

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

General Questions

1. How does the title of the book relate to the story? Are there any other title(s) that you think might also describe the story?
 - What does the jade bangle mean to Anne?
 - What do the pearl earrings mean to Liz?
 - What does the painted fan mean to Jacob?
2. In the books, it's stated "We Vietnamese believe the spirits of our family, our ancestors, stay with us after they pass away. They hear our prayers. They watch out for us."
 - How do these beliefs appear in the story?
 - What are some of your family's beliefs?
3. The siblings speak both Vietnamese and English with their families. Do you speak a language other than English? If so, what language? Are there any other language(s) you want to learn?
4. Each of the Nguyen kids is named after a character from a story book.
 - Who is Anne named after?
 - Who is Liz named after?
 - Who is Jacob named after?
 - Have you read these books?
5. How do the Nguyen kids get along with each other? Can you find some examples to show how they get along or don't get along with each other?
6. How is Jacob's relationship with Mom and Dad different from Anne's and Liz's relationships with them?
8. Can you relate to the characters in the book? Why or why not? Who is your favorite character? Why?
9. Describe in your own words what each of the books is about.
10. Is there anything you are still curious about after finishing the books?

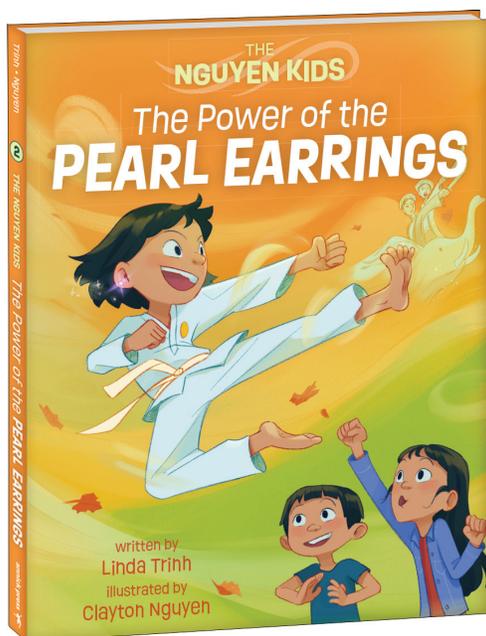




The Secret of the Jade Bangle



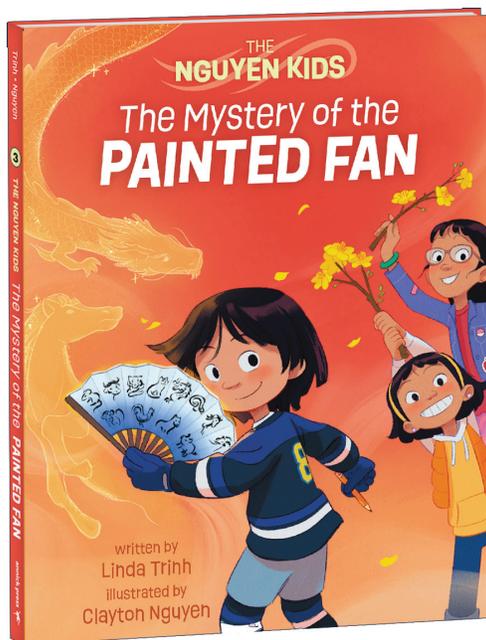
1. When Anne cooks Grandma Nội's recipes, she feels closer to her. What do you like to do with your family?
2. Mrs. Smith asks Anne, "Where are you really from?"
 - How does this question impact the rest of the story?
 - What did you think when you read this part?
3. Anne thinks: "I sit by myself and think about what it means to be Vietnamese. I've never really thought about this stuff before."
 - What do you think Anne means by this?
4. Anne asks herself: "Is something wrong with me? Who am I?"
 - Why do you think Anne feels this way here? Have you ever felt like how Anne does?
 - What does Anne discover about her identity by the end of the book?
5. Jennifer says: "Sure. But she always points out how different you are." Then Anne says: "I'm shocked. How does Jennifer notice when Sophie, my good friend, doesn't?"
 - Why do you think Jennifer and Sophie respond differently to the way Mrs. Smith treats Anne?
 - How do the ways that Anne's friends react to Mrs. Smith tell readers about friendship and standing up for what's right?
6. Anne's parents have certain expectations of how Anne performs at school and in ballet.
 - How do these expectations impact Anne, and how do they shape the story?
7. Anne brings the chả giò spring rolls to ballet class and stands up to Mrs. Smith. How does this scene make you feel?
8. What do you think Mom means when she tells Anne, "Those comments were racist." What is your understanding of racism, what are some examples of racism in Mrs. Smith's actions?
9. How does Anne and Jennifer's relationship change throughout the book? What do you think were the reasons for these changes?
10. How would you describe Anne's character? Do you think she seems different at the end of the book, compared to how she was in the beginning?



The Power of the Pearl Earrings



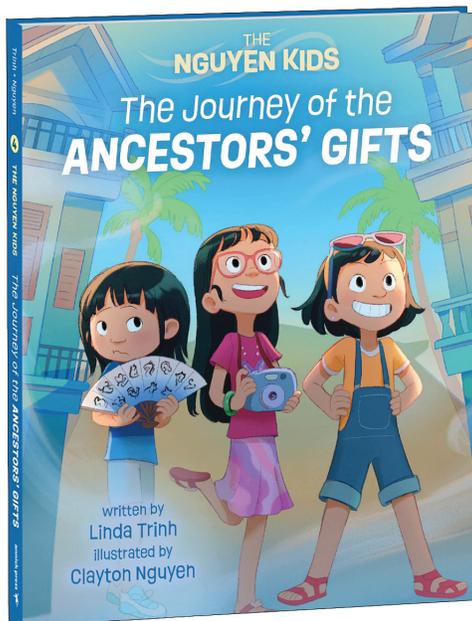
1. Liz admires the Trung Warriors and this belief gives her strength. What are some stories of your family or culture that inspire you?
2. Liz and Rohan like to play role-playing games. What do you like to do with your friends?
3. When Michael says, “Taekwondo— isn’t that a boy thing?” how does this make Liz feel?
 - What was your reaction to reading this scene?
 - Why do you think Rohan starts hanging out with Michael more than Liz?
4. Anne holds my hand. “Like I said, if you need help, Grandma Nội will know.”
 - What do you think Anne means here, and how does it help Liz?
5. Liz thinks: “The Baby and Dad are buddies. Miss Perfect and Mom are buddies. Mom and Dad just want me to stay out of the way.”
 - What does Liz mean by this? How does this impact Liz and how she acts in the book?
6. Why do you think Michael starts the “No Girls Allowed” club?
7. Liz tells her mom about what she notices with some of the boys at school: “Like they tell you things you already know. Or they pretend to know things. Like people pay more attention to them.”
 - Has something like this ever happened to you at school?
8. Auntie Hai says: “Us feminists believe women equal to men. Should have same rights and chances. Still need to fight.”
 - What do you think about these statements?
9. After Liz lets Michael answer the question about coding, she decides to do it herself.
 - Why do you think she does this?
 - How does this scene show how she’s changed from the beginning of the book?
10. How would you describe Liz’s personality? What kind of things does she do that surprises you?



The Mystery of the Painted Fan



1. Jacob says both he and Grandma Nội were born in the Year of the Horse in the Vietnamese zodiac and that is one way they are alike. In what ways are you alike or different from your family members?
2. Jacob loves to draw. He says “It helps my mind quiet down when it’s like a storm, like a blizzard, inside my head.”
 - What do you like to do to help your mind quiet down?
3. What are the reasons you think Dad didn’t get the pink helmet for Jacob when they were at the store the first time?
4. When some of his teammates make fun of his pink helmet, Jacob thinks, “I didn’t think I would care what people said. But I do.”
 - How does this scene impact the characters and the plot?
5. Jacob asks Cousin Hanh, “More than boy or girl? More than just two?”
 - What are your thoughts about their conversation?
6. Why does Jacob think that tracing the rooster on his painted fan might help him tell his family that he wants to be in the fan dance?
7. Jacob’s hockey team is called The Kings. He thinks, “Why don’t we have a team name that includes everyone?”
 - What team name(s) can you think of that are more inclusive?
8. When Dad and Jacob go to the zoo, Dad tells a story about Chú Vãn and how he doesn’t want Jacob to get hurt like he did. Jacob is surprised grown-ups bully other grown-ups.
 - How did you feel reading/listening to this part of the story?
9. Jacob says to his classmates that he’s wearing an áo dài for Lunar New Year because “It’s Vietnamese. I’m celebrating.”
 - What holidays do you celebrate and what do you do?
10. Jacob is dancing the fan dance and thinks, “I can be powerful and graceful, strong and soft. I can be who I am.”
 - How does this scene show how he’s changed from the beginning to the end of the book?
11. How would you describe Jacob’s personality? In what ways does he seem different by the end of the book?



The Journey of the Ancestors' Gifts



1. How does the title of the book relate to the story?
 - What other title(s) can you think of?
 - What are the ancestors' gifts?

2. In the books, it's stated "we Vietnamese believe the spirits of our family, our ancestors, stay with us after they pass away. We pray to them, and they bring us luck."
 - How do these beliefs show up in the story?
 - What are your family's beliefs?

3. How do all the Nguyen kids get along with each other? Can you find some examples to show that they do or don't get along with each other?

4. Anne, Liz, and Jay all get to give their points of view as the chapters rotate through all of them.
 - How does changing the points of view move the plot of the story along?
 - How does it show the different ways they experience what's happening?
 - What other things do you notice about the changes in the points of view?

5. Anne thinks, "I am super excited to learn what Grandma Nội's life was like here in Vietnam. That may help me learn about where my parents came from and where I come from."
 - Is your family from a place different from where you live now? Have you ever visited that place? What was the visit like?

6. How do each of the siblings feel about being in Vietnam at the beginning of the book?
 - How do their feelings change about their trip throughout the book? And by the end of the book?

7. In chapter 4, Anne, Liz, and Jay find out something weird about the house and Grandma Nội. What is it?

8. Why do the kids at the soccer field not let Liz, Anne, and Jay play with them?
 - How do the siblings feel about this?

9. Feeling bad about happened at the soccer field, Jay thinks, "Knowing what it's like to feel different, I know it's not a great feeling."
 - What does Jay mean by this? Have you ever felt different or like you didn't belong? If so, why?

10. What is in the chest Cô Ba shows the Kids that belonged to Grandma Nội? If you had a chest of treasures, what would be in it?

11. The kids really want to help fix the problem with the house and help their Grandma Nội.
 - What is the problem they are trying to solve?
 - What are some of the clues that help them out?
 - How do Anne’s jade bracelet, Liz’s pearl earrings, and Jay’s painted fan play a part?
12. Liz and Cô Ba have a great relationship. What does Liz mean when she thinks her plan “is not just for Grandma Nội. But for Cô Ba too. For those who left and those still here”?
13. On the trip to Núi Bà Đen, Anne thinks “I thought being in Vietnam would make me MORE SURE about who I am, not less sure.”
 - What does she mean by this?
14. On the trip to Núi Bà Đen, Liz, Jay, and Anne all get into a fight. What are they fighting about?
 - What do each of the characters learn about each other?
 - How does getting into the fight move along the plot?
15. At the end of the book, how do the siblings work together to solve their problem with the house? What does this show you about their relationship?
16. Grandma Nội tells Anne, Liz, and Jacob that “Vietnam is always a part of you. All the ancestors are in you.” What does she mean by this?
17. What questions were left unanswered after you finished the book?
18. Can you relate to the characters in the book? Why or why not? Who is your favorite character?
19. Describe in your own words what the book is about.