



DISCUSSION GUIDE

Disney • HYPERION BOOKS

About the Book

Red Kite, Blue Kite is the story of a young boy (Tai Shan) and his father (Baba) during China's Cultural Revolution. Tai Shan and Baba love spending time together flying their kites in the crowded city. However, due to the hard times that the Revolution brings, Tai Shan and Baba must use their kites to secretly communicate. Every day the kites give Tai Shan hope that he and his father will be free and together again soon.

“Told against the backdrop of a dark part of Chinese history, any child coping with separation from a loved one may find comfort in this story.”—*Kirkus Review*

Common Core Alignment

This guide is aligned with the College and Career Readiness Anchor Standards (CCR) for Literature, Writing, Language, Speaking and Listening. The broad CCR standards are the foundation for the grade level-specific Common Core State Standards. Each question and activity in this guide includes a reference for the CCR strand, domain, and standard that is addressed. To support instruction also reference the grade-level specific Common Core State Standards to scaffold the questions for your students.



Pre-reading Activity

Activate Background Knowledge

Prior to students completing the graphic organizer below, ask the following prompts*:

A word that is used at the beginning of the story is *crowded*. What does it mean to be in a place that is crowded? When was the last time you felt crowded?

Have you ever flown a kite before? If yes, what is fun about flying a kite? What type of weather is needed for kite flying to work?

Why would people go around smashing things and searching homes? What could be happening to the city?

Sentence from the story	Draw a picture of the image described in the sentence	Write a sentence about how you think this sentence relates to the book. What might you learn in the story?
My city is <i>crowded</i> and the streets are skinny.		
Baba and I fly our kites from the tippy-top of our triangle roof.		
People wearing red armbands smash store signs and search homes.		

*Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use; L.CCR.4; Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: R.CCR.1

Discussion Questions

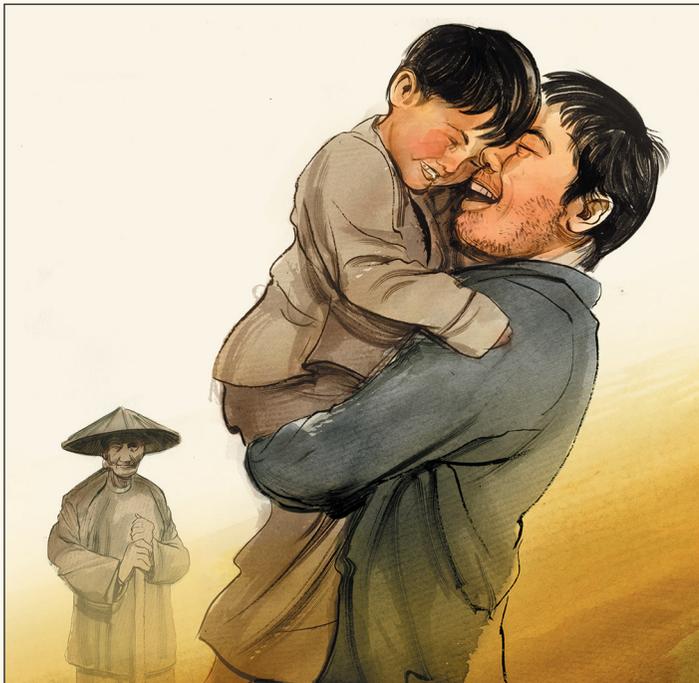
- 1 In the story it says, “The kites hop and giggle as they rise and dive, soaring and lunging together.” Use the context clues in the sentence to figure out what the word *lunging* means. How does it look when kites are *lunging*? Create a picture in your mind. What is an antonym for lunging? What is a synonym? (*Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: L.CCR.4*)
- 2 Why do you think Tai Shan is sent to live with Granny Wang? Why can’t he go with Baba? Make an inference by using your own ideas and details from the text to answer the question. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: R.CCR.1*)
- 3 Describe the events that occurred and caused Baba to go to a labor camp. How does Tai Shan respond to the challenge of living apart from Baba? Use evidence from the text to support your answer. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: R.CCR.2*)
- 4 The author includes many detailed images of Tai Shan and Baba in the story. For example, “He picks me up and swirls me around until I become a kite.” What figurative language can you find in the quote? (*Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: L.CCR.5*)
- 5 How did flying the kites in two different places have a positive impact on Tai Shan and Baba? Why is this daily activity important to Tai Shan and Baba? Give specific examples from the text. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: R.CCR.1*)
- 6 Tai Shan is the narrator telling the story. How might his point of view impact the way that the events are described? Be sure to include examples from the story. (*Reading Literature: Craft and Structure: R.CCR.6*)
- 7 What common experiences and feelings do Tai Shan and Baba share in the story? Pick an interaction between Tai Shan and Baba that supports your answer (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: R.CCR. 3*)

- 8 How do the illustrations in the novel help the reader understand the story? Select one picture and explain how it supports the words in the story. (*Reading Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas: R.CCR. 7*)

Post-reading Assignment

What does the author want the reader to learn in this story? What lesson could a child or adult learn by reading this book? Use examples from the story to support your answer. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: R.CCR.2*)

Think about another book that you have read about a father and son. Compare and contrast the relationship between the characters in both books. How are they similar? How are they different? What types of events in each story impacts the father/son relationship? Include details from both stories to support your conclusions. (*Reading Literature: Key Ideas and Details: R.CCR.3*)



Across the Curriculum

Social Studies

Research the Cultural Revolution using online and/or library resources. Consider the following questions: What caused the Cultural Revolution? How did the Cultural Revolution impact people in China? What happened once the Cultural Revolution ended? What parts of the story *Red Kite*, *Blue Kite* match your research findings? (*Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge: W.CCR.7*)

Revolutions can have a huge impact on a society. Describe what a “Revolution” might look like, feel like, and sound like using the graphic organizer below. (*Language: Vocabulary Acquisition and Use: L.CCR.5*)

<i>Revolution</i>		
Feels Like	Looks Like	Sounds Like

Reading Fluency Practice

During centers or choice time encourage students to take turns reading pages of the story to one another. Students should focus on reading with appropriate expression, rate, and accuracy in the voice that they believe Tai Shan would use while telling the story. (*Reading Foundational Skills: Fluency: R.CCR. 4*)

Writing

Do you believe that Baba is brave or cowardly for going to the labor camp? Write an opinion essay that explains why you have that opinion. Be sure to support your argument with an introduction, multiple reasons, and a concluding statement. (*Writing: Text Types and Purposes: W.CCR.1*)

Math

Step 1: Kites can come in many different shapes and sizes. Use the Internet to research different ways to make kites using varying geometric shapes. (*Writing: Research to Build and Present Knowledge: W.CCR.7*)

Step 2: Once you find your design create a manual that shows others how to make your kite. You must include step-by-step directions and visual images that others could use and follow. (*Writing: Production and Distribution of Writing: W.CCR.6*)

Step 3: Build the kite using your manual. Make sure to label each shape with the matching math vocabulary word. In class with a partner present your kite and manual. Be sure to explain your research steps, details from your manual, and the materials you used to construct your actual kite. (*Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas: SL. CCR.4*)

Science

Pick any city in the world and research the annual weather trends. Based on your research and opinion describe the “perfect” city location (e.g., hill, building, etc...), month, day, and time to fly a kite. Include information such as the relevance of the selected kite-flying location, temperature, wind speed, city events, and chance of rain in your report. (*Writing: Text Types and Purposes: W.CCR.1*)

Home-School Connection

Create a shape poem about flying a kite. Around the perimeter of the kite shape (see below) write a poem that tells how you feel when you fly a kite. Consider including some of the vocabulary words used to describe flying kites in the story, such as “forward,” “backward,” “up and down,” “swirls,” “circles,” “nods and greets,” “free,” “soaring,” and “lunging.” (*Writing: Types and Purposes: W.CCR.3*)



About the Author

Ji-li Jiang (www.jilijiang.com) was born in Shanghai, China. For more than twenty years she nursed her childhood memories of surviving the Cultural Revolution in China, and she finally brought them to life in her first book, *Red Scarf Girl*, which has sold more than 300,000 copies since it was published in 1997 and has become required reading in many schools. Following the success of *Red Scarf Girl*, she published her adaptation of Chinese classic folklore, *Magical Monkey King: Mischief in Heaven*. When she isn't writing or speaking, Ji-li devotes time to various cultural exchange programs, including leading group trips to China. She believes that a better understanding among people around the world is the only route to global peace.



Q & A with Ji-li Jiang

1 You provide very vivid imagery of flying kites in your story. What was your favorite part of flying or watching kites as a child?

Flying kites on the tippy-top of our triangle roof, as I described in the book, was my own childhood experience. I remember how I cheered or screamed as the kite hopped up or tumbled down. When the kite rose into the boundless sky, I felt like flapping my own wings and flying in the wind. The feeling of being free totally gave me a thrill that nothing else could.

2 Why do you think it is important for young readers to learn more about the Cultural Revolution?

Costing millions of people's lives, the Cultural Revolution was the most destructive political movement in modern Chinese history. Just like the Holocaust, the only way to prevent history from repeating is to make people aware and vigilant, so we will not allow this kind of tragedy to happen again, at any time, in any country.

3 In the “Author’s Note” it states that your friend who is a poet inspired this story. How did interviews with your friend or other people help you develop the story?

I didn’t do any interviews for this book. The poet, whom I mentioned in the Author’s Note, died twenty years ago, but his story, that he had to follow his father to the labor camp at a very young age, lived in my mind for decades. It was natural to use him as the protagonist when I wrote this story.

4 What is the lesson that you want young readers to learn from reading your story? Why?

I hope kids can relate to Tai Shan, the young boy in my book. Life can be hard or cruel, sometimes even hopeless, but I want them to know their parents’ love is always there. This is one of the most selfless and unconditional forms of love in the world.

5 Why did you decide to become a writer? What do you like most about being a children’s author?

Honestly speaking, I never planned to be a writer. I dreamed of becoming an actress since I was a little girl, but was rejected again and again during the ten years of the Cultural Revolution due to my family’s political background. In 1976 when the Cultural Revolution was over, I submitted my application to Shanghai Drama Academy, a school I longed for years to attend, and was waiting for an audition. About ten days before the audition, I got a letter from my district authority denying my participation. I was devastated, as this meant losing my last chance to pursue my dream. A relative took me to see an acquaintance who was the chauffeur of a district official, hoping this driver could ask his boss to give me permission to go to the audition. It was raining and dark. My relative and I searched in the rain, house by house, for three hours. We never found the driver. On my way back home, all the terrible experiences of the past ten years flooded over me. I began to cry under the umbrella. I wished I could share my feelings with others. Suddenly, this idea burst upon me: “One day, I will write my story down and share it with others.” That’s how I wrote my story and became a writer.

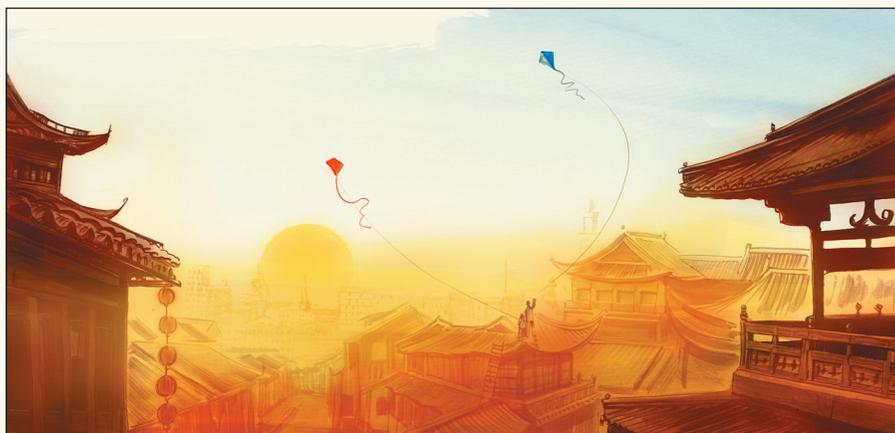
To be a children’s author is a privilege. Not only have I received letters, photos, even “red envelopes” from children (no money inside of the red envelopes, sorry!), I was treated with abundant trust and openness, as if I was one of their family members. When they told me their personal stories and how they were encouraged by my book, I felt so lucky and honored to be able to touch tens of thousands of children’s hearts with my writing.

About the Illustrator

Greg Ruth (www.gregthings.com) has worked in comics since 1993, creating artwork for *The New York Times*, DC Comics, Paradox Press, Fantagraphics Books, Caliber Comics, Dark Horse Comics, and *The Matrix*. His book projects include *The Lost Boy*, which he wrote and illustrated, and *The Secret Adventures of Jack London*, *The Haunting of Charles Dickens*, *A Pirate’s Guide to First Grade*, and R.L. Stine’s *Goosebumps* tales. After watching President Obama’s Inauguration he was inspired to create sketches that eventually became the basis of his picture book *Our Enduring Spirit*. Greg lives in Massachusetts with his family.

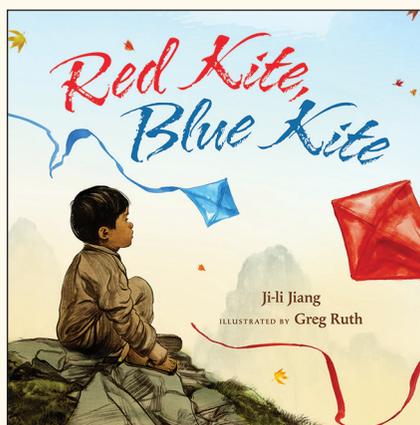


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This guide was created by Dawn Jacobs. She has spent her career supporting students with disabilities through various roles as a practitioner, researcher, and special education director. She received her doctorate in Special Education: Learning Disabilities from the University of Maryland, College Park. Furthermore, she continues to improve the academic outcomes for students with disabilities through teacher development, instructional design, and research in the areas of response to intervention, social support, and parent involvement. Feel free to contact her at Jacobsdmi@gmail.com.

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Red Kite, Blue Kite

Hardcover

978-1-4231-2753-6

\$17.99

Disney • HYPERION BOOKS

NEW YORK

www.disneyhyperionbooks.com

