



Inquire to Learn!

There are many ways in which *The Girl and the Waterfall/Explore China* can be used as a base for Inquiry Learning. This is just one suggestion.

Session 1

Using the Big Book, share-read *The Girl and the Waterfall*, stopping at natural points for discussion. Draw on the students' prior knowledge of weather/drought and plants, natural springs, mythical creatures, fear, thunder, waterfalls, statues, self sacrifice and helping others.

Possible Starter Questions for Discussion

Weather/Drought: Does anyone know what it is called when there has been no rain for a long time? Discuss droughts and their effects on plant growth.

Natural Springs: If there is no rain, where else might people get water from? Ensure that the children understand that *The Girl and the Waterfall* is set long ago in rural China when there was no running water. Extend the discussion beyond rivers and lakes to include natural springs and waterfalls. Help the children to understand that most bottled water comes from natural springs.

Mythical Creatures: Hold up the cover of *The Girl and the Waterfall*. Ask, What do you think the green and gold creature might be?

Self-Sacrifice and Helping Others: Would you give up your own happiness to save your family and friends? Why/why not?

Text and Illustration Based Inquiry Questions

Cover and title page: Look at the cover of *The Girl and the Waterfall*. Ask, How do you think the girl is feeling? How can you tell? Why do you think she is feeling this way? Look at the title page. What do you think the girl might have in her bucket?

P. 4: How is Ah-mei feeling? What makes you think this? Why did Ah-mei rush home to tell her family about the water? Discuss Ah-mei's desire to share the water with her family.

P. 5: Discuss the verb phrase *took shelter* and help the children to understand that the word *shelter* can also be used as a noun e.g. a cave is a shelter. Discuss the character of Lei-gong, the Chinese god of thunder, and his desire to keep the water all for himself.

PP. 6–7: Ah-mei is so afraid of Lei-gong that her hair turns white and she cannot talk. Ask, What are some things that make you feel afraid? Ensure that the children know that it is always OK to talk about their fears with an adult they trust. Explain to the children that a person's hair suddenly turning white from fear is something that only happens in stories, not in real life.

The Girl and the Waterfall/Explore China

Teacher's Notes continued

P. 8: *Why did Ah-mei go up the mountain again to dig for water even though she was so afraid of Lei-gong?* (To help the old man and the other villagers.)

PP. 11: Revisit the text: *At home, she saw how happy the people were. She knew she had done the right thing.* Discuss the concept of self-sacrifice to help others.

PP. 12–13: *How did the old man and Ah-mei trick Lei-gong?* (They put a statue under the waterfall in Ah-mei's place.) *What did Ah-mei have to give up to make their plan work?* (Her long, white hair.)

P. 16: *How do you think Ah-mei's mother would have felt to have her daughter back? How would the villagers have felt to have water?*

Further Discussion and Inquiry Extension

Research weather/thunder gods from other cultures and compare them to Lei-gong e.g., Tawhirimatea – the Māori god of weather or Whaitiri – the Māori goddess of thunder; Thor – the god of thunder from Norse mythology; Indra – the Indian/Hindu god of thunder, or Zeus from Greek mythology.

Challenge the students to write a story about their chosen god of thunder. Remind the students that many mythological creatures have both positive and negative aspects to their personalities.

Explore the concept that some people around the world do not have running water today, and our ancestors didn't have running water in their homes. Learn more about springs and wells (refer to the illustration on pp. 6–7 of *The Girl and the Waterfall*) and the different methods used around the world for carrying water. Discuss all the ways in which we use water and how our lives would be different if we didn't have the technology to have water in our homes.

Research drought, with a particular emphasis on the local environment if applicable. Who is affected by drought? How is it dealt with?

Learn about other Chinese gods and mythological creatures e.g., Guanyin – the goddess of mercy, who helps the distressed and hungry and gives comfort and aid OR share-read another folk tale from China e.g., the Chinese Cinderella story.

Session 2

Using the Big Book, share-read *Explore China*, stopping at natural points for discussion. Draw on the students' prior knowledge of China and the Great Wall, folk tales, animals, festivals and New Year celebrations, fireworks, and inventions.

Possible Starter Questions for Discussion and Inquiry

Chinese (Mandarin) Greeting: *People in China speak a language called Mandarin. Does anyone know how to say hello in Mandarin? It is nǐ hǎo.*

Great Wall of China: Look at the cover. Ask, *Does anyone know what this is a photo of?* Explain that the Great Wall of China is a famous wall built over 2,000 years ago across the northern border of China for defence purposes.

Location of China/Geography: Look at the map on p. 1 of *Explore China* and note the location of China in Asia, and in relation to New Zealand. Discuss that China is a huge country – New Zealand could fit into China more than 35 times. If any of the children come from China or have visited it, invite them to share their experiences.



The Girl and the Waterfall/Explore China

Teacher's Notes continued

Folk Tales: Discuss how folk stories and traditional tales used to be passed on from one generation to another by word of mouth. Draw on the prior knowledge students may have about Māori and Pacific tales traditionally being passed on orally. Explore the concept that in the past, all around the world, stories were used to explain how things came to be and to teach lessons.

Animals: *Has anyone seen any of the animals on pp. 2–3? Which animal have you seen and where did you see it? How are these animals similar to New Zealand or Australian animals? How are they different?*

Spring Festival/Chinese New Year: *Who has been part of Chinese New Year celebrations? Where were you? What did you do? What did you see?* Discuss that the date of Chinese New Year changes from year to year because it is based on the Chinese lunar calendar, but it is always somewhere between January 21 to February 20 and signifies the beginning of Spring in China. Find out when Chinese New Year is this year. Talk about the use of fireworks at celebrations and draw on the children's knowledge of Guy Fawkes Day. Compare and contrast the Spring Festival to other celebrations where family time, food, and gifts play an important role.

Inventions: Using p. 8 of *Explore China*, match the descriptions of the inventions to the photos.

Further Discussion and Inquiry Extension

Discuss that China is the largest country in the world in terms of population (1.35 billion people). Compare China's population to those of New Zealand and Australia. Look at or make a bar graph comparing the populations of various countries.

Invite the children to pick an animal from China to learn more about. Zoos in Auckland, Hamilton, and Wellington have red pandas, and New Zealand is part of an international red panda breeding programme. Orana Wildlife Park in Christchurch has yaks.

Learn more about Chinese New Year and the Lantern Festival, which is celebrated on the 15th day of the New Year and marks the end of Spring Festival celebrations. If possible, arrange for the children to see some Chinese lanterns, which come in a huge variety of styles. Lantern Festivals are held in Auckland and Christchurch.

Make your own Spring Festival decorations using simple ideas from the Internet and decorate your classroom.

Research the 12 animals of the Chinese zodiac and find out which animal is being celebrated this year.

Research other inventions from China e.g., fireworks and printing. As a class, make your own recycled paper. Discuss the environmental benefits of recycling paper and explore some products that are made from recycled paper e.g., egg cartons.

Learn about other festivals or special events that are celebrated in China e.g., the Mid-Autumn or Moon Festival, and the Dragon Boat Festival.