

*A*  
*Literature Unit*

**In the Year of the Boar  
and Jackie Robinson**

by Bette Bao Lord

A young Chinese girl, Shirley Temple Wong, arrives in America to start a new life with her parents in the "land of opportunity." The year is 1947—the Year of the Boar, 4646, on the Chinese calendar. At first Shirley finds her new world a strange, lonely place. In time, however, she makes friends and things begin to look brighter. When she develops an interest in the Brooklyn Dodgers, her life takes on even greater excitement. That excitement peaks when she gets to meet her hero, Jackie Robinson!

# January

**Vocabulary:** Match the vocabulary word on the left with the definition on the right.

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|-------------------|--|
| ___ 1. patriarch  | A. a metal pan for holding burning coals or charcoal |
| ___ 2. slight     | B. to feel or express malicious self-satisfaction    |
| ___ 3. unsightly  | C. to spend foolishly or wastefully                  |
| ___ 4. brazier    | D. the male leader of a family or tribe              |
| ___ 5. matriarch  | E. a person from whom one is descended               |
| ___ 6. dictum     | F. an authoritative pronouncement                    |
| ___ 7. harmony    | G. a Chinese game using tiles                        |
| ___ 8. gloat      | H. an act of disrespect or discourtesy               |
| ___ 9. irate      | I. extremely angry                                   |
| ___ 10. squander  | J. the female leader of a family or tribe            |
| ___ 11. ancestor  | K. a pleasing arrangement of parts that form a whole |
| ___ 12. mah-jongg | L. unattractive; unpleasant to look at               |

## Comprehension & Discussion Questions

1. Why did Awaiting Marriage blame Bandit for shattering the water urn? Why was the broken urn especially upsetting?

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2. What did Bandit believe to be the reason Grandmother summoned her? Why did she entice Precious Coins to hold her leg as she spoke to her?

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3. What caused Mother to smile, Grandmother to cry, and Grandfather to be angry?

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4. How did Bandit's family get many of their ideas about America? Cite an example.

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5. Why did the family stay awake the final day of the Year of the Dog?

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## Follow-up Activities

1. In the Confucian household children spoke only when spoken to. They didn't question the opinions or actions of their elders. Compare this to your household.

2. Think of something else that might have made Mother smile, Grandmother cry, and Grandfather become angry.

3. On New Year's Eve the people competed with each other in creating rhymed couplets. Designate a topic and a time limit—15 minutes, for example. Have a contest to see who can create the most couplets.