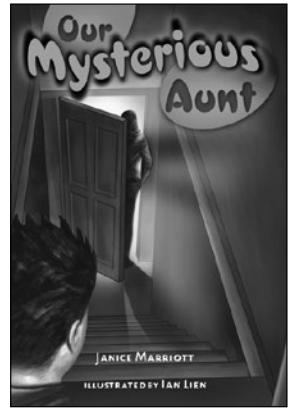


Our Mysterious Aunt

by Janice Marriott
illustrated by Ian Lien



Book Summary

Lee has travelled to his uncle's place in the country, which is very different from his home in Singapore. He encounters his mysterious Aunt Lynn, who is making strange things in the basement. This story about family connections is told through emails exchanged between Lee and his sister.

Features of the Book

- Mystery fiction
- Email format
- Communication between people in different countries
- Cultural differences
- Factual information

Purpose

Our Mysterious Aunt can be used to introduce and reinforce the following skills and understandings:

- S** making and checking predictions;
- S** making inferences;
- S** examining how different groups in society may place different values on cultural practices;
- S** describing the ways in which technology links people and communities;
- S** exploring the use of descriptive language;
- S** understanding how societies around the world are increasingly connected through the use of technology.

Investigation Tools

- Digging Deeper – Good Luck!, page 29
- Step by Step – Making Models, pages 30–31
- What's the Background? – Keeping in Touch, page 32

The Guided Reading Lesson

- S** Making and checking predictions
- S** Making inferences
- S** Examining how groups in society may place different values on cultural practices

Introducing the text

Show the students the front and back covers of the book and the table of contents. Encourage them to make predictions about the text. Flick through the book to show them the format (emails).

- *What can we infer about the characters?* (They live in different places and communicate using email; they have access to the Internet.)

Explain to the students that you will be asking them to use predictions and inferences to make meaning from the text. They will also be learning about how technology connects people around the world.

Reading and discussing the text

Ask the students to read to the end of page 4, paying special attention to the author's use of detail to convey Lee's feelings.

- *This is a mystery story. How does this help you to predict how the story will unfold?*

The students can read to the end of Chapter 1 and share their inferences about the characters and their relationships. Check to ensure they are able to use the text and their own knowledge about people from other countries to "read between the lines".

- *Why do you think Lee has been sent to his uncle's for a term?*
- *What have you inferred about his uncle and aunt? What information helped you?*
- *What did you make of the interaction between An and her mother on page 6?*
- *Can you revise or make any new predictions about what might happen? Why is the photo album so important?*

As the students continue to read, ask them to pause at the end of each chapter to share their predictions and to discuss their inferences about the characters and events. They can use the chapter headings to help them make predictions before reading on.

- *Why does the aunt appear to be so mysterious? What can you tell about her?*

By the end of Chapter 3, the students should be making predictions about the photo album. Prompt them to think about how the main issues (the mysterious aunt, the photo album, the grandfather's birthday) could be connected. Explain that good readers are constantly on the lookout for clues as they read.

Point out how the author maintains the sense of mystery. For example, read aloud the text at the top of page 10 and discuss it.

- *Why might Aunt Lynn say "very" so slowly?*
- *What might Lee mean by "the laugh bounced off the walls of the kitchen"?*
- *What do Lee's reactions tell us about his feelings for his aunt?*

Other good places to share inferences are on page 14: "He smiled in a strange way" and "I'm not sure if that's good or bad."

Ask the students to examine Lee's feelings about his aunt.

- *How has their relationship changed? Why?*

When the students have finished the story, ask them when they made the connection between the mysterious aunt, the photograph album, and Grandpa's birthday. If some students struggle with this, go back and trace the movements of Aunt Lynn and the preparations for the party in Singapore.

- *Whose idea do you think it was to make the model? Why do you think that?*
- *How do you think Lee would feel about his aunt now?*
- *What have you learnt about the importance of family and traditions to the characters?*
- *Aunt Lynn is not Chinese. How has she helped the family to maintain their connections and traditions? What does this say about her?*

The students can read the information on pages 29 to 32 silently.

Revisiting the Text

The activities below can be used immediately after the guided reading lesson, during later reading sessions as mini-lessons, or as independent activities.

S Examining how different groups in society may place different values on cultural practices

☞ If the students have experienced moving to a new country, they could write a poem, story, or playscript to express what they felt and how they maintained their culture. Other students could imagine what it might be like and write about the difficulties they might face.

S Exploring the use of descriptive language

The students can reread the story to identify where the author has used language to build atmosphere.

They can complete the blackline master using words from the text as well as their own examples.

S Describing the ways in which technology links people and communities

The students can reread the information on page 32, then think of other technologies that can connect people, communities, and ideas. Examples could include cell phones, the Internet, video or webcam links, as well as music and other entertainment media that "communicate" with a worldwide audience.