

**Reflections:**

*A Student Response Journal for...*

# *The Indian in the Cupboard*

*by Lynne Reid Banks*

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## **Chapter 1 – Birthday Presents**

1. Patrick gives Omri a plastic Indian figure for his birthday. Omri is not happy with this present, but he tries to hide his feelings because he does not want to hurt his friend. Do you understand how Omri is feeling? Have you ever had a similar experience? If so, relate the experience.
2. Omri's brother gives Omri the white cupboard as a gift. Omri knows that his brother found the cupboard in the alley, but Omri is pleased with it anyway. Think about your best friend, your brother or sister, or anyone who is close to you. If you wanted to give them a gift but did not have any money, what might that gift be? Why do you think the other person would like your gift?
3. Omri makes a wish when he blows out the candles on his birthday cake. He wishes that he will pass his spelling test. Later he regrets this wish, so he changes it. He wishes that his birthday present will become a "secret cupboard" when he puts the key into the lock. What kinds of things do you wish for when you blow out your birthday candles? Do any of your wishes come true?
4. If you had a cupboard with a lock, similar to Omri's, what do you think you might put into it?
5. The key is a very special family heirloom that fits into the lock on a jewelry box. The only gift his deceased great-grandmother left to his mother. What kinds of family heirlooms do you have in your family? Is there one that is special to you in some way? What is it?

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6. In the morning, when Omri opens the cupboard, he finds that the plastic figure of the Indian has come to life. Omri stares in disbelief at the Indian. He does not call anyone else into the room because he is worried that he might be dreaming; if he is not dreaming, though, he does not want to share this special moment with anyone else. Suppose you were Omri. How do you think you might react if your plastic Indian suddenly came to life? Would you share the moment with anyone else?
  
7. The Indian is described as “clutching his knife, rigid with terror, but defiant.” As the Indian, write a diary entry describing how you feel waiting in the locked cupboard and then how you feel when you first see the giant boy.
  
8. If you were Omri and you wanted to pick up the Indian without getting stabbed again, how might you accomplish this without hurting yourself or the Indian?
  
9. The story tells us how Omri feels about the Indian:

This Indian – *his* Indian – was behaving in every way like a real live Indian brave, and despite the vast difference in their sizes and strengths, Omri respected him and even, odd as it sounds, feared him at that moment.

Stereotyping is defined as putting people into groups based on race, religion, nationality, physical appearance, social class, or some other easily identifiable characteristic. Some critics of this book complain that the Indian in the cupboard is a stereotypical person and is not a good representative of real life Indians.

Think about the following questions: What characteristics do you think of when you think of Native Americans? What is the source of these impressions – television, reading, movies, or life experience?

After considering your personal impressions, to what extent do you agree or disagree with the opinion of the critics?

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10. From the point of view of the Indian, describe how Omri must look to him.
11. The following is a humorous exchange between Omri and the Indian because each character is viewing the same situation from a different perspective.

Omri: Were you always this small?

Indian: I not small! You, big!

Write a similar conversation between yourself and an adult. In this conversation you are discussing a topic you both may view differently. Some topics you might consider are: bedtime, clean room, allowance, homework, or any other appropriate topic..

12. At the end of this chapter, Omri closes and locks the cupboard with the Indian inside. How do you think the Indian feels about this? Describe his feelings once the cupboard is locked.
13. When Omri's hears his mother coming toward his room, he locks the Indian into the cupboard. If you were Omri, how might you have handled this situation differently?

## **Chapter 2 – The Door Is Shut**

14. Breakfast in Omri's house is rushed and hectic. We all have experienced hectic mornings. Describe a difficult morning at your house. Be sure to include how you feel about everything you describe.
15. Omri forgets his swimming clothes and blames his brother Adiel for his own forgetfulness. Write a letter of apology from Omri to Adiel.
16. Patrick is surprised that Omri does not bring his new skateboard to school. He knows that Omri has been wishing for a skateboard to skate with the other boys. Have you ever wished for some item, like a skateboard, because having it will help you to be more accepted by other children? If so, describe the experience.
17. At the end of the school day, Omri begins to worry that he may have harmed the Indian by leaving him locked in the cupboard all day without any food, water, or fresh air. He has a terrible, sick feeling of dread. Can you understand how he feels? Write about a time in your life when you felt this way about something you may have done or may have forgotten to do.
18. When Omri discovers that the Indian is once again plastic, he wonders if he imagined the whole incident. Did this thought occur to you as you read the story? What evidence is there in the story supporting the idea that Omri's experiences are only a dream?

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19. Omri feels a “pain of sadness, disappointment, and a strange sort of guilt” because the Indian is once again plastic. His mother notices that Omri is not feeling well, so she begins to fuss over him. Omri finds comfort in his mother’s sympathy. What kinds of special attention do your parents or guardians give to you when you are ill? How do you feel about this attention? Write a letter to the person who helps you when you are sick explaining your thoughts.
  
20. Omri is delighted to discover that the Indian is alive once again. However, Omri is a bit surprised when the Indian starts giving him orders. Why do you suppose the Indian behaves in this way? Why is Omri surprised? Compose a short e-mail to a friend explaining Omri’s feelings.
  
21. Omri makes some assumptions about the Indian when deciding what kind of food the Indian might eat. He thinks about what he has seen in television about how Indians live, and then he tries to find food that the Indian will like. If you could talk to Omri about these assumptions, what might you say to him?
  
22. Omri gives the Indian some soda and correctly assumes that he would never have tasted Coke. What other types of food that we eat today would be new to the Indian? What foods do you think might still be the same? Make a list.
  
23. When Omri turns out the light, the Indian is impressed. He asks if Omri is the Great White Spirit. Omri does not pretend to be powerful. Instead he explains that electricity is not magic. What other aspects of modern life might the Indian think are magical?