 24; April 23, 1989, p. 10; May 2, 1993, p. 7.

New Statesman, November 12, 1960, p. 754; July 26, 1968, p. 116; August 7, 1970, p. 157; October 16, 1981, pp. 24-25; November 8, 1985, p. 26; October 10, 1986, p. 30; April 8, 1988, p. 27.

New Yorker, June 8, 1968.

New York Times Book Review, April 9, 1961, p. 38; May 12, 1968, pp. 40-41; November 8, 1970, p. 53; October 15, 1977; October 11, 1981; September 26, 1986, p. 84; November 9, 1986, p. 40; January 18, 1987, p. 18; December 18, 1988, p. 21; April 16, 1989, p. 26; May 16, 1993, p. 21; June 6, 1993, p. 36; December 5, 1993, p. 54; November 5, 1995, p. 31; August 3, 1997, p. 14.

Observer (London), August 9, 1970; April 7, 1974.

Publishers Weekly, November 21, 1986, p. 37; August 7, 1987, p. 435; April 29, 1988, p. 79; June 24, 1988, p. 98; October 14, 1988, p. 78; February 22, 1993, p. 96; July 5, 1993, p. 69; February 20, 1995, p. 206; February 26, 1996, p. 106; April 7, 1997, p. 92; June 9, 1997, p. 46.

Punch, August 7, 1968.

School Librarian, September 1985, p. 233; February 1987, p. 40; November, 1993, p. 153.

School Library Journal, November 1986, p. 85; June 1988, p. 100; October 1988, p. 143; June 1993, p. 102;

November 1993, p. 104; April 1994, p. 88; April 1995, p. 150; November 1995, p. 52; January 1996, p. 64; April 1996, p. 89; April 1997, p. 82; July 1997, pp. 56, 90; September 1997, p. 172.

Times (London), August 13, 1984.

Times Educational Supplement, November 24, 1978; February 8, 1985, p. 26; November 8, 1985, p. 33; May 13, 1988, p. B3; November 26, 1993, p.11; August 12, 1994, p. 19.

Times Literary Supplement, March 22, 1974, p. 282; December 10, 1976; March 25, 1977; November 21, 1980; October 2, 1981, p. 118; August 24, 1984; October 3, 1986, p. 1114; October 17, 1986, p. 1175; December 1, 1988.

Tribune Books (Chicago), April 11, 1993, p. 6.

Voice of Youth Advocates, December 1992, p. 274.

Washington Post Book World, November 9, 1986, p. 13;

February 8, 1987, p. 9; August 14, 1988, p. 10; May 9, 1993, p. 14.

Wilson Library Bulletin, March 1982, p. 632.

General Objectives

1. To identify the novel's inciting incident
2. To explore the elements of fantasy and realism in the novel
3. To understand the conflict between Boone and Little Bear
4. To explore Little Bear's complex character
5. To appreciate the novel's suspense
6. To understand the British words and phrases
7. To understand the story's humor
8. To describe the novel's setting
9. To analyze how Omri matures throughout his experiences
10. To see how the plot is resolved

Specific Objectives

1. To list the three birthday gifts that Omri receives: the toy Indian, the cupboard, and the key
2. To differentiate between fantasy and reality
3. To see what happens when Omri puts the toy Indian in the cupboard and turns the key
4. To understand why Omri shows Little Bear to Patrick
5. To compare and contrast Omri and Patrick
6. To understand what motivates Patrick to bring Boone to school and to show him to the headmaster
7. To probe the role of the pet rat in the novel
8. To analyze why Omri sends Little Bear, Bright Stars, and Boone back to their own time and what this reveals about Omri himself

9. To appreciate the author's cleverness and wit
10. To analyze the ending and see how it paves the way for a sequel

Literary Terms and Applications

For a better understanding of Lynne Reid Banks' style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

Conflict in literature: a struggle or fight. Conflict makes a story interesting because readers want to find out the outcome.

There are two kinds of conflict. In an external conflict, characters struggle against a force outside themselves. In an internal conflict, characters battle a force within themselves. Stories often contain both external and internal conflicts. Boone and Little Bear have an external conflict as they struggle in their traditional roles of cowboy and Indian, respectively. Omri and Patrick have an external conflict over making more plastic toys come alive, while Omri has an internal conflict as he struggles over whether to keep Little Bear, Boone, and Bright Stars or send them back to their own time.

Fantasy: a kind of writing that describes events that could not take place in real life. Fantasy has unrealistic characters, settings, and events. *The Indian in the Cupboard* is fantasy writing, evident from the cupboard that turns plastic toys into real people.

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. *The Indian in the Cupboard* is rich in descriptions such as this one of Boone: "Omri and Patrick watched, spellbound, as the little man in the plaid shirt, buckskin trousers, high-heeled leather boots, and big hat scrambled frantically up the side of Patrick's right hand, and, dodging through the space between his index finger and thumb, swung himself clear of the horse—only to look down and find he was dangling over empty space." This description helps readers visualize the tiny figure. It also sets the stage for the magical happenings to follow.

The Importance of Setting

The Indian in the Cupboard is set in England about twenty-five years ago. The setting is not critical to the novel because the action could take place in any country in which boys play with little plastic action figures. The conflict between cowboys and Indians is common in North America and well-known in other English-speaking countries, but readers would not have difficulty understanding this interaction. The novel contains a spattering of British words and expressions, but these are easily understood.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Fiction

Richard Adams, *Watership Down*
Peter S. Beagle, *The Last Unicorn*
Lewis Carroll, *Alice in Wonderland*
Barbara Kingsolver, *The Poisonwood Bible*
Ursula K. Le Guin, *A Wizard of Earthsea*
C. S. Lewis, *The Chronicles of Narnia*
Patricia A. McKillip, *The Forgotten Beasts of Eld*
Michael Moorcock, *Elric of Melniboné*
James Morrow, *Towing Jehovah*
Philip Pullman, *The Amber Spyglass* and *The Golden Compass*
J. K. Rowling, *The Harry Potter* series
Louis Sachar, *Holes*
Mary Stewart, *Merlin Trilogy*
J.R.R. Tolkien, *The Lord of the Rings*
Vernor Vinge, *A Deepness in the Sky*
T. H. White; *The Once and Future King*
Connie Willis, *To Say Nothing of the Dog*



Roger Zelazny, *The Great Book of Amber: The Complete Amber Chronicles, 1-10*

Marion Zimmer Bradley, *The Mists of Avalon*

Nonfiction

John Clute, *The Encyclopedia of Fantasy*

Vincent Di Fate, *Infinite Worlds: The Fantastic Visions of Science Fiction*

Frank M. Robinson, *Science Fiction of the 20th Century: An Illustrated History*

Robert Silverberg, *Reflections and Refractions: Thoughts on Science Fiction, Science, and Other Matters*

Audiocassettes

The Indian in the Cupboard

Videos/Films

The Adventures of Baron Munchausen

Clamshell

The Dark Crystal

Edward Scissorhands

The Indian in the Cupboard (1994)

Labyrinth

The L-Shaped Room (1962)

Lord of the Rings

The Neverending Story

The Neverending Story II

Return to Oz

The Rocketeer

Superman - The Movie

The Thief of Baghdad

Time Bandits

Internet

Lynne Reid Banks Official Web Site
www.lynnereidbanks.com/

Lynne Reid Banks Teacher Resource File
falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/banks.htm

Kidsreads.com - Lynne Reid Banks
www.kidsreads.com/authors/au-banks-lynnereid.asp

C4 - BookBox - Biography of Lynne Reid Banks
www.channel4.com/learning/microsites/B/bookbox/authors/reidbanks/index1.htm

Juvenile Books Author of the Month: Lynne Reid Banks
www.yourlibrary.ws/childrens_webpage/j-author62001.htm

Lynne Reid Banks
en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lynne_Reid_Banks

Interview with Lynne Reid Banks
www.misrule.com.au/lrbanks.html

Themes and Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Lynne Reid Banks' *The Indian in the Cupboard* should include these aspects:

Themes

- compassion
- cowboys
- danger
- fantasy
- friendship
- Indians
- innocence and experience
- plastic toys
- maturity
- rats

Motifs

- collecting plastic action figures
- playing cowboys and Indians with action figures
- being in a world of fantasy
- trusting your best friend with a big secret
- being unable to resist playing a joke on your teacher
- thinking fast and well under pressure
- quarreling with your brothers
- learning about history
- maturing into a kind and compassionate person
- making a difficult decision

Meaning Study

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

1. "It was not that Omri didn't appreciate Patrick's birthday present to him. Far from it. He was really very grateful-sort of." (Chapter 1, p. 3)
(Patrick has given Omri a secondhand plastic Indian that he himself has finished with. From this disappointing gift comes a world of wonderment, as the little toy sets off the action.)
2. "He pulled very carefully. The door was shut tight. But as he pulled, the cupboard moved, just slightly. The noise from inside instantly stopped ." "He lay still for a long time, wondering. Had he imagined it? The noise did not start again. At last he cautiously turned the key and opened the cupboard door."

"The Indian was gone." (Chapter 2, p.9)
(Omri locks the little plastic toy in the cupboard. In the morning, he hears a noise from inside the cupboard. The Indian has not vanished—something even more amazing has happened. The Indian has come alive!)

3. "'Listen,' said Omri, and then stopped, and then started again. 'The Indian isn't plastic. He's real.'" (Chapter 7, p.75)
(Omri knows that for Little Bear's safety, he shouldn't tell anyone that the plastic toy has come alive – Patrick perhaps least of all because he is not especially mature. But Omri can't keep the secret and so he tells Patrick. This leads to further complications.)
4. 'He now said the words Omri had been dreading. 'It's true and I can prove it!' And his hand went to his pocket.'" (Chapter 12, p.146)
(Patrick and Omri have been misbehaving in school and so they get sent to the headmaster. When the boys refuse to explain the cause for their actions, the headmaster threatens to call Patrick's father. In a panic, Patrick shows Boone to the headmaster. At this point, Omri begins to realize that this is only the beginning of the trouble. Omri realizes that Boone and Little Bear cannot stay in Omri's world.)
5. "'They're not safe with you. You use them. They're people. You can't use people.'" (Chapter 13, p.151)
(Omri tells Patrick this after the incident with Mr. Johnson, the headmaster. The Indian in the Cupboard is a suspenseful fantasy tale, but it is also a moral education. Readers follow Omri's maturation as he goes from using the little men himself to play a trick on his art teacher to realizing that people should not be used as toys. Everyone should be treated with dignity and respect.)
6. "'Last time Ah saw a newspaper it was 1889,' said Boone." (Chapter 13, p.155)
(This is the first concrete marker readers have about Boone's past. We know now that he is more than 100 years out of time. This helps readers grasp the enormity of his cultural dislocation.)
7. "Sitting on Omri's palm, filthy and bedraggled but triumphant, was Little Bear, and cradled in his arms, trailing cobwebs and a red satin ribbon, was the missing key." (Chapter 15, p.192)
(Boone lies near death because Little Bear shot him with an arrow. Thus, it is only fitting that Little Bear be the one to retrieve the key and thus activate the magic again. Little Bear's action here is expiation for his sin of injuring Boone. It wipes the slate clean.)

8. "For all Little Bear's unpredictable moods, his demands, his occasional cruelties, Omri liked him. He wanted to keep him. But he knew, now, that that was impossible." (Chapter 16, p.200)
(Omri has matured sufficiently to realize that he must put the needs of Little Bear, Boone, and Bright Stars above his own desires. Only disaster can result from keeping the little people alive. Whatever magic had been used to bring them to life in the present must be used to restore them to their proper place and time.)
9. "When Omri bent to hear him, he said, 'Now!' 'Now? You mean, to go back?' 'Good time. All happy. Not wait for more.'" (Chapter 16, p.208)
(Little Bear takes the decision from Omri's hands by announcing that after the blood brother ceremony, they be sent back to their own time. He is correct, of course, which shows his wisdom.)
10. "Brother," he said, looking up at Omri with his fierce black eyes for the last time. (Chapter 16, p. 210)
(Although Little Bear had told Omri that his people did not practice "blood brother" ceremonies, he realizes that the ritual has mythic meaning for Omri and so goes along with it. When he understands the bond between him and Boone, Little Bear insists that Omri perform the ceremony with him as well. This gives the ending a deeply emotional tone. This raises the level of the book above that of mere entertainment into the realm of enduring literature.)

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. What does Omri receive for his birthday from his friend Patrick? From his older brother Gillon?
(Patrick gives Omri one of his little toy plastic Indians. Gillon gives him a second-hand metal cupboard, like a medicine chest.)
2. What happens when Omri puts the little toy Indian figure in the cabinet?
(The figure turns into a real man, Little Bear.)
3. How does Boone explain Omri's existence?
(Boone thinks that he is hallucinating, suffering from the effects of drinking too much alcohol.)

4. In what year did Boone live?
(Boone comes from 1889.)
5. What does Omri do with the key at the end of the novel?
(Omri gives the key to his mother for safekeeping.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. At the beginning of the novel, why doesn't Omri tell the others about the Indian?
(Perhaps he is afraid that if he takes his eyes off Little Bear for even a moment, the figure will vanish or turn back into plastic. He is also afraid that his family will accuse him of making things up. Last, he might not believe his own eyes.)
7. How does Omri change as a result of his experiences?
(He learns to respect people and not use them for his own amusement. He matures and gains in compassion.)
8. In what ways is this book humorous?
(Boone is an especially humorous creation with his insistence that sweat is a fine substitute for bathing. His tender soul—which earned him the nickname “Boohoo”—is also very amusing because we don't expect cowboys to cry easily.)

Questions 9 and 10 (Critical Level)

9. Do you agree that Omri should have sent the figures back to their own time and place? Why or why not?
(Readers should understand that Omri had no choice: the novel's theme is the importance of the dignity of individuals. Omri cannot in good conscience use Boone and Little Bear for his own amusement.)
10. How does the author encourage our willing suspension of disbelief?
(By using many concrete details, Banks helps make the story seem realistic, even though it is clearly fantasy. The description, especially the dialogue, helps make the story very believable.)

Questions 11-13 (Creative Level)

11. Working with a small group of classmates, discuss what you would put in the sequels to this novel, *The Secret of the Indian* and *The Key to the Indian*.
12. Explain how Banks makes his fantasy world seem believable.

Across the Curriculum

Language Arts

1. What could be a better gift than a toy Indian and a cupboard? Most people could think of a few gifts they would rather receive! Explain in an essay what gifts you would like to receive for your birthday. Tell why you chose each gift.
2. The novel uses many British words, such as *lorry* for truck and *biscuit* for cookie. Make a glossary of at least ten British terms and their American English equivalents.
3. Watch the movie version of *The Indian in the Cupboard*. Write an essay in which you compare and contrast the book version to the movie version. Which one do you like better and why?
4. The Indian identifies himself as Little Bear, an Iroquois brave. Give yourself a Native American name and explain its significance.
5. The last time that Boone saw a newspaper, it was 1889. Imagine that like Boone, you are suddenly and magically transported about 100 years in the future. Write a journal entry describing what life is like a century in the future.

Drama

1. Working with your classmates, debate whether or not Omri should have returned Boone and Little Bear to their rightful historical periods.
2. In a speech, explain what lessons Patrick and Omri learned from their experiences in this book.
3. Improvise a scene in which you and a group of classmates act out what would happen if you brought Little Bear and Boone to your class.
4. Banks believes that professional writers must be able to write well, but that writing is not a skill that can be learned. She argues: “I don't think that [writing is] something, basically, that can be taught. You've got it or you haven't, though you can always learn more and improve.” Debate whether or not writing can be taught. Is writing a skill like all other skills, or is it an inborn talent?
5. Create some skits to show ways that people can resolve conflicts, such as the ones that Omri and Patrick experience.

The Indian in the Cupboard

Lynne Reid Banks

Art/Music

1. Draw or build a model of Omri's room.
2. Design a poster for a movie version of *The Indian in the Cupboard*.
3. Write a song about the events in this novel. Your song can be any form you wish, such as a ballad or rap song.
4. Boone comes from 1889. Research some songs from that time to share with your classmates.
5. Create a model of a teepee and/or a longhouse.

Geography and History

1. Explain the reasons for the hostilities between the cowboys and the Native Americans in America.
2. Write a biography of Little Bear. Make up details about his life before and after he transforms.
3. On a map of the United States, show where the major Native American tribes lived in the 1700s before their resettlement.
4. The Indian identifies himself as Little Bear, an Iroquois brave. Prepare a report on the Iroquois nation, focusing on their beliefs and customs.
5. Omri and his family have a meal they call "tea." Find out what foods comprise a traditional English tea and then have a tea with your classmates.
6. The key that locks the cupboard comes from Florence, Italy. Make a poster showing why Florence is famous.
7. Omri discovers that Little Bear had fought with the English against the French. Research to find out what war Little Bear is referring to in his discussion.
8. Adiel, Gillon, and Omri are unusual names. Find their origin.

Science

1. The toys are made of plastic. Find out how plastic is made. Then list at least 25 common objects that are made of plastic.
2. Omri's father is angry that hailstones are harming

his garden. Explain what causes hail to form.

3. Prepare a basic first aid kit for your family, similar to the first aid kit that Tommy Atkins might have carried.
4. Make a display of the foods that Native Americans ate in your region a century ago.
5. Boone believes that washing is very bad for you because "sweat keeps a man clean," as he says. Explain the function of sweat.

Math

1. Create a chart showing how many Native Americans live in your state now, as compared to 100 years ago.
2. The British are on the pound sterling, not the dollar. Using the current exchange rate, make a chart showing the correspondence between each American and British unit of money.
3. Find plastic toys like the ones that Omri and Patrick collect. How much do they cost now?

Alternate Assessment

1. Omri makes breakfast for Boone and Little Bear, but finds cooking more difficult than he imagined. Learn to cook at least three simple breakfast meals, such as pancakes, scrambled eggs, and waffles.
2. Banks wrote two sequels to *The Indian in the Cupboard*: *The Secret of the Indian* and *The Key to the Indian*. Read one of these novels and in a speech, compare and contrast it to *The Indian in the Cupboard*. Which novel did you like the most and why?
3. Make a timeline showing the main events in the plot.
4. Write a critical review of the novel for publication in the school newspaper.

Vocabulary

Complete the crossword puzzle below with these ten words from the novel:

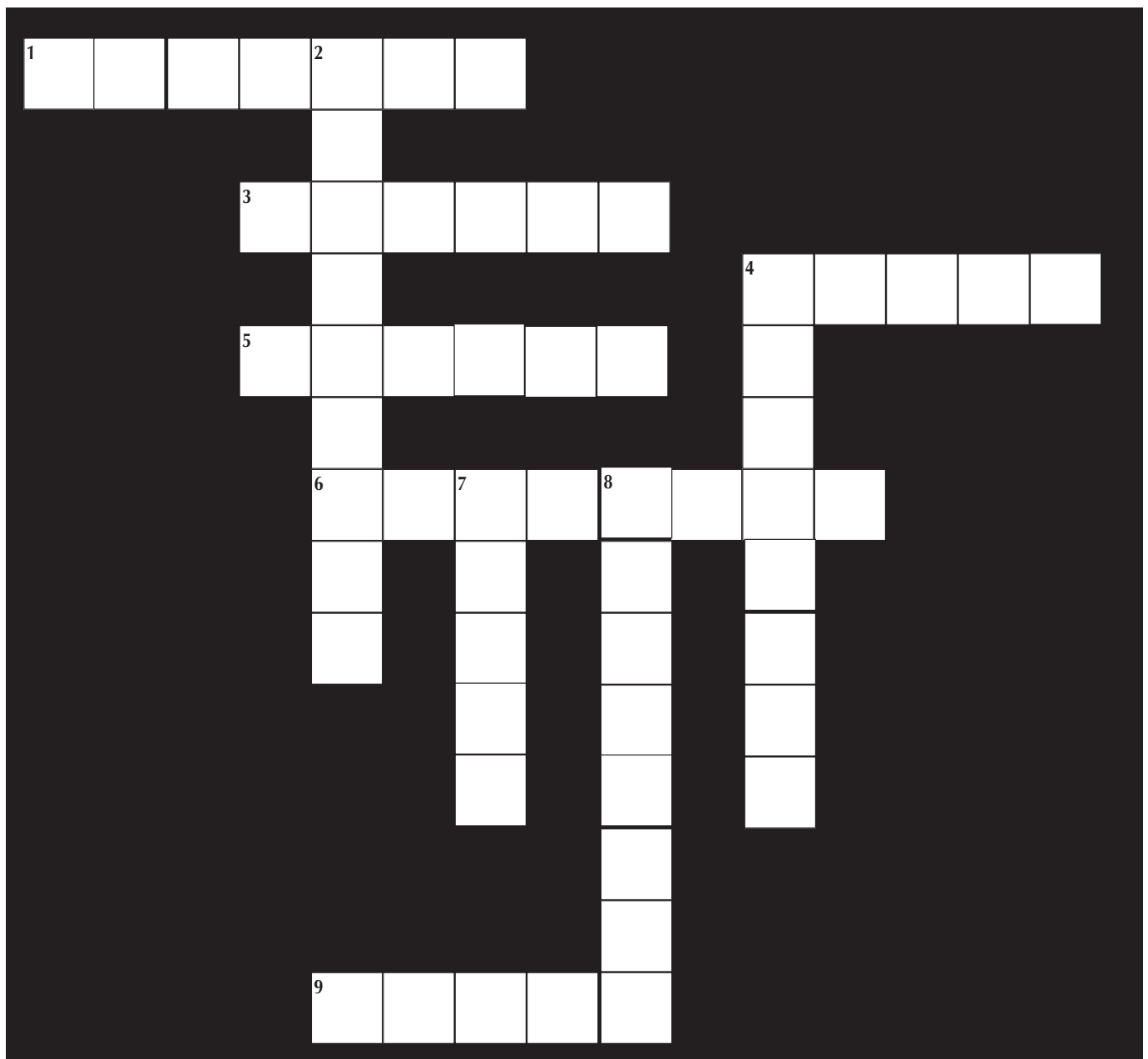
fragile stench chaos minute appalled
rigid intricate peril coherent lopsided

Across

1. easily broken
3. foul smell
4. total disarray
5. tiny
6. horrified
9. stiff

Down

2. very detailed
4. logical
7. danger
8. crooked



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.

- | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| A. Omri | F. Boone |
| B. Patrick | G. Mr. Johnson |
| C. Adiel | H. Mrs. Hunt |
| D. Little Bear | I. Mr. Yapp |
| E. Tommy Atkins | J. Bright Stars |

- ___ 1. Omri's older brother
- ___ 2. headmaster's secretary
- ___ 3. nicknamed "Boohoo"
- ___ 4. school headmaster
- ___ 5. Indian
- ___ 6. Omri's best friend
- ___ 7. child who receives the plastic statue and the cupboard
- ___ 8. store owner
- ___ 9. World War I medic
- ___ 10. Little Bear's wife

Part II: True/False (20 points)

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

- ___ 1. To his disappointment, Omri's best friend Patrick gives him only a secondhand metal cupboard for his birthday.
- ___ 2. Omri's mother gives him a key which had belonged to her grandmother's jewel box.
- ___ 3. Omri immediately tells his two brothers about the Indian in the cupboard because he knows they snoop in his room all the time.
- ___ 4. The Indian complains that he needs shelter—a longhouse, not a teepee.
- ___ 5. The Indian is a member of the Iroquois tribe
- ___ 6. Omri makes a toy horse come alive for the Indian.
- ___ 7. The medic panics when he sees the Indian and hides in the corner of the room. Omri cannot get him to come out and so has to pick him up.
- ___ 8. Omri makes a toy soldier come alive to get his bayonet, but the soldier dies of fright.
- ___ 9. Omri makes all of Patrick's toy figures come alive so they have a room full of real soldiers.
- ___ 10. Boone draws a beautiful scene of his town, which amazes Omri's art teacher because she assumes that Omri has drawn it.

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: Quote Identification (30 points)

Briefly explain why each quote is important in the novel.

1. "Omri sat up sharply in bed and peered into the dark corners. Suddenly he saw him. But he wasn't on the shelf anymore, he was in the bottom of the cupboard. And he wasn't standing upright. He was crouching in the darkest corner, half hidden by the front of the cupboard. And he was alive." (pp. 7-8)
2. "'Don't show him, Patrick, don't show him! Patrick, don't, I'll kill you if you show him!' he screamed at the top of his lungs." (p. 156)
3. "'They're not safe with you. You use them. They're people. You can't use people.'" (p. 160)
4. "For all Little Bear's unpredictable moods, his demands, his occasional cruelties, Omri liked him. He wanted to keep him. But he knew, now, that that was impossible." (p. 212)
5. "When Omri bent to hear him, he said, 'Now!' 'Now? You mean, to go back?' 'Good time. All happy. Not wait for morning.'" (p. 221)

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Explain how the novel provides subtle reminders of the responsibilities that accompany friendship and love.
2. Provide three details from the novel that make *The Indian in the Cupboard* seem to be nonfiction, even though it is really fiction.
3. Analyze how life in England is similar to and different from life in America, based on what you read in *The Indian in the Cupboard*.
4. Is Omri a good friend to Patrick? Why or why not?

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

Choose the word or phrase that best completes each of the following statements.

1. To his disappointment, Omri's best friend Patrick gives him only a secondhand **(skateboard, toy Indian)** for his birthday.
2. Omri's older brother has no birthday present for him, so he gives Omri an old **(medicine cabinet, cowboy toy figure)** he's found.
3. Omri's mother gives him a key so he can lock the cabinet. The key, which had belonged to her grandmother's jewel box, is **(huge, small)** and ornate.
4. As they talk, the Indian complains that he needs shelter—a **(longhouse, teepee)**.
5. The Indian is a member of the **(Pawnee, Iroquois)** tribe.
6. Omri makes a toy **(car, horse)** come alive for the Indian, which delights him.
7. Omri makes a model of an Indian chief come alive to get his **(beads, bow and arrow)**, but the elderly man dies of fright.
8. Believing that Omri took his **(pet rat, soccer shorts)**, Adiel ransacks Omri's room.
9. While Omri and Patrick keep watch over Boone, Little Bear goes on a perilous quest to find the missing **(key, horse)**.
10. At the end of the novel, Omri decides to put **(medicine, toys)** in the cabinet.

Part II: Matching (30 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.

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| ___ 1. Bright Stars | A. headmaster |
| ___ 2. Mr. Yapp | B. World War I medic |
| ___ 3. Mrs. Hunt | C. store owner who suspects Omri of shoplifting |
| ___ 4. Mr. Johnson | D. cowboy |
| ___ 5. Boone | E. Indian maiden |
| ___ 6. Tommy Atkins | F. headmaster's secretary |
| ___ 7. Gillon | G. Omri's older brother |
| ___ 8. Little Bear | H. Omri's best friend |
| ___ 9. Patrick | I. Native American warrior |
| ___ 10. Omri | J. young boy who receives magical birthday gifts |

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Identification (20 points)

Explain why each is important in the novel.

1. plass-tik
2. cupboard
3. key
4. meat
5. liquor

Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. What makes Omri an admirable character? Isolate and analyze at least two of his best traits.
2. Trace the novel's plot. Include the rising action, climax, and resolution.
3. Explain how the novel shows this theme: the strength and importance of friendship.
4. Many of Banks' books, especially those for adolescents, have a moral lesson at their core. What is the moral lesson of *The Indian in the Cupboard*?

Answer Key

VOCABULARY

Across

1. fragile
3. stench
4. chaos
5. minute
6. appalled
9. rigid

Down

2. intricate
4. coherent
7. peril
8. lopsided

COMPREHENSION TEST A

Part I: Matching (20 points)

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

Part II: True/False (20 points)

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

Part III: Quote Identification (30 points)

1. The night before, Omri had locked the little plastic toy in the cupboard. In the morning, he hears a noise from inside the cupboard. The Indian has not vanished—something even more amazing has happened: the Indian has come alive! This sets off the action.
2. Patrick and Omri have been misbehaving in school and so they get sent to the headmaster. When the boys refuse to explain the cause for their actions, the headmaster threatens to call Patrick's father. In a panic, Patrick shows Boone to the headmaster. At this point, Omri begins to realize that this is only the beginning of the trouble and Boone and Little Bear cannot stay in Omri's world.
3. Omri tells Patrick this after the incident with Mr. Johnson, the headmaster. *The Indian in the Cupboard* is a suspenseful fantasy tale, but it is also a moral education. Readers follow Omri's maturation as he goes from using the little men himself to play a trick on his art teacher to realizing that people should not be used as toys. Omri and readers realize that everyone should be treated with dignity and respect.

4. Omri has matured sufficiently to realize that he must put the needs of Little Bear, Boone, and Bright Stars above his own desires. Only disaster can result from keeping the little people alive. Whatever magic had been used to bring them to life in the present must be used to restore them to their proper place and time.
5. Little Bear takes the decision from Omri's hands by announcing that after the blood brother ceremony, they be sent back to their own time. He is correct, of course, which shows his wisdom.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.

COMPREHENSION TEST B

Part I: Sentence Completion (20 points)

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------|
| 1. toy Indian | 6. horse |
| 2. medicine cabinet | 7. bow and arrow |
| 3. small | 8. soccer shorts |
| 4. longhouse | 9. key |
| 5. Iroquois | 10. medicine |

Part II: Matching (30 points)

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

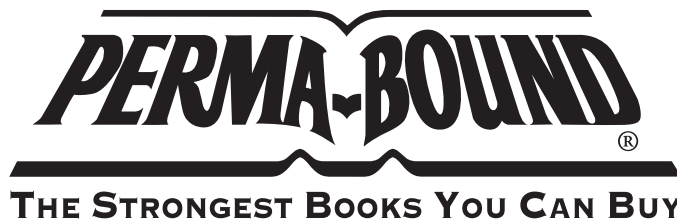
Part III: Identification (20 points)

1. This is how Little Bear pronounces "plastic." The plastic toys are transformed into real people and objects. Perhaps some of the magic is in the plastic, because Omri and Patrick don't experiment with other materials.
2. Omri receives the cupboard for one of his birthday gifts. It is important because the toys' magical transformation occurs inside it.
3. The key is a crucial element in the magic because the magic doesn't work without it. The key appears to have some special powers because it was the only thing that Mother's grandmother left to her. It came from an old Italian jewelry box.
4. Little Bear craves meat and asks for it at every meal. It is portrayed as a healthful, life-giving food in the novel.
5. Liquor is used for medicine as well as recreation.

Tommy, the medic, gives it to Boone to bring him around after Little Bear shoots him with an arrow.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Answers will vary.



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