



CHAPTER

1

Read Aloud

Before we meet our main character, we're going to read about the setting + learn
Far away from here, following the Jade River, there was ^{learn} once a black mountain that cut into the sky like a jagged ^{details} piece of rough metal. The villagers called it Fruitless ^{about} Mountain because nothing grew on it and birds and animals ^{where she} did not rest there. ^{lives}

Crowded in the corner of where Fruitless Mountain and the Jade River met was a village that was a shade of faded brown. This was because the land around the village was hard and poor. To coax rice out of the stubborn land, the fields had to be flooded with water. The

obtain something
by persistently
trying

villagers had to tramp in the mud, bending and stooping and planting day after day. Working in the mud so much made it spread everywhere and the hot sun dried it onto their clothes and hair and homes. Over time, everything in the village had become the dull color of dried mud.

One of the houses in this village was so small that its wood boards, held together by the roof, made one think of a bunch of matches tied with a piece of twine. Inside, there was barely enough room for three people to sit around the table — which was lucky because only three people lived there. One of them was a young girl called

Minli.

Read Aloud

Annotate: details we learn

Q1a+b

Minli was not brown and dull like the rest of the vil-^{about}
lage. She had glossy black hair with pink cheeks, shining^{Minli}
eyes always eager for adventure, and a fast smile that
flashed from her face. When people saw her lively and
impulsive spirit, they thought her name, which meant
quick thinking, suited her well. "Too well," her mother
sighed, as Minli had a habit of quick acting as well. ← ^{What does it}
^{mean that}

Ma sighed a great deal, an impatient noise usually ac-^{Minli}
companied with a frown at their rough clothes, rundown ^{had}
house, or meager food. Minli could not remember a time ^{an}
^{impulsive}
^{spirit?}

when Ma did not sigh; it often made Minli wish she had been called a name that meant *gold* or *fortune* instead. Because Minli and her parents, like the village and the land around them, were very poor. They were barely able to harvest enough rice to feed themselves, and the only money in the house was two old copper coins that sat in a blue rice bowl with a white rabbit painted on it. The coins and the bowl belonged to Minli; they had been given to her when she was a baby, and she had had them for as long as she could remember. *When does Ma sigh?*

Why?
What kept Minli from becoming dull and brown like the rest of the village were the stories her father told her every night at dinner. She glowed with such wonder and excitement that even Ma would smile, though she would shake her head at the same time. Ba seemed to drop his gray and work weariness *tiredness* — his black eyes sparkled like raindrops in the sun when he began a story.

FALSE
“Ba, tell me the story about Fruitless Mountain again,” Minli would say as her mother spooned their plain rice into bowls. “Tell me again why nothing grows on it.”

“Ah,” Minli’s father said, “you’ve heard this so many times. You know.”

"Tell me again, Ba," Minli begged. "Please."

"Okay," he said, and as he set down his chopsticks his smile twinkled in a way that Minli loved.

Q2 + Q4

In this
novel
there
are many
shorter stories
within it.
This is the first



THE STORY OF FRUITLESS MOUNTAIN



Once when there were no rivers on the earth, the Jade Dragon was in charge of clouds. She decided when and where the clouds would rain upon the land and when they would stop. She was very proud of her power and of the reverence the people of earth paid her. Jade Dragon had four dragon children: Pearl, Yellow, Long, and Black. They were large and strong and good and kind. They helped Jade Dragon with her work, and whenever they flew in the sky she was overwhelmed with love and pride.

However, one day, as Jade Dragon ended the rain and moved the clouds away from the land, she overheard some villagers' conversation.

honour
resp.

"Ah, thank goodness the rain is gone," one man said.

"Yes," another said, "I'm so tired of the rain. I'm glad the clouds are gone and the sun is finally shining."

Those words filled Jade Dragon with anger. Tired of rain! Glad the clouds were gone! Jade Dragon was in-

angry b/c something is wrong unfair dignant How dare the villagers dishonor her that way!

Jade Dragon was so offended that she decided that she would never let it rain again. "The people can enjoy the sun forever," Jade Dragon thought resentfully.

Of course, that meant despair *deep sadness* for the people on earth. As the sun beat overhead and the rain never came, drought *dry spell* and famine *lack of food* spread over the land. Animals and trees withered and died and the people begged for rain, but Jade Dragon ignored them.

But their suffering did not go unnoticed by Jade Dragon's children. They were horrified at the anguish *extreme grief or pain* and misery on earth. One by one, they went to their mother and pleaded forgiveness for the humans — but even their words did not soften their mother's cold heart. "We will never make it rain for the people again," Jade Dragon vowed.

Pearl, Yellow, Long, and Black met in secret.

"We must do something to help the people," Black said. "If they do not get water soon, they will all die."

"Yes," Yellow said, "but what can we do? We cannot make it rain. We cannot dishonor Mother with disobedience."

Long looked down at the earth. "I will sacrifice myself for the people of earth," he said. "I will lie on the land and transform myself into water for them to drink."

The others looked at him in astonishment, but one by one they nodded.

"I will do the same," Yellow said.

"As will we," Pearl and Black said.

So Jade Dragon's children went down to earth and turned themselves into water, saving the people on the earth. They became the four great rivers of the land, stopping the drought and death of all those on earth.

But when Jade Dragon saw what her children had done, she cursed herself for her pride. No longer would her dragon children fly in the air with her or call her Mother. Her heart broke in grief and sadness; she fell from the sky and turned herself into the Jade River

in hopes that she could somehow be reunited with her children.

Fruitless Mountain is the broken heart of Jade Dragon. Nothing grows or lives on the mountain; the land around it is hard and the water of the river is dark because Jade Dragon's sad spirit is still there. Until Jade Dragon is no longer lonely and is reunited with at least one of her children, Fruitless Mountain will remain bare.

FM: Who told this story?
What does it explain?



Q5 + Q6

FASE
Annotate
moments
that show
how
Ma feels
about
Ba's
stories

"Why doesn't someone bring the water of the four great rivers to the mountain?" Minli asked, even though she had asked this question many times before. Every time Ba told the story, she couldn't help thinking how wonderful it would be to have the mountain blooming with fruit and flowers, bringing richness to their needy village.

"Wouldn't that make Jade Dragon happy?"

"When Jade Dragon's children turned themselves into water," Minli's father said, "they were at peace and their spirits were released. Their spirits are no longer in the water. So Jade Dragon cannot find them in the rivers."

Over a hundred years ago, a man tried to reunite them by taking stones from the mountain to the rivers." *[M: what does solution does]*

"That man was not taking the stone for a dragon spirit," *Minli* Minli's mother cut in. She never quite approved of Ba's stories, as she felt they made Minli impractical and caused her to daydream. "My grandmother told me he was an artist. He took the mountain rock to carve into inking stones." *- used to grind + hold ink (for writing)* *Minli propose? why will it not work?*

"Did he ever come back?" Minli asked.

"No. It probably did not make good ink." Ma sighed. "He probably found something finer elsewhere. I bet the bronze on his horse's saddle was more than we will ever have."

Ma's sighs made Minli wish that every rock of Fruitless Mountain were gold and she couldn't help asking, "So how will Fruitless Mountain ever grow green again?"

"Ah," her father said, "that is a question you will have to ask the Old Man of the Moon."

"Oh, tell that story next!" Minli begged. "Whenever I ask something important, people say, 'That is a question you have to ask the Old Man of the Moon.' Someday, I will ask him."

"The Old Man of the Moon! Another story! Our house

is bare and our rice hardly fills our bowls, but we have
plenty of stories.” Ma sighed again. “What a poor fortune
we have!”

“Maybe,” Ba said to Minli, glancing at Ma, “I should
tell you that story tomorrow.”