

RESOURCES FOR TEACHERS

The Boy in the Attic

Grades K - 2

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1. Story Summary

Seven-year-old Kai-ming and his family leave China for North America's skyscrapers. At the ancestral tombs, a black butterfly lands on him to point out the right tomb. In North America, Kai-ming is uneasy. He doesn't know English. The streets are busy. One day he spots a face in the attic. Up there, he meets a strange boy. The two cannot understand each other until a butterfly lands on Kai-ming. The two boys become friends. When time comes for Kai-ming to move away, the other boy reveals he died in the house long ago. Kai-ming leaves behind his butterfly, so that his friend can talk with other newcomers.

2. Themes around Immigration

- It is sad to leave one's homeland to go live elsewhere.
- A new homeland can be scary.
- Making friends is important.
- Learning the language of the new homeland is important.
- When a family moves from one country to another, a child's parents will face many new problems.

3. Comprehension

- 3.1 How did Kai-ming feel after arriving in North America?
- 3.2 Why didn't Kai-ming have any friends at first?
- 3.3 Kai-ming did not speak English. Benjamin did not speak Chinese. How did the two boys talk to one another?
- 3.4 When Ba said it was time to move, why didn't Kai-ming want to go?
- 3.5 Why couldn't Benjamin go away with Kai-ming?

4. Activities

- 4.1 Can you make someone understand you without speaking? How do we express the following without using our mouths?
 - a. Yes (nod head)
 - b. No (shake head)
 - c. I don't know. (shrug shoulders)
 - d. I can't hear. (put one hand behind ear)
 - e. I'm tired (sign and let shoulders sag)
 - f. Come! (wave hand towards yourself)
 - g. Stop! (have palm facing outwards)
 - g. Be quiet! (raise finger to lips)
- 4.2 Name some toys that Benjamin played with long ago.
Name some toys that Kai-ming played with today.
Name the toys that children from a hundred years ago and from today play with.
- 4.3 You are seven years old and moving to a different country. What things would you want to carry with you?
- 4.4 You meet a new friend who cannot speak your language. What game can you show him or her so that you could play together?
- 4.5 What kind of a tree does the artist show at the end of the story? Why do you think the author chose this tree? Cut a leaf shape from coloured paper, and write a one-sentence message from Kai-ming to Benjamin.