



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Upper primary and lower secondary
(ages 9-13)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

1. **Learning areas:** English
2. **General capabilities:** Chinese culture; Intercultural Understanding; Ethical Understanding; Literacy; Critical and Creative Thinking
3. **Cross-curriculum priorities:** Chinese history and culture; mythology; family history

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- Analyse Chinese history and culture
- Develop critical and creative thinking
- Analyse how language and writing evoke mood, tone, tension and characterisation
- Encourage creative and imaginative writing

THEMES

- Cultural Diversity – Chinese culture & history
- Family – Family History
- Characterisation
- Loss & Grief

PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Australia

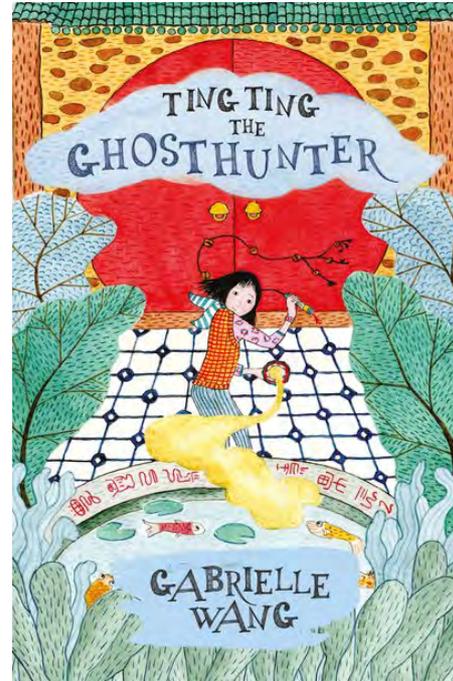
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Ting Ting the Ghosthunter Gabrielle Wang

PLOT SUMMARY

Thirteen-year-old Ting Ting has learned the ancient skills and art of ghost hunting from her adopted grandmother, Por Por, a famous ghost hunter. But Ting Ting is sick of capturing harmless 'fat belly' ghosts, and when a desperate plea for help comes for Por Por, Ting Ting recklessly decides to take matters into her own hands and prove that she is a true ghost hunter. But what Ting Ting discovers is much more dangerous than she had thought. Can Ting Ting conquer her own pride to save Por Por and the villagers before it's too late?

This sequel to the award-winning *Ghost in My Suitcase* is a powerful magic realism story for 10+ readers about Chinese mythology and culture, and ghost-hunting...

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gabrielle Wang is an author and illustrator born in Melbourne of Chinese heritage. Her maternal great grandfather came to Victoria from China during the Gold Rush and her father from Shanghai. Her stories are a blend of Chinese and Western culture with a touch of fantasy.

Gabrielle's first children's novel, *The Garden of Empress Cassia*, won the 2002 Aurealis Award, was shortlisted for the Queensland Premier's Literary Awards and was a CBCA Notable Book. *The Pearl of Tiger Bay* was shortlisted for the 2004 Aurealis Award and *The Lion Drummer* was a Notable Book in the 2009 CBCA Book of the Year Awards. *A Ghost in My Suitcase* won the 2009 Aurealis Award, was a CBC Notable Book, was shortlisted for the 2011 Sakura Medal and received a Highly Commended in the 2010 Prime Minister's Literary Awards. Her first young adult novel, *Little Paradise*, also received a Highly Commended in the 2011 Prime Minister's Awards. Gabrielle's picture book *The Race for the Chinese Zodiac* (2010) illustrated by Sally Rippin and Regine Abos was a Notable Book in the CBCA Awards for 2011 and shortlisted for the 2011 YABBA and WAYBRA awards. Her latest books are part of the highly successful 2011 Our Australian Girl series published by Penguin – *Meet Poppy*, *Poppy at Summerhill*, *Poppy and the Thief* and *Poppy Comes Home*. Gabrielle is an ambassador for the Victorian Premiers' Reading Challenge.

The Wishbird (2014) was a CBCA 2014 Notable Book and was shortlisted for the 2014 Australian Book Design Awards, Yabba Awards, Kroc Awards, Koala Awards, Cool Awards and Crystal Kite Award.

The Beast of Hushing Wood was published in 2018 to much critical acclaim.

AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION

Gabrielle says:

Although it had not been planted or fertilised and I had no concept of it at the time, the seed for *Ting Ting the Ghosthunter* began way back in 2003 with a minor but important character in *The Pearl of Tiger Bay* (2004). The character was Por Por, the maternal grandmother of the family in the story. She was such an interesting character that she called out to have a book in which she played a more important role, and so I wrote *A Ghost in My Suitcase*, published in 2010.

In December 2016 the artistic director of Barking Gecko Theatre contacted me about adapting *A Ghost in My Suitcase* for the stage. In June that year the creative team—two co-artistic directors, playwright and set designer—included me in the initial creative development of the play. It was during those meetings that I realised how strong a character Ting Ting was.

Creativity feeds itself. Once you start creating, things come into being that may otherwise have remained forever hidden. For a writer, a character can come out of nowhere, as if she'd been standing in the wings, tapping her foot, impatient to take her place on stage. This is one of the many mysteries of storytelling.

PRE-READING QUESTIONS

1. Look at the cover design – what do you think the front cover might reveal about the story? What kind of emotion is it evoking?
2. Examine the importance of the back cover blurb in captivating the reader. Do you feel it has been successful in piquing your interest? Why? Why not?

KEY STUDY TOPICS

Cultural Diversity – Chinese Culture & History

Chinese culture, history and mythology are an integral part of this story.

Discussion

- Discuss the main themes in this novel and how the author uses Chinese culture, history and mythology to develop these themes.
- What is magic realism and how does the author use it in this story?
- Does the author successfully weave magic and realism together. Is it authentic?
- What are some examples of Chinese culture and beliefs in this book that are so different to Australian culture?
- Does this story make you want to visit China or learn more about Chinese history/culture?



- How does the author weave facts about Chinese culture and history into the story? Does she do this successfully without taking away from the adventure and excitement? Give some examples.

Writing Style

1. What is the novel's writing style? Consider how and when information is revealed, particularly through the use of Ting Ting's thoughts and observations. How effectively does this contribute to the novel's storytelling?
2. How do the illustrations contribute to the story. Do you think they are effective? Are there any spots in the book where you felt they were/weren't needed?
3. Do you think the author blended cultural and mythological references into the story well?
4. How did they help the story for you? Did they slow the pace down? Did they make the story more believable?
5. Did you find the setting and the ghost-hunting authentic?

Activities

- Write a scene using descriptive language. Then write a scene using very pared back language and short sentences. Compare the mood and pacing of both.
- Discuss your favourite book with the class and describe the language used in that book.
- Choose an incident in the story and write it from a different character's perspective, such as Fat Belly or the village boy.
- Draw a couple of alternative illustrations in the book where you think they were needed.

Setting

The story is set in China and moves between Isle of Clouds, Shanghai and Black Band Village in China.

Questions

1. How did the author use the setting in each place to evoke atmosphere?
2. How does the author work Chinese culture and history into the setting. Give some examples.
3. How would you describe the author's style of writing? Give some examples.

4. How does the setting of this story affect the characters and the events that take place?
5. How is it obvious that the setting is not in Australia – find some examples in the book and discuss.
6. How does the author use the setting to reveal Ting Ting's character to us?

Activities

- Write a scene using a setting to create an atmosphere for a story (eg a storm for menace, or perhaps a lovely summer day might be menacing in some way?).
- Write a scene showing a certain place in the world without actually saying where it is but using setting to give us clues.
- Write a scene using descriptive language. Then write a scene using very pared back language and short sentences. Compare the mood and pacing of both.
- Discuss your favourite book with the class and describe the language used in that book.

THEMES

Family & Family History

In this novel, Ting Ting is struggling to reconcile her family's past and the attitude of Por and other people towards her.

Discussion

1. How does her family's past affect Ting Ting's attitude towards herself and those around her?
2. Ting Ting's personality has very contradictory forces. Why is this and how does she overcome it?
3. What is the overall message in this book about family and family history? Give some examples of why you think that.
4. How does Por act towards Ting Ting and why?
5. What does Ting Ting realise in the end about how Por shows affection for her.

Activities

- Bring something to class or talk about something (physical or an attribute) that is special to your family or unique to your family. Share it with the



class and discuss why this makes your family different/unique.

- Discuss your family/other people's expectations of you and whether that helps or hinders you.

Characterisation

Characters in the book include: Ting Ting, Por, Little Cloud, Fat Belly, Yang Bin, San Ni.

Questions

1. How are Ting Ting and Por different from other people?
2. What happens to Ting Ting's character arc – how does it develop and what does she learn about herself?
3. How does Ting Ting's character change by the end of the book?
4. How does Ting Ting feel about Little Cloud and how does this change by the end of the book?
5. What does Por also learn about herself?
6. How is Yang Bin depicted as evil? What evocative imagery does the author use to hint at his character when we first meet him?
7. Ting Ting's battle with Yang Bin is not just a physical one. What is the message behind it?

Activities

1. Make a list of unique character traits of yourself and perhaps of people in your class: quiet, outgoing, hard-working, short-tempered, generous, stubborn, energetic. Discuss and compare how different each person is and how that contributes to the class/life.
2. Write a scene that demonstrates your personality.
3. Write a scene that demonstrates a friend or family's personality. Discuss how it might develop or change.
4. Write the same scene with someone else in your class/family as the main character. Discuss how different this scene is and why.

Loss & Grief

In this novel, Ting Ting's parents died in a car accident when she was young and she was adopted by Por.

Discussion

- How does her loss initially affect Ting Ting's perception of herself and those around her?
- Describe Por and Ting Ting's relationship.
- How is Por's lack of affection towards Ting Ting misinterpreted? How does it affect Ting Ting's actions?
- What does Ting Ting come to realise about her relationship with Por and about herself by the end?

Problem Solving

Questions

1. What problems does Ting Ting face? List the ways she tries to solve them. Do you have better ways? What are they?
2. Some problems she has to face alone, some together with others. Which problems do you think she handles better? Why?

Activities

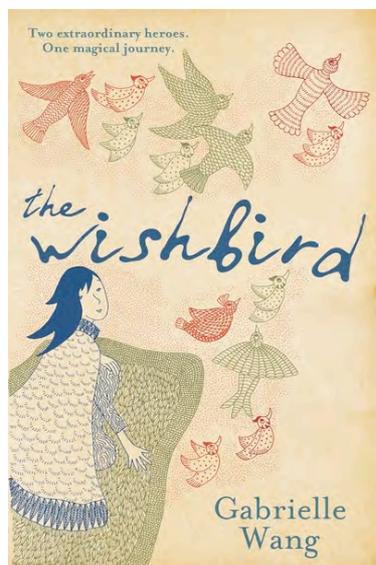
- China has a long history of military tactics and strategy, and Ting Ting has absorbed some of this thinking. List some of the strategies she and the others use to overcome the ghost army.
- Conflict is often one thing that moves a story along. Using your own experience list 3 conflicts. Could these form the basis of a story?

Discussion

1. The story has both inner and outer conflict. Can you see where? Which does Ting Ting handle best? 'Demons' can symbolize our inner fears and thoughts. Nowadays there are many stories and shows about ghosts and demons. Why do you think this is? Could it reflect some of the uncertainties our society is going through?



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA

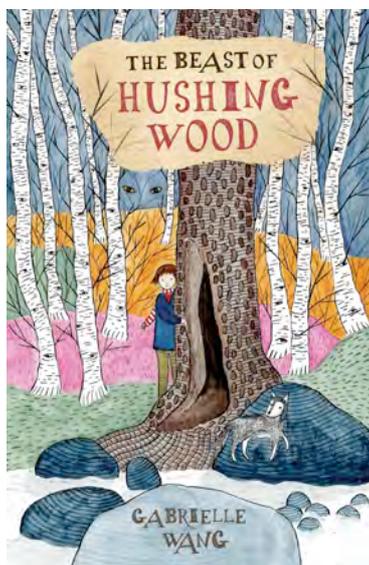


The Wishbird
by Gabrielle Wang

Why this story? Read it as another example of creative writing and using setting as a character.

Oriole's beloved Wishbird is dying and she must leave the Forest to save him. But in the City of Soulless there is danger everywhere. Can Oriole and Boy save Soulless and the Wishbird, or will the city's darkness prove too great even for magic?

Teachers' resources available.



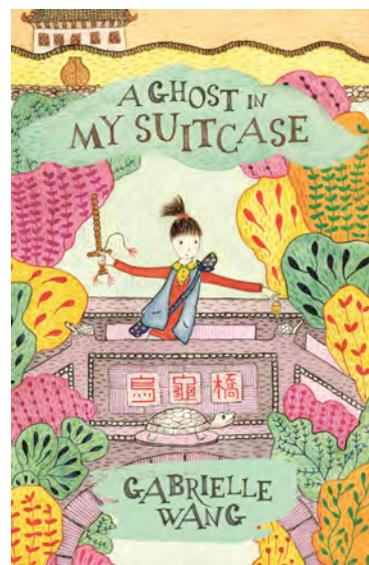
The Beast of Hushing Wood
by Gabrielle Wang

Why this story? Read it as another example of magic realism and cultural diversity.

Ziggy Truegood lives in a tiny town deep in Hushing Wood, where strange things are happening. The townspeople are fighting, Ziggy feels like something is hunting her, and her beloved woods have become dark and hostile. When exotic Raffi and his grandfather arrive in town, Ziggy finds herself strangely drawn to them. But are they there to save Ziggy, or are they the hunters?

Thought-provoking and engaging, Hushing Wood is a lovely blend of action, fable and magic realism.

Teachers' resources available.



Ghost in My Suitcase
by Gabrielle Wang

Why this story? This is the sequel to Ting Ting the Ghosthunter. Read it as another example of magic realism and cultural diversity.

When thirteen-year-old Celeste travels to China to visit her grandmother, she uncovers an incredible family secret. And with this secret comes danger and adventure. If Celeste is to save her family and friends, she must learn to harness her rare and powerful gift . . .

Teachers' resources available.



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Ting Ting the Ghosthunter	Gabrielle Wang	9780143787334	5+	\$16.99		
The Beast of Hushing Wood	Gabrielle Wang	9780143309178	5+	\$16.99		
A Ghost in my Suitcase	Gabrielle Wang	9780143303794	5+	\$16.99		
The Wishbird	Gabrielle Wang	9780143307525	5+	\$14.99		
Tarin of the Mammoths	Jo Sandhu	9780143309376	6+	\$16.99		
Mr Romanov's Garden in the Sky	Robert Newton	9780143309307	6+	\$17.99		
TOTAL						

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