

# The Lost Garden

**Synopsis:** In *The Lost Garden*, Laurence Yep describes how he grew up as a confused and conflicted Chinese American in San Francisco during the 1950s and '60s. During that time he struggled to better understand himself and his place in the world. Ultimately, through his writing, he achieved his goal and in the process, also found a way to celebrate his family and his ethnic heritage.

## Introduction: Explore Autobiography

Explain to students that *The Lost Garden* is an autobiography written by the two-time Newbery Honor author Laurence Yep. Review the difference between an autobiography and a biography. Say, *Yep is a Chinese American who grew up too American to fit into San Francisco's Chinatown and too Chinese to fit in anywhere else. Although he was surrounded by a loving and supportive family, whom he loved and respected in return, he often felt different and alienated. In this book he describes his childhood and teenage years as well as the role that writing played in his journey of self-discovery.*

*Several things make this book enjoyable to read. The author has the ability to write as though he is having a conversation with the reader. In addition, his honesty and sense of humor in telling stories about himself and people he encountered are entertaining. His ability to describe people, places, and activities make them all come alive. Throughout the book, he talks about how his life is like a lot of puzzle pieces that don't fit together. Look for these passages and you will see how eventually all the puzzle pieces finally fit.*

## Vocabulary

**Tier Two:** cannibalized (11), coax (3), enigmatic (31), eventually (21), hanker (15), lingered (26), quirks (29), transcontinental (6)

**Tier Three:** changeling (12), desegregation (59), Great Depression (9), irony (30), journalism (93), philosophical (30), prejudice (55), stereotype (62), surrealistic (96), *taqueria* (10), voice (106)

## Vocabulary Acquisition

Use this activity after students have read the book. Discuss with students the variety of sentence patterns that writers employ to achieve different purposes. Say, *For example, to move exciting action along in a story, a writer may choose several short, simple sentences. To describe a character or a setting, a writer may choose more complex sentences that contain adjectives and figurative language. To reveal information about characters, a writer may employ dialogue that doesn't contain complete sentences because people in conversation don't always speak in complete sentences.* Have students reread pages 70–73. Discuss the variety of sentence patterns the author uses on these pages. *(He used longer, more complex sentences for describing Mo-Mo, and dialogue to give the flavor of Mo-Mo's personality.)*



**Author:** Laurence Yep

**Genre:** Informational Text

**Text Structure:** Autobiography

**Guided Reading Level:** W

## English Language Support

Offer realia, gestures, or photos to support the introduction of the new vocabulary. Use photos to help students understand the conditions of the Great Depression, an example of a *taqueria*, and examples of people doing journalistic work. Use gestures or pantomime to demonstrate the words *lingered* and *coax*.

## Understanding the Text

**Literal:** *What did the author consider to be the positive and negative things about owning a store?*

(Positive: Food was available any time you wanted it. He had access to all the bubblegum cards, so his collections were all complete. Negative: Work at the store was never done and it was hard. He had a lot of chores such as stocking the shelves, figuring out the price of all the stock, and the constant cleaning up.)

**Interpretive:** Have students reread the last three paragraphs on page 54. Discuss the meaning of the last sentence: “The knife that shapes us must also be the knife that cuts.” Encourage students to discuss how it relates to the author’s grandmother’s life.

**Applied:** Discuss the quote on page 54 as it applies to characters in other books with which students may be familiar. You may wish also to discuss how it applies to historical figures, such as Abraham Lincoln; Cesar Chavez; Martin Luther King, Jr.; and other people known to students.

## Grammar and Usage

Review subjective, possessive, and objective cases of pronouns. Ask a volunteer to read the first complete paragraph on page 32 aloud. Point out *he* and *his* as examples of subject and possessive pronouns in the first sentence. Point out *them* as an object pronoun in the third sentence. Continue by asking students to point out other pronouns in the paragraph and to explain what case they are. Then have students write five sentences about the author’s descriptions of his life that contain subject, possessive, and object pronouns.

## Text Features

Explain to students that *analogies* show relationships between words and in order to understand an analogy, you have to figure out the relationship between each pair of words in the analogy. Share the following analogy with students: *Petal* is to *flower* as *tire* is to *car*. Explain this as a part to a whole analogy and discuss. Share this analogy: *Carrot* is to *vegetable* as *bear* is to *animal*. Explain this type as an item to a category and discuss. Finally share: *Virus* is to *illness* as *hurricane* is to *damage*. Explain that this type of analogy is a cause to an effect.

Share the following analogies to explain vocabulary from *The Lost Garden* and challenge students to determine the type of relationship.

*Taqueria* is to *restaurant* as *bus* is to *vehicle*. (item/category)

*Speeding* is to *accident* as *Great Depression* is to *financial problems*. (cause/effect)

## Reading Informational Text

Explain to students that the author of *The Lost Garden* created an idea that threads its way through the entire book. It makes its first appearance early in the book on page 12. Have them reread the last paragraph on page 11 and all of page 12. Explain that at the end of page 12, he introduces the image of himself as a puzzle with missing pieces. Ask students why they think he felt that way. Have them offer evidence from the book to support their opinions.

## Writing

Have students reread page 91 and write a paragraph that explains how writing helped the author understand himself better and go from being a puzzle with missing pieces to a puzzle solver.