

Ties That Bind, Ties That Break

Lensey Namioka

Teacher's Guide

Written By Laurie Rozakis, Ph.D.

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Synopsis

Prologue

The story opens in 1925 in San Francisco. The narrator, nineteen-year-old Tao Ailin, is dressing in traditional Chinese clothing, in keeping with her status as the wife of the owner of a Chinese restaurant. As she wobbles on her high-heeled shoes, Ailin thinks how grateful she is not to have bound feet. She walks out to the restaurant's dining room and to her great astonishment, sees her former fiancé, Liu Hanwei. They greet each other warmly, Ailin orders him a lavish meal, and she learns that he has been studying at the University of Illinois. Their talk is easy because they had always been fond of each other. Ailin reveals that Hanwei's mother had broken off their engagement, but she does not say why.

Chapter 1

The action flashes back fourteen years: Ailin is five years old, living in her native China. The Taos, her wealthy family, lives in a huge compound of more than fifty rooms. Ailin had loved her wet nurse, an affectionate peasant woman, but she was sent away when Ailin was four. Now Ailin has a sharp-tongued and impatient amah (governess), who totters around on bound feet. Ailin is a high-spirited girl, to her amah's annoyance. Everyone but Ailin's father wants to bind her feet to teach her a woman's proper behavior. Ailin's mother and Grandmother receive Mrs. Liu, who has come to make the betrothal between her son Hanwei and Ailin. The children get along well and Hanwei tells Ailin that he goes to public school, something Ailin wants, but in 1911, such education is for men only.

Chapter 2

Ailin's gentle, beloved father works in the Custom's House and has progressive ideas. He speaks to her about history as the family debates China's declining role in world affairs. Father's brother Big Uncle, a fierce bully, stubbornly sticks to the old ways. Second Sister unwraps her bound feet and shows them to Ailin, which horrifies her. She vows never to have her feet bound.

Chapter 3

Nonetheless, Ailin's mother binds her feet, for with unbound feet, Ailin will never be able to find a decent husband. Large feet are considered lower class, certainly not suitable for the women in the Tao family. Father intercedes, Ailin's feet are unbound, and the Liu family breaks off the engagement.

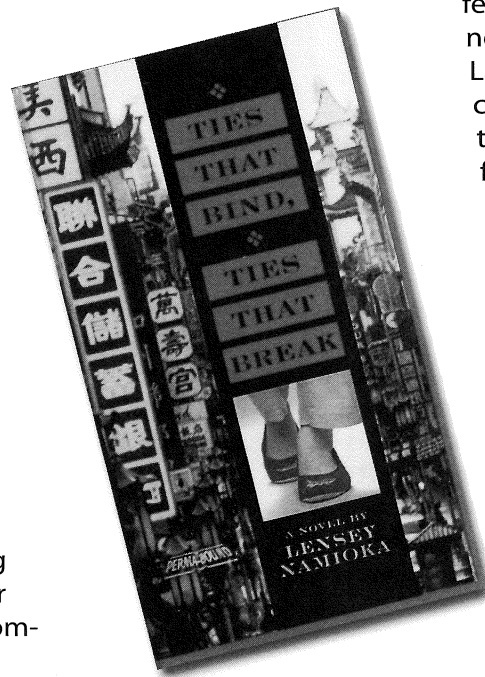
Chapter 4

News of the revolution reaches the Tao compound. To the family's great consternation, when Ailin is nine years old, Father enrolls her in public school. Grandmother declares that too much studying is unhealthy for a girl, but Ailin's father is determined to give Ailin the chance at an education that his brilliant sister had never had. Ailin is enrolled in the MacIntosh school, run by Protestant missionaries. Ailin pass-

es the entrance exams easily and meets Miss Gilbertson, the first foreigner she has ever seen. Ailin loves school. She becomes friends with Xueyan, who vows to become a doctor. For three years Ailin attends school. Ailin's beloved, gentle Second Sister warns her not to be different or she will come to harm.

Chapter 5

Ailin's grandmother has a stroke and dies. The funeral is huge, as many had loved and respected the elderly woman. Ailin had been especially close to her grandmother, who had lavished the child with unconditional love and acceptance. The revolution intensifies.



Chapter 6

Ailin's father dies of tuberculosis, and Big Uncle pulls Ailin out of school. To Ailin's delight, Miss Gilbertson continues Ailin's English lessons for free. Miss Gilbertson introduces Ailin to the missionaries Mr. and Mrs. Warner and their children, six-year-old Grace and five-year-old Billy.

Chapter 7

With her unbound feet, Ailin cannot make a good marriage, so Big Uncle arranges for her to be a concubine to a man who already has two wives. Horrified, Ailin refuses. She realizes that she has few options, but rejects suicide. With Miss Gilbertson's help, Ailin becomes a governess for the Warners, responsible for teaching the children as well as minding them. Although little more than a child herself, Ailin eagerly embraces the opportunity to escape from Big Uncle's cruel and rigid plan for her future.

Chapter 8

When Ailin tells Big Uncle of her plan, he comes close to killing her—only his love for her late father stays his hand.

Ailin's life as an amah is very difficult because Billy is mischievous and the Chinese servants shun her. The houseboy is especially arrogant. Ailin's move away from her culture continues as she gets Western-style clothing. Ailin hears the Warners discussing her as "heathen" and realizes they do not accept her either. Ailin understands that her rebellion has exiled her from her own people and put her in a world that despises all that she had been taught to value.

Chapter 9

Ailin spends two years with the Warners, from the time she is twelve to fourteen. One day the Warners go on a religious retreat and Billy gets sick. Ailin swallows her pride and goes to her sister's house to get a doctor, but she is turned away. She then goes to Miss Gilbertson and gets a Western doctor, who diagnoses Billy's illness as measles. After this incident, the houseboy warms to her. The Warners invite Ailin to come to America with them and she accepts. Ailin bids farewell to Big Uncle, giving him all the money she had earned. Ailin reveals that she is a strong woman, capable of standing on her own.

Chapter 10

When she is given third-class passage on the ocean liner, Ailin realizes that the Warners have very little money. They are able to live so well in China because their salary goes so much further there. Xueyan comes to say goodbye and returns the money that Ailin had given to Big Uncle. He wants to make sure that she can live with the status befitting a daughter of the Tao family, but by now Ailin is used to blows to her status. On the ship, Ailin meets James Chew. Ten years older than Ailin, he tells her that his father had moved to California from China during the Gold Rush in 1849 to find gold but ended up opening a Chinese restaurant in San Francisco. The restaurant is flourishing, but James is restive because his father is ill and so the restaurant will pass to his older brother, who is not a good manager. Ailin feels very comfortable with James and it is plain that he is taken with her.

Chapter 11

In San Francisco, Ailin is shocked to realize that the Warners have no servants and must do all their own cleaning and cooking. Although she has no training in either skill, Aileen pitches in and soon becomes the family's cook as well as the children's nanny. Once a week, she travels into Chinatown to buy necessary ingredients for the meals that she prepares. One day, she meets James Chew there. He takes her for a meal at his family's restaurant and expresses his admiration for her bravery—a child herself at age fifteen, she nonetheless has left her homeland, family, and culture to assume heavy responsibilities in a new land. James explains that he has decided to open his own restaurant.

Epilogue

The action flashes forward to 1925, when Ailin and Hanwei meet in the restaurant. Ailin suddenly realizes that she is ready to communicate with her family again. With a laugh, she thinks that she is standing on her own two, big feet.

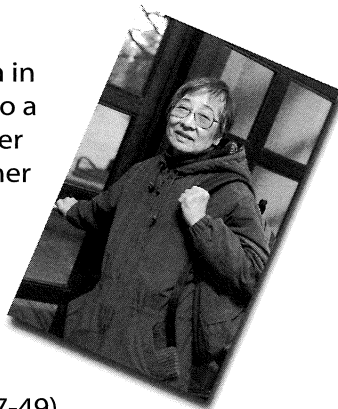
Timeline

1911-1925

- 1911** The Chinese Revolution; riots cause the collapse of the Qing dynasty and the Republic of China is born. About 11 million people die.
- 1912** Song Jiaoren founds the Guomindang Party. China adopts the Gregorian calendar. Oreo cookies are introduced. The *Titanic* sinks.
- 1913** Song wins the majority of the votes but he is assassinated and Sun Yatsen flees the country.
- 1914** Archduke Ferdinand assassinated, setting off World War I.
- 1916** *Yuan dies.*
- 1917** Sun Yatsen establishes a rival government in the South Russian Revolution. U.S. enters World War I
- 1919** May 4, Students hold a mass protest in Tiananmen Square, setting of the first true nationalist movement in China. Treaty of Versailles ends World War I.
- 1920** Sun Yatsen, the leader of the Nationalist Party (KMT), accepts Soviet aid, forges an alliance with the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), and starts the task of re-unifying a China beset with warlords. Women granted the right to vote in the U.S.
- 1925** Sun Yatsen dies of cancer. Chiang Kaishek takes over party leadership and unifies Southern China. This gives the Nationalists control over the Lower Yangtze River.

Author Sketch

Lensey Namioka was born in 1929, in Beijing, China, into a highly-educated family: her father was a linguist and her mother, a doctor and writer. She and her family relocated to America when Lensey was nine years old. Equally well-educated, Lensey attended Radcliffe College (1947-49), earning her BA from the University of California, Berkeley in 1951 and her MA the following year. In 1957, Lensey married Isaac Namioka; they have two daughters.



Originally a college math teacher, Namioka did not become a writer until she was in her forties. Commenting on her sharp career change, Namioka said, "My long years of training in mathematics had little influence on my writing, except for an urge to economy."

Namioka explained that her aim is to write books that will give young people the same pleasure in reading that she got from books as a child. She says, "While my books contain messages--the need for understanding and tolerance--I also try to make them as entertaining as possible. If my readers agree with my message, then they deserve to have some fun. If they disagree, I'm certainly not going to convert them by being preachy and boring."

Critics Corner

Ties That Bind, Ties That Break received excellent reviews. In a starred review, *Publishers Weekly* said, "With the force and intensity of a memoir, the novel chronicles a heroine who creates her own destiny through events as dramatic as they are credible, and weaves in just enough political history to help readers understand the turbulent climate." *School Library Journal* noted, "In lyrical, descriptive prose, Namioka compassionately portrays a young girl's coming-of-age in a repressive, challenging time. The characters have exceptional depth, and readers will gain appreciation and respect for the many transitions in Chinese history and culture...A book that is both emotionally and historically illuminating."

Not surprisingly, the novel also received many awards, including the 2004 California Young Readers Medal, the Washington State Governor's Writers Award, and American Library Association Best Book.

Other Books By The Author

- April and the Dragon Lady* (1994)
China: A Traveler's Companion (1985)
Coming of the Bear (1992)
Den of the White Fox (1997)
Island of Ogres (1989)
Japan: A Traveler's Companion (1979)
The Loyal Cat (1995)
Phantom of Tiger Mountain (1986)
The Samurai and the Long-Nosed Devils (1976)

Valley of Broken Cherry Trees (1981)
Village of the Vampire Cat (1981)
White Serpent Castle (1976)
Who's Hu? (1981)
Yang the Third and Her Impossible Family (1995)
Yang the Youngest and His Terrible Ear (1992)

Bibliography

Booklist, April 15, 1995, p. 1500.
Christian Science Monitor, May 1, 1992, p. 10.
Contemporary Authors Online. The Gale Group, 2000
Horn Book Magazine, June, 1980, p. 307; July, 1992, p. 452; March, 1995, p. 240; January, 1996, p. 68.
Kirkus Reviews, October 15, 1976, p. 1146.
School Library Journal, May, 1981, p. 76.
Something About The Author Autobiography Series, Volume 24, Gale, 1997.
Twentieth-Century Young Adult Writers, 1st edition, St. James Press, 1994.

Literary Terms And Applications

For a better understanding of Lensey Namioka's style, present the following terms and applications to the novel:

flashback a scene that breaks into the story to show an earlier part of the action. Flashbacks help fill in missing information, explain the characters' actions, and advance the plot. All but the Prologue and Epilogue of *Ties That Bind, Ties That Break* is a flashback, as the author takes readers from the present (San Francisco, 1925) to the past (China, 1911) to tell Ailin's story. The flashback allows us to understand the forces that shaped Ailin and the elements of her culture that she felt forced to reject.

point of view the position from which a story is told. In *Ties that Bind, Ties that Break*, Namioka uses the first-person point of view. As a result, we see all events through Ailin's eyes, which gives the events a personal and immediate slant. This gives the novel great immediacy and power. It also helps readers identify with Ailin's emotions and appreciate her exceptional courage.

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

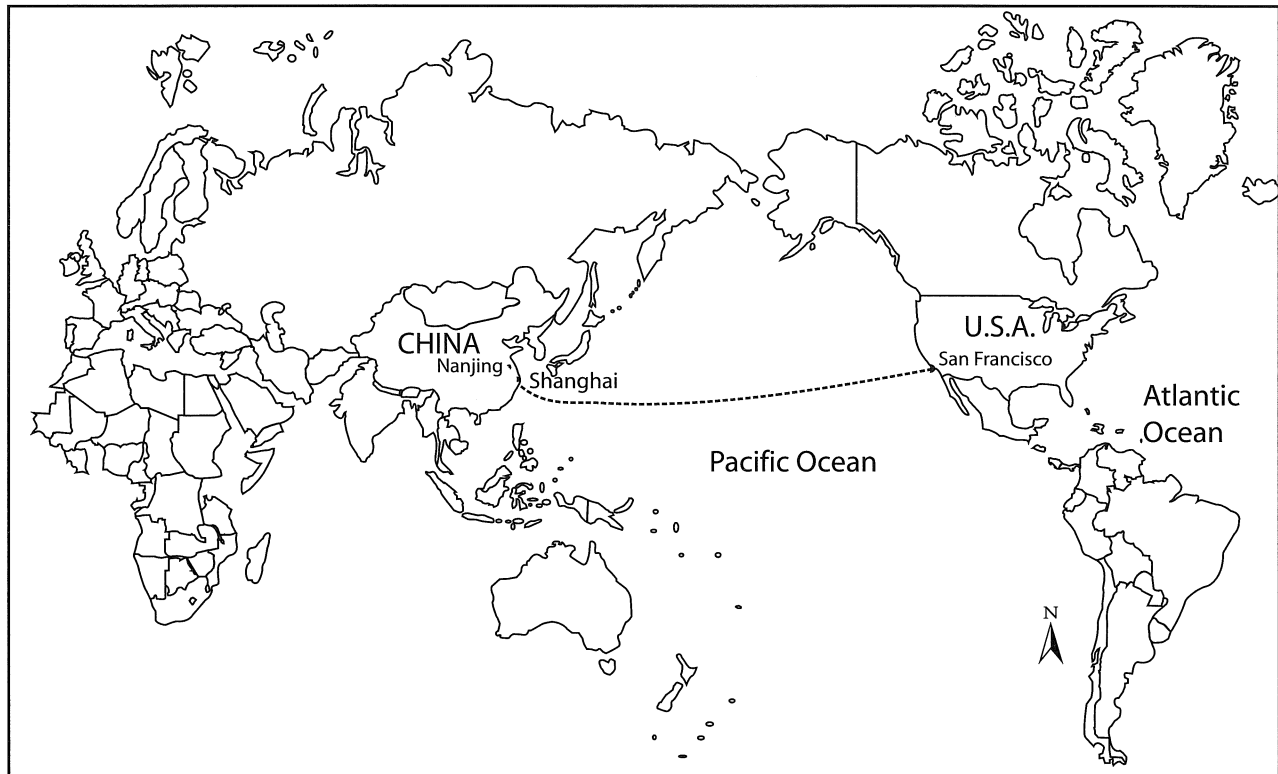
conflict, characters battle a force within themselves. Stories often contain both external and internal conflicts, actions, and advance the plot. Ailin has an external conflict with her mother and grandmother over not having her feet bound. She has an external conflict with Big Uncle over being pulled out of school, too. She has deep internal conflicts as she struggles with leaving her family, adopting Western culture, and eventually leaving China.

General Objectives

1. To analyze Chinese culture
2. To understand the novel's title
3. To recognize the importance of setting
4. To assess each character's personality
5. To recognize the novel's theme and lessons that it teaches
6. To understand rebellion
7. To explore the ways kindness can be shown
8. To find examples of bravery and courage
9. To sympathize with the main character's plight
10. To describe the author's use of historical details

Specific Objectives

1. To analyze understand what life was like in China in the early part of the 20th century.
2. To understand women's roles in China and America around the turn of the century until 1925
3. To understand why the Warners regard Ailin as "heathen"
4. To analyze Ailin's thirst for knowledge and learning
5. To recognize the pull of family and tradition
6. To understand what Ailin gained and lost by leaving her family, home, and country
7. To appreciate how Miss Gilbertson helps Ailin
8. To find examples of Ailin's courage and determination
9. To determine why Ailin marries James Chew
10. To compare and contrast Ailin and Second Sister



The Importance Of Setting

Setting is crucial in *Ties that Bind, Ties that Break* for several reasons. On a symbolic level, like nearly all women around the turn of the 20th century, Ailin is totally without rights in her native China. Were it not for her father's intervention, she would be horribly crippled, her feet bound for life. Her husband is chosen for her when she is still a child; indeed, some Chinese children at that time were betrothed before their birth. She is barely allowed to attend school, and then only briefly; she cannot pursue a reputable career of any kind. Even with the Chinese revolution and the swift changes it brings, Ailin has virtually no autonomy. For a woman of her class, she is allowed to be a wife or a concubine. Some women of her class, faced with this lack of freedom, chose suicide. In San Francisco, in sharp contrast, Ailin is free to work side-by-side with her husband to build their own business, a Chinese restaurant. She can stand on her "own two big feet," as she says with pride.

However, Ailin's identity is firmly wedded to her place. She is torn by the realization that by being a part of two cultures—China and America—she is a part of neither and thus belongs nowhere. She puts

it this way: "Suddenly I wanted to cover my face and weep. At the Warners', I was a Chinese and a heathen. At Second Sister's home, I was turned away as a foreigner." This is a plight that many people face when they leave one country and culture to join another.

Cross-Curricular Sources

Fiction

Jan Brett, *Daisy Comes Home*
 Pearl Buck, *The Big Wave*
 Demi, *Ling and the Magic Paintbrush*
 Cameron Dokey, *The Storyteller's Daughter*
 Deborah Ellis, *Breadwinner*
 Sherry Garland, *The Lotus Seed*
 Diana Kidd, *Onion Tears*
 Donna Jo Napoli, *Bound*
 Kathy Tucker, *The Seven Chinese Sisters*
 Wendelin Van Draanen, *Flipped*
 Lawrence Yep, *The Dragon Prince: A Chinese Beauty and the Beast*

Nonfiction

Da Chen, *China's Son: Growing Up In the Cultural Revolution*
 Ji-li Jiang, *Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution*

Dorothy Ko, *Every Step a Lotus: Shoes for Bound Feet*
Adeline Yen Mah, *Chinese Cinderella: The True Story of an Unwanted Daughter*
Wang Ping, *Aching for Beauty: Footbinding in China*
Amy Wilson Sanger, *First Book of Sushi*

DVDs, Videos

China, A Century of Revolution
Discovering China
Globe Trekker: China

Internet

Lensey Namioka's official web site
www.lensey.com
Meet Lensey Namioka
www.eduplace.com/kids/hmr/mtai/namioka.html>
Lensey Namioka Teacher Resource File
falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/namioka.htm

Themes And Motifs

A study of the central issues and situations in Lensey Namioka's *Ties that Bind, Ties that Break* should include these aspects:

Themes

- arranged marriages
- conformity
- courage
- education
- family love
- foot binding
- living in a patriarchal society
- life in China the 1920s
- immigration
- rebellion

Motifs

- being independent and earning your own living
- being brave in unfamiliar situations
- dealing with prejudice because of your appearance and beliefs
- defying long-held conventions of society
- facing severely limited career choices
- having your physical movements restricted
- learning about Chinese culture of the 1920s
- making a new life in a foreign country
- obtaining an education
- serving as a missionary overseas

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. "What made me run away?" (Prologue)
(*The novel is told in a flashback: the action begins in San Francisco's Chinatown in 1925 and flashes back to China, 1911. The entire flashback answers the question why Ailin fled China.*)
2. "I stared at the pitiful stumps at the end of Second Sister's legs... her foot had been squeezed into a wedge: the big toe had been left undeformed, but the rest of the foot... had been forced down under the sole... like a piece of bread folded over." (Ch. 2, p. 28).
(*Ailin is horrified when she sees how binding has deformed Second Sister's feet. She suddenly understands the torture and lifelong restrictions that await her if she has her feet bound.*)
3. "It's hard enough when a girl has big feet, but an educated girl with big feet will be quite impossible to marry off!" (Ch. 4, p. 49)
(*Even though Ailin's grandmother gives her unconditional love, she recognizes the cultural realities of her day—and upholds them. Thus, she denies Ailin an education and pressures her to marry someone the family has selected.*)
4. "Whenever they see a colored one [silk cocoon], they immediately take it out. Remember this." (Ch. 4, p. 55)
(*Second Sister uses the analogy to a silk cocoon to warn Ailin that if she stands out, she will be destroyed. Ailin does stand out because of her rebellious nature, education, and unbound feet.*)
5. Any money we had was used for educating the boys. (Ch. 7, p. 82)
(*Big Uncle gives Ailin a choice: She can be a nun, a farmer's wife, or a concubine. Ailin realizes that she must leave her family if she is to escape a life of servitude and humiliation.*)

6. "Confucianism is a heathen religion!" (Ch. 8, p. 101)
(Mrs. Warner, the Protestant missionary, is horrified that Ailin is teaching her children Grace and Billy about Chinese culture. Ailin realizes that Mrs. Warner sounds just like Big Uncle: intolerant.)
7. I realized that I was like a bamboo shoot that had been outside in the air and sun. (Ch. 9., p. 111)
(Ailin realizes that like old bamboo, she has become too tough to be a delicate Chinese girl. But on the positive side, her toughness has brought her great strength.)
8. Suddenly I covered my face and wept. (Ch. 9, p. 108)
(At the Warners', Ailin is Chinese and a heathen. At Second Sister's home, she is turned away as a foreigner. Ailin realizes that she no longer belongs in either culture. Her rebellion has gained her freedom, but at a terrible price: loss of identity and home.)
9. "You are a revolutionary," said James. (Ch. 10, p. 128)
(James Chew, the man who becomes Ailin's husband, admires her fierce spirit and independence. Until this moment, Ailin had not understood that she was fighting a war against tradition and that her battle was indeed heroic.)
10. "By standing on my own two big feet!" (Epilogue, p. 151)
(At the end of the novel, Ailin tells her former fiancé, Hanwei, that she is proud of having worked side-by-side with her husband to make their restaurant a success. She knows that her father would have been proud of her for defying tradition and succeeding.)

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. When and where does the story take place?

(The novel opens and closes in San Francisco in 1925; the narrative takes place in China around 1911.)

2. Why did upper-class women have their feet bound at this time?
(It was considered necessary to make them suitable wives. Women with unbound feet were considered wild and unattractive.)
3. What two actions does Big Uncle take when Ailin's father dies?
(He pulls Ailin out of school and arranges for her to become a concubine for a wealthy man.)
4. How does Ailin become a nanny?
(Miss Gilbertson tells Ailin that her friends, the Warners, are looking for a nanny for their children. Miss Gilbertson sets up the meeting. When the Warners realize that Ailin speaks nearly flawless English, they eagerly hire her.)
5. Describe Ailin's life with James Chew.
(Although she works very hard in their restaurant, she and James are true partners, united by love, admiration, and common goals. They appear to have a very happy, fulfilled, and successful life.)

Questions 6-8 (Interpretative Level)

6. Why does Ailin give the money that she earns to Big Uncle? Why does he return the money to her later on?
(Big Uncle did not need the money; the family is very wealthy. She gives him the money ostensibly to help with her younger brother's education but really as an act of defiance to show that she can support herself without her family's help. You can tell that she is proud of her success and bravery because she "couldn't resist a swagger" on the way out. He returns the money to help her book suitable passage on the boat to America, but really to show his love and admiration, which he cannot express in words.)
7. Why does Miss Gilbertson tutor Ailin in English for free?
(Miss Gilbertson, a kind and generous person, recognizes Ailin's brilliance and determination. She wants to help Ailin perfect her English so Ailin will be able to go further in the world.)

Miss Gilbertson is the embodiment of what a missionary should be.)

8. What does the title mean? Explain its symbolism.
(The first part of the title, "The Ties that Bind," symbolizes both the custom of binding feet and the ties that Ailin feels to her family and culture. Once a girl's feet were bound, she was crippled, tied to her home, family, and husband. The second part of the title, "The Ties that Break," symbolizes how Ailin broke with her tradition and family by refusing to have her feet bound, by refusing to become a concubine, by getting an education, by getting a job as a nanny, and by leaving the country.)

Questions 9 And 10 (Critical Level)

9. Why do you think the women in this novel try to force Ailin to bind her feet, while some men – especially her father—resist the custom?
(The women want their daughters to fit with their culture and be sheltered, while some men are beginning to realize that women deserve an unfettered life—or at least a chance at one.)
10. Does the flashback improve the novel or detract from it? Why?
(The flashback improves the novel by setting it in a frame. It helps readers appreciate the enormous obstacles that Ailin has overcome.)

Questions 11-12 (Creative Level)

11. Write a journal that describes Ailin's life ten years in the future.
12. Write a new Epilogue in which the novel is resolved differently.

Across The Curriculum

Speech

1. Until relatively recently, arranged marriages were the norm throughout the world. They are still common in many places, such as India. In a roundtable, discuss the pros and cons of arranged marriages.
2. Ailin rebels, but freedom comes with a price. Exiled from her own people, she enters a world where all she has been taught to value is misunderstood, even despised. Debate whether or

not her rebellion was worth the price that she paid.

3. Second Sister tells Ailin that "Life is hard on women." In a speech to the class, explain why life was hard in women in China from 1911-1925, when the book takes place. Include specific examples.

Art

1. Make a brush drawing such as the ones that Ailin teaches Billy and Grace to make.
2. Create a three-dimensional diorama of San Francisco during the gold rush of 1849.
3. Create a collage of newspaper headlines for the time period covered in the novel.

Language Arts

1. Make a book for immigrants new to America. Include words, phrases, and pictures to teach the basics of English quickly.
2. In 1911, China was experiencing dramatic cultural and political changes. In Ailin's home, a quieter but equally dramatic revolution was taking place—a war against tradition. In an essay, compare and contrast the changes in China to the changes in Ailin's home and life.
3. Namioka's father made up the name "Lensey" for his daughter. Make up a new first name for yourself that you believe best describes your most important personality traits.
4. On her website, Namioka says: "I remember being a little girl in China." Write a memory you have about being a child. Describe something that happened when you were younger than ten years old.
5. Send an email to Namioka at Lensey@Lensey.com. Tell her two things that you liked best about *Ties That Bind, Ties That Break*.
6. Choose any one of the characters. Write a journal entry in which you explain and justify your actions.

History/Social Studies

1. Ailin learns to cook for the Warners. Prepare a dish from your heritage for the class. Distribute the recipe and a list of ingredients.
2. Namioka is interested in both China and Japan. Read a book on Japanese culture in the 1920s and compare and contrast that culture to what you learned about Chinese culture in *Ties that Bind, Ties that Break*.
3. Locate China on a map and explain its history in the 20th century.
4. Explain the main events of the Opium War of 1839.
5. Write a report on Sun Yat-sen, explaining his importance.
6. Why is Mulan a great Chinese heroine? Learn more about her life and share your findings with a small group of classmates.

Science

1. Ailin's amah tells her that an eclipse is caused by the Heavenly Dog trying to eat the sun. Make a diagram showing the cause of an eclipse. Describe either a solar or lunar eclipse.
2. Ailin's father dies of tuberculosis. Learn more about the disease, focusing on its causes and cures.
3. Second Sister shows Ailin some silkworms. Make a chart showing the process of making silk.
4. Grandmother has a stroke. Write a report explaining what a stroke is, including its causes and treatments.
5. Billy gets measles. List the vaccines that Americans receive today and the diseases that each one prevents.

Math

1. On a chart, show the number of Chinese immigrants to America from 1900 to the present. Analyze why immigration peaked and declined in certain years.

2. Find out how much passage by boat and airplane costs from China to America today. How long does each trip take?
3. Ailin says that according to the Chinese calendar, a person is one year old at the moment of birth. Explain this.

Alternate Assessment

1. Tutor a classmate or younger child, as Miss Gilbertson tutors Ailin.
2. Working with a small group, role-play the scene in which Ailin is reunited with her family when she finally returns for a visit.
3. In your own words, state the novel's theme or message.
4. Write a critical review of the novel for the school newspaper.

Vocabulary

Complete the chart by writing synonyms and antonyms on the lines provided. Write as many words for each vocabulary word as you can.

Vocabulary Word	Synonym	Antonym
1. jeer	_____ / _____	_____
2. saucy	_____ / _____	_____
3. infuriated	_____ / _____	_____
4. incompetent	_____ / _____	_____
5. lavish	_____ / _____	_____
6. insolence	_____ / _____	_____
7. unison	_____ / _____	_____
8. frail	_____ / _____	_____
9. dainty	_____ / _____	_____
10. fastidious	_____ / _____	_____
11. obstinate	_____ / _____	_____
12. ingenious	_____ / _____	_____
13. indulge	_____ / _____	_____
14. frenzy	_____ / _____	_____
15. restrain	_____ / _____	_____

Comprehension Test A

Part I: Motivation (20 points)

Complete each phrase below with a reason or justification.

1. Hanwei's mother broke off his engagement to Ailin because
2. Everyone but Ailin's father wants to bind her feet to
3. When she is a small child, Ailin is not allowed to attend public school because
4. Grandmother does not want Ailin to have too much education because
5. Ailin's Second Sister warns her not to be too different from anyone else because
6. Big Uncle pulls Ailin out of school because
7. Ailin becomes a governess because
8. Ailin's life as a governess is very difficult because
9. Ailin swallows her pride and goes to her sister's house because she needs
10. The Warners give Ailin the worst cabin on the ocean liner on the way to America because

Part II: Matching (20 points)

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

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| _____ 1. Ailin's lazy, mean governess | A. Tao Ailin |
| _____ 2. The six-year-old son of missionaries | B. Hanwei Liu |
| _____ 3. Ailin's friend in school; she wants to become a doctor | C. Second Sister |
| _____ 4. Ailin's beloved grandmother | D. Amah |
| _____ 5. The narrator, a brilliant and brave girl | E. Auntie Tao |
| _____ 6. The Chinese nickname for all Americans | F. Miss Gilbertson |
| _____ 7. The six-year old daughter of missionaries | G. Zhang Xueyan |
| _____ 8. The young man who is engaged to Ailin when they are small children | H. Grace |
| _____ 9. The Protestant missionary who teaches English to Ailin | I. Billy |
| _____ 10. The gentle, kind young woman who shows Ailin her bound feet | J. Big Noses |

Comprehension Test A (Page 2)

Part III: True/False (20 points)

Mark the following statements T if they are true or F if they are false.

- ___ 1. Ailin's family is very wealthy and lives in a huge compound of more than fifty rooms.
- ___ 2. Ailin is a high-spirited girl, to her amah's annoyance.
- ___ 3. Ailin's mother and grandmother unwrap their bound feet and shows them to Ailin.
- ___ 4. Around the turn of the 20th century in China, large feet on women were considered a sign of strength and beauty.
- ___ 5. Ailin is enrolled in the MacIntosh school, run by Protestant missionaries.
- ___ 6. Ailin had been especially close to her Big Uncle, who had lavished her with unconditional love and acceptance.
- ___ 7. Big Uncle arranges for Ailin to be the wife of a farmer.
- ___ 8. Ailin spends only a few months with the Warners.
- ___ 9. In San Francisco, Ailin is shocked to realize that the Warners have no servants and must do all their own cleaning and cooking.
- ___ 10. Ailin refuses to cook or clean for the Warners, believing that such menial work is below her status as a member of the Tao family.

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

- 1. Explain why Ailin is heroic. What traits make her most admirable? Why?
- 2. Analyze why Ailin's mother is so determined to have Ailin's feet bound and why her father resists.
- 3. Describe what Ailin gains and loses by rebelling against her family and culture.
- 4. Compare and contrast the Warners and Big Uncle. Explain how they are similar and different from each other.

Comprehension Test B

Part I: Fill in the Blank (20 points)

Supply a term or phrase to complete each of the following statements. Write your answers in the blanks provided in the sentences.

1. The Prologue, the introduction to the story, opens in 1925 in the city of _____.
2. With the start of Chapter 1, the action changes to the country of _____ in 1911.
3. Second Sister shows her _____ to Ailin, which horrifies Ailin.
4. Ailin's father dies of _____.
5. After Ailin's father dies, Big Uncle arranges for her to be a _____ to a man who already has two wives.
6. With Miss Gilbertson's help, Ailin becomes a _____ for the Warners.
7. Ailin hears the Warners discussing her as _____ and realizes they do not accept her either.
8. On the ship, Ailin meets a man named _____ and they grow fond of each other.
9. In America, Ailin has her own business, a Chinese _____.
10. In the Epilogue, Ailin realizes that she is ready to travel home to see her _____ again after many years.

Part II: Matching (20 points)

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

- | | |
|---|--------------------|
| _____ 1. The first white person Ailin meets | A. Zhang Xueyan |
| _____ 2. The mother of Grace and Billy | B. Second Sister |
| _____ 3. Ailin's husband | C. Miss Gilbertson |
| _____ 4. The American name given to Ailin | D. Hanwei Lui |
| _____ 5. Ailin's first fiancé | E. Miss Scott |
| _____ 6. Ailin's friend at school; she wants to be a doctor | F. Auntie Tao |
| _____ 7. Ailin's beloved grandmother | G. Imogene Warner |
| _____ 8. The child who refuses to have her feet bound | H. Eileen |
| _____ 9. Ailin's older sister | I. Ailin |
| _____ 10. Ailin's history teacher | J. James Chew |

Comprehension Test B (Page 2)

Part III: Identification (20 points)

Briefly describe each and explain why it is important in the story.

1. bound feet
2. education
3. silk worms
4. the bag of money
5. revolution

Part IV: Essay (40 points)

Choose two and answer in complete sentences.

1. Compare and contrast James Chew and Hanwei Liu. Explain how they are the same and different.
2. Analyze what the title means and tell why it fits the novel's theme.
3. Describe the novel's setting and explain its importance to the story.
4. Explain how the role of women has changed since the time described in the novel.

Answer Key

Vocabulary

POSSIBLE ANSWERS

Vocabulary Word	Synonym	Antonym
1. jeer	scoff, sneer	cheer, praise
2. saucy	rude	polite
3. infuriated	enraged	delighted
4. incompetent	unqualified	qualified, capable
5. lavish	generous	stingy
6. insolence	disrespect	respect
7. unison	together	separate
8. frail	feeble	robust
9. dainty	delicate	clumsy
10. fastidious	meticulous	sloppy, careless
11. obstinate	stubborn	obedient
12. ingenious	clever	ignorant
13. indulge	permit	disallow
14. frenzy	rage	coolness
15. restrain	hold back	release

Comprehension Tests A

PART I: MOTIVATION (20 POINTS)

- she did not have her feet bound
- to teach her a woman's proper behavior; to make her suitable for marriage
- such education was for men only
- she believes that education is bad for girls; it will make them sicken and die
- she will come to harm from those who fear differences, especially in women
- he believes that it is a waste of money to educate women
- it is the only way that she sees to avoid becoming a concubine
- Billy is mischievous and the servants shun her
- a doctor for Billy, who has the measles
- they do not have enough money to afford better accommodations

PART II: MATCHING (20 POINTS)

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

PART III: TRUE/FALSE (20 POINTS)

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

PART IV: ESSAY (40 POINTS)

Answers will vary.

Comprehension Test B

PART I: FILL IN THE BLANK (20 POINTS)

- | | |
|------------------|---------------|
| 1. San Francisco | 6. governess |
| 2. China | 7. heathen |
| 3. bound feet | 8. James Chew |
| 4. tuberculosis | 9. restaurant |
| 5. concubine | 10. family |

PART II: MATCHING (20 POINTS)

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

PART III: IDENTIFICATION (20 POINTS)

- Bound feet set off the action and serve as the main symbol in the story. Ailin refuses to have her feet bound, as is the custom. This rebellion typifies her independent, courageous spirit.
- Education is Ailin's love and her goal. She sacrifices a great deal to learn English and world history, which paves the way for her extraordinary rebellion and subsequent journey to America.
- Second Sister tells Ailin that the different colored silk worms are destroyed, a warning that Ailin faces serious peril—perhaps even death—if she attempts to break away from tradition and her family.
- Ailin gives the bag of money she had earned to Big Uncle as an act of defiance and pride. He returns it to her to remind her that she comes from a wealthy family and should comport herself accordingly.
- Ailin's personal revolution is echoed in China's national revolution; national events serve to mirror personal ones. Each revolution is as dramatic in its own way.

PART IV: ESSAY (40 POINTS)

Answers will vary.



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