

A Teacher's Guide for

PiE in the SKY

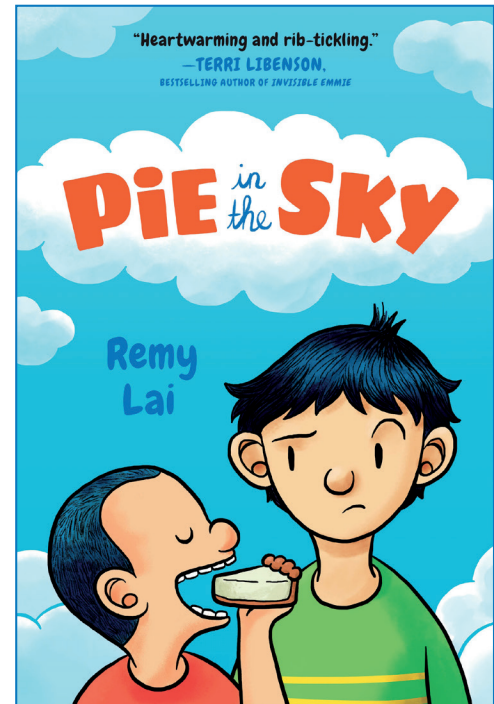
FOR USE
WITH COMMON
CORE STATE
STANDARDS

About the Book

When Jingwen moves to a new country, he feels like he's landed on Mars. School is torture, making friends is impossible since he doesn't speak English, and he's often stuck looking after his (extremely irritating) little brother, Yanghao.

To distract himself from the loneliness, Jingwen daydreams about making all the cakes on the menu of Pie in the Sky, the bakery his father had planned to open before he unexpectedly passed away. The only problem is his mother has laid down one major rule: The brothers are not to use the oven while she's at work. As Jingwen and Yanghao bake elaborate cakes, they'll have to cook up elaborate excuses to keep the cake-making a secret from Mama.

In her hilarious, moving middle-grade debut, Remy Lai delivers a scrumptious combination of vibrant graphic art and pitch-perfect writing that will appeal to fans of Shannon Hale and LeUyen Pham's *Real Friends*, Terri Libenson's *Invisible Emmie*, and Kelly Yang's *Front Desk*.



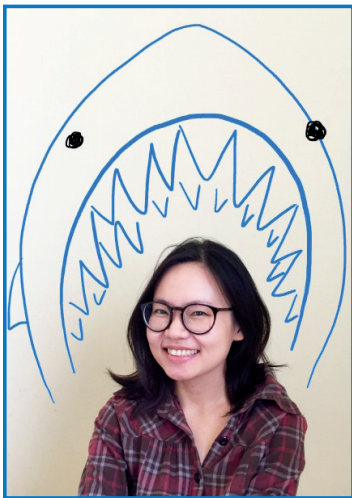
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Ages 8–11

About the Author

Remy Lai studied fine arts, with a major in painting and drawing. She was born in Indonesia, grew up in Singapore, and currently lives in Brisbane, Australia, where she writes and draws stories for kids with her two dogs by her side. *Pie in the Sky* is her first middle-grade novel.

Using *Pie in the Sky* in the Classroom

Pie in the Sky can be shared in many different ways in the classroom. It can be part of a literature circle, a partner read, an independent reading book, or a whole class study that makes connections to a curriculum unit. Chapters of the text can be read aloud or shared. In addition, the graphic illustrations can be analyzed and used as an exemplar for a graphic writing assignment. The novel *The Little Prince* could be read as an extension since it is referenced frequently in the book.



The discussion questions are designed to align with the *Common Core Standards* that include the four domains of *Reading, Writing, Speaking, and Listening*. The *grade five* standards are referenced for this guide but all the activities and questions can be adapted from *grades three to six*. Please feel free to make adaptations to fit the needs of your students. Enjoy!

Pre-reading Activity

Introduction to Text: Just the Gist

Introduce the book to students and explain that the characters—Jingwen; his younger brother, Yanghao; and his mother—are moving to Australia. The boys will also be starting in a new school. They do not speak English. Then ask the students to scan through the first chapter to notice both the print and graphics that will tell the story. Read aloud the first few pages and then have students think, pair, and share their predictions. Provide sticky notes and chart paper for students to record in their group. Then have students save notes on a class chart to revisit.

Pre-reading Discussion Questions

Working in whole, small, or partner groups discuss the following questions:

- What do you think it is like to immigrate to a new country?
- In thinking about this transition, what are the benefits? What are the challenges? Record these responses on a two-column T chart. Then have students do a quick write to answer the question: What changes would you need to make in order to become part of your new environment? Have students save this quick write in a notebook to add further reflections throughout reading the book.

Discussion Questions

Encourage students to cite the text evidence in their discussions.

1. What coincidence comes about for Jingwen about the last Pie in the Sky cake, Apple Mille-Feuille cake? Do you think making that cake fixes everything? Explain why or why not.
2. In chapter 1, we are introduced to the narrator. Who is the narrator and what do we learn about the narrator and the other characters introduced in this chapter? Describe the events in the first chapter that hint at the narrator's point of view. What happens that is an omen about what the narrator's entry might be like in the new country?
3. Jingwen refers to his new home as "Mars." Why does he feel like he is on planet Mars? As you refer to the graphics on page 19, what graphic details change to reveal Jingwen's new understanding of how he fits in his new country of Australia? Describe how the author portrays Jingwen with graphics.
4. Discuss the meaning of the story of the *lamb and dogs* that Jingwen describes. What message does it convey to Jingwen? Locate Jingwen's own thoughts that explain what the story means to him.
5. In chapter 4 we are introduced to Papa for the first time. Why do you think the author introduces Papa at this point? What do we learn about Papa? Thinking of Papa sparks memories for Jingwen. How does Jingwen react when he thinks of him? Describe what memories come up and what they mean for Jingwen. What more do we learn about Papa?
6. Based on the events that happen at school, summarize Jingwen's biggest challenges there. Why does Jingwen hide his feelings from his mother, especially about what happens at school? What does this demonstrate about Jingwen's character?

Discussion Questions (cont'd)

7. Yanghao is another important character in this book. What do we know about him? Discuss Jingwen's perspective of his younger brother. What is the relationship like for the siblings?
8. Jingwen describes "lies." He defines three types of lies. What are they? What is the worst kind of lie? Does Jingwen lie based on his definitions of a "lie"? In making the Nutella cake for Yanghao, Jingwen "lies" to his mother. What kind of "lie" does Jingwen tell Mama?
9. Jingwen takes the cookbook in his backpack. Why does he bring it to school? Based on what you've read, what can you infer about the significance of the cookbook to Jingwen?
10. Ben sits next to Jingwen. How does Ben act toward Jingwen? What does Jingwen worry about with Ben? What metaphor does Jingwen use on page 123 to describe himself? What do you predict might happen with the boys?
11. Jingwen is asked to read a paragraph about "metamorphosis" and learns about the meaning of the word. Why do you think the author includes that in the story? What is "a very small change" that Jingwen refers to at school (page 127)? What themes are evident in the story so far?
12. Jingwen becomes upset with Yanghao and Mama because he thinks they are starting to forget Papa. What is Jingwen's plan to help Yanghao and Mama remember Papa? How do these memories of Papa affect Jingwen?
13. Jingwen feels many emotions when he remembers the Pie in the Sky cakes. In his internal conversation, Jingwen explains why he will make all the cakes. What does he think making those cakes will do for him and his family? What do you predict will happen?
14. Jingwen continues to make cakes without Mama's permission. What prompts Jingwen to make the decision to continue making cakes even though he is doing it without Mama's permission?
15. The author moves back and forth between the settings of school and home. What are Jingwen's school challenges? How does he act to meet these challenges? What are his home challenges? What actions does he take there? Do these actions help Jingwen transition to his new country? Why or why not?
16. Memories of Papa are revealed throughout the book. What do they indicate about Papa and Jingwen's relationship? How does Jingwen feel about Papa now? On page 197, Jingwen admits why he was wrong about why he was making Pie in the Sky cakes. What does he reveal?
17. When Jingwen doesn't find the cookbook and can't make the Raspberry Torte cake, a scene unfolds with Yanghao. What happens and what memory does it bring back to Jingwen? How does the author represent the emotions in writing?
18. The author describes three characters at school who interact with Jingwen. Ben, Ms. Scruppell, and Mr. Hart each play a role in Jingwen's transition to his new environment. What is their role? Describe how Jingwen views them. How does each of them support his transition?
19. Papa tells Jingwen about humble cakes. He also describes his dream for Jingwen and Yanghao. How does this memory affect Jingwen?
20. Jingwen comments how "cakes have made life better for everyone." Mama and Yanghao continue to become part of their new community but Jingwen blames himself for "crawling backwards." What does he think is the reason for this backward movement of his journey?
21. In chapters 52–54, Jingwen reflects on his understanding of why he is stuck. What do these graphic pages capture about Jingwen and his reflection of who he is?
22. In the process of finally baking the last cake, something happens that leads to a series of events. Describe the events. As a result, Jingwen has an interchange with Mama that sparks the memory of his last words to Papa. What did he say? How does he feel about that now? What metaphor does he use about what is contained in his suitcase?
23. The rainbow cake is referenced throughout the book. Yanghao wants to include it as part of the Pie in the Sky cakes. Jingwen thinks it is too simple. What makes Jingwen change his mind about the cake? What do the graphic illustrations reveal about Jingwen's emotions after finishing the rainbow cake?

Discussion Questions (cont'd)

24. What finally prompts Jingwen to tell Mama the truth about his cake-making? How does Mama react? How does this make Jingwen feel?
25. The last few chapters reveal why Jingwen has been feeling guilty throughout the book. What is the guilt Jingwen carries in the book? Describe Jingwen's feelings at the end of the story.
26. Characters can change from the beginning to the end of the story. How does Jingwen change? Summarize those changes.

CCSS.RL.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.RL.5.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

CCSS.RL.5.3 Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

CCSS.RL.5.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

CCSS.RL.5.6 Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

CCSS.RL.5.7 Analyze how visual and multimedia elements contribute to the meaning, tone, or beauty of a text (e.g., graphic novel, multimedia presentation of fiction, folktale, myth, poem).

CCSS.SL.5.1.a. Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation and other information known about the topic to explore ideas under discussion.

CCSS.SL.5.1.b Follow agreed-upon rules for discussions and carry out assigned roles.

CCSS.SL.5.1.c Pose and respond to specific questions by making comments that contribute to the discussion and elaborate on the remarks of others.

CCSS.SL.5.1.d Review the key ideas expressed and draw conclusions in light of information and knowledge gained from the discussions.

CCSS.SL.5.5 Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, sound) and visual displays in presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.

Reading Activities

Central Themes

There are prominent themes in *Pie in the Sky*. Working with a partner or in a group, identify a theme from the text and create a representation of the theme. The representation should include evidence from the text and direct quotes to support your presentation. The theme can be represented using technology, print, or graphic illustrations.

CCSS.RL.5.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

CCSS.SL.5.5 Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, sound) and visual displays in presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.

CCSS.W.5.8 Recall relevant information from experiences or gather relevant information from print and digital sources; summarize or paraphrase information in notes and finished work, and provide a list of sources.

CCSS.W.5.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Jingwen and Papa

Papa is not present in the story but is an important character throughout the story. His influence is demonstrated in Jingwen's inner **conversations** as well as memories of their conversations. Divide the class into pairs. With a partner, locate the conversations that Papa and Jingwen have. Using them as a guideline, write a conversational script. The script should include both Jingwen's and Papa's responses and have a focus on Jingwen's new life in Australia. Include details that support your ideas. For example:

Jingwen's motivation to make the Pie in the Sky cakes; Jingwen describes his transition to Australia; Jingwen's feelings about Papa now.

Reading Activities (cont'd)

CCSS.RL.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.RL.5.2 Determine a theme of a story, drama, or poem from details in the text, including how characters in a story or drama respond to challenges or how the speaker in a poem reflects upon a topic; summarize the text.

CCSS.RL.5.6 Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

CCSS.SL.5.4 Report on a topic or text or present an opinion, sequencing ideas logically and using appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details to support main ideas or themes; speak clearly at an understandable pace.

CCSS.SL.5.5 Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, sound) and visual displays in presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.

CCSS.W.5.3.b Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

Graphics Tell the Story

The author, Remy Lai, has combined a novel in print and a graphic novel to tell Jingwen's story. Using the graphic features from *Pie in the Sky* as an example, create your own graphic page based on text in the book that chronicles Jingwen in Australia. Include details and direct quotes where appropriate. Be sure to represent Jingwen's point of view. *Choose from the following pages: pp. 53, 60, 64–65, 86, 97, 121, 157, 297, and 305.*

CCSS.SL.5.5 Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, sound) and visual displays in presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.

CCSS.W.5.3.a Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

CCSS.W.5.3.b Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

CCSS.W.5.3.d Use concrete words and phrases and sensory details to convey experiences and events precisely.

CCSS.W.5.3.e Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.

CCSS.W.5.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

CCSS.W.5.9.a Apply grade 5 Reading standards to literature (e.g., "Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or a drama, drawing on specific details in the text [e.g., how characters interact]").

A Different Point of View

The author, from Jingwen's point of view, depicts Yanghao's character as a younger brother made to follow his big brother's rules. The last few chapters describe what happens when Yanghao is lost. Now, taking Yanghao's point of view in your writing, retell the events that take place the day Yanghao is lost, then found.

CCSS.RL.5.3 Compare and contrast two or more characters, settings, or events in a story or drama, drawing on specific details in the text (e.g., how characters interact).

CCSS.RL.5.6 Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

CCSS.W.5.3.a Orient the reader by establishing a situation and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally.

Words and Their Meaning—Figurative Language

Jingwen, as the narrator, uses metaphors and idioms to describe feelings and situations in the book. Below a sample of these metaphors and idioms are listed. Choose one of the following metaphors or idioms and create a visual display that illustrates their meaning:

- seashells of trouble weighing down
- broken-down car in middle of a big busy road
- swarm of monsters locked in that suitcase
- pie in the sky
- birds of a feather
- on the house
- skin of your teeth
- lone mouse in a vast desert
- heart made of metal and nuts
- recipe for disaster

Reading Activities (cont'd)

CCSS.L.5.5.a Interpret figurative language, including similes and metaphors, in context.

CCSS.L.5.5.b Recognize and explain the meaning of common idioms, adages, and proverbs.

CCSS.SL.5.5 Include multimedia components (e.g., graphics, sound) and visual displays in presentations when appropriate to enhance the development of main ideas or themes.

CCSS.W.5.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

A New Cake for Pie in the Sky

"Cakes are magic," Jingwen declares. In making each of the special cakes, he describes the ingredients and the instructions to make them. The author even includes a recipe at the end of the book. Have you ever wanted a special cake? What kind of cake did you want and why? What "magic" would your cake create for you? If possible, include the ingredients for your "magic" cake. Write a description of the cake and include what might make your cake "magic." Illustrate the finished cake.

CCSS.W.5.3.b Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, description, and pacing, to develop experiences and events or show the responses of characters to situations.

CCSS.W.5.4 Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development and organization are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience.

Humor

The author uses humor throughout the text to keep the reader engaged and reflect the characters' points of view. Locate one or two examples of this in the text and describe how the humor is used in the scene.

CCSS.RL.5.1 Quote accurately from a text when explaining what the text says explicitly and when drawing inferences from the text.

CCSS.RL.5.4 Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative language such as metaphors and similes.

CCSS.RL.5.6 Describe how a narrator's or speaker's point of view influences how events are described.

CCSS.W.5.9 Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

Guide provided by Mary Hurley
