

Teachers' Resource Kit

– *Lin and the Red Stranger* – by Ken Catran

Lin and the Red Stranger is a poignant tale for 8–13 year olds, set in the 1860s Otago goldfields. It follows the lives of two very different young people, both drawn to the goldfields in the hope they'll strike it rich. One is a young Chinese girl, and the other a European boy. Plot-driven, this story also examines the cultural differences between the two. *Lin and the Red Stranger* shows how people are shaped by struggle and adversity and how the goldfields shaped our society in the nineteenth century; how it changed people who then went on to change their world. This book was a finalist in the Senior Fiction category of the NZ Post Book Awards for Children and Young Adults 2004.



Including classroom activities for children, Years 3-8, in the following subjects:

- * Art
- * Visual language
- * Reading
- * Writing

Born in 1944, Ken Catran, as well as writing science fiction and historical fiction for children, is an award-winning television writer. He has written for some of our best-loved television series, including *Shortland Street*. He has been shortlisted for the New Zealand Post Children's Book Awards many times, and won the Senior Fiction category and Book of the Year for this coveted award in 2001.



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Understanding the Story

Respond to these questions after reading each chapter.

Chapter 1:

Declan: What problems does he face? What do you think his 'bigger problems' might be? (p. 9)

Lin: Why does Lin call the sailors Big Nose? (p.10) Why is she so afraid? What problems does she face in a new culture? This is the first meeting of Lin and Declan. What feelings do each have about the other?

Chapter 2:

Lin: What is her first impression of the city? Why does she hate it? (p.16) Why do the people seem ugly to her?

Declan: Why did Declan steal? (p.19) Is he really 'mad-brained'? What kind of man was his victim? (p. 21) How did he unsettle Declan? What feelings does he have towards the rich?

Chapter 3:

Lin: Why doesn't Lin like Hing?

Why does Lin get 'looks of anger' in the street? (p. 26) What's the treatment for blisters? (p. 28)

Declan: What do we discover about his family? (p. 29)

Chapter 4;

Lin: Who are the Foreign Devils? (p. 32) Why is Lin 'full of terror' at the policeman? (p. 34) How is 'a fine set of bluidy rascals' translated?

Declan: What kind of men has he met? (p. 39) Does he trust them?

Chapter 5:

Lin: What is Fool's Gold? (p.43)

Declan: How did Michael make it sound right to steal? (p. 48) What kind of picture are you getting of Michael so far?

Chapter 6

Lin: What upsets Hing so much? (pp. 50, 51) How does Lin make everyone feel better?

Declan: Why did he like Ambrose? (pp.54, 55) Why does Ambrose show him the gun?

Chapter 7

Lin: What disaster in China made them come to NZ?

(pp. 57, 58) How is this like Declan's family background? Why had Lin's father sold her? Who do you know better at this stage of the book? Lin or Declan?

Chapter 8

Lin: Why should Lin keep her eyes down in the town? (p. 65) What is Lin's impression of the Red Stranger so far? (pp. 53, 68, 74) What nationalities came to NZ at this time? (pp. 48, 70) What foods do we still eat today? (p. 72)

Declan: What did both he and Ambrose dream of for the future? (p. 63) But what was the likely future for Ambrose? (p. 74)

Chapter 9

Declan: What made him so angry? (pp. 80, 81)

Chapter 10:

Lin: Rescued by Declan (p.86) How would she be feeling as she escapes?

Declan: He remembers his sister Bridget (p.89) Why is this important?

Chapter 11:

Lin: Who is Kwan-Ti and why is he important to Lin? (pp. 53, 90) What does she like about Declan?

Declan: Is Hinch a goodie or a baddie? (p. 95)

Chapter 12

Declan: What is 'bailing up'? (p. 100) How do they talk Declan into joining them? (pp. 101, 102) What reasons does Declan give himself for stealing?

Lin: Who does she think Declan might be? (p. 103)

Chapter 13

Declan: He wants to help the Chinese, but what is stopping him? (p. 107) What is the gang's plan?

Chapter 14:

Lin: When the mob attacks, what does it remind Lin about China? (p. 113) What brave thing does she do? (p. 115) Does Lin think the policeman is a friend or just tricking them? (pp. 118–121)

Chapter 15:

Lin: What is irony? (p. 124) Why was Hing confused by the words 'charming laddies'? What is the good thing they discovered about the Law? (p. 125)

Chapter 16:

Lin: How had Choy revealed the secret of his gold to Lin? (pp. 127, 129–30)

Chapter 17:

Declan: How did he know the gang could not be trusted? (p. 138)

Lin: What are the bad things about China that she thinks about? (p. 142) Why didn't she tell anyone about the men with guns? (p. 143) Does Choy know that Lin has found his gold? (pp. 139, 147–8)

Chapter 18:

Declan: What does he suddenly feel about the word 'robber'? Why? (p. 150) What went wrong with the plan? (p. 152) 'The coin was spinning for life or death.' (p. 156) What did that mean?

Chapter 20:

Lin: Who is 'dead and buried'? (p.166) How had Declan been 'the cause of their good fortune'? (p.171) 'It was a good land'. Why did Lin say this?

Visual/Artistic Responses

Art Activities or Static Images

1. Wagon: Draw the wagons as they are described on p. 26. Find an old photo of a real oxen team and wagons and compare it with your version.
2. Character Sketches:
 - * Police: Read the vivid description of the policeman and his horse on p. 34. Sketch and colour them as realistically as possible. Draw them again, but this time as cartoon characters, using pictures with 'rubbery lips' and 'demon eyes'.
 - * Miner: Read the description of Ambrose on p. 53, 54. Draw him.
 - * Paint a portrait of Lin or Declan.
3. Boot Creek: Draw a sketch of Boot Creek using the novel and old photos of mining camps.
4. Dragon: Use bright pastels to illustrate the colourful Chinese dragon on p. 71.
5. The Mountain Story, p. 127.
 - * Illustrate a picture-book version of this folk tale for junior readers. Give each character a full page mountain, lizard, tree, falcon and owl. Write a simple sentence for each page.
 - * Draw a map using the story clues, to show where Choy's gold was hidden. (Chapter 16)

Research

1. Change: Read pp. 16, 19 and 22, which describe Dunedin city over 100 years ago. List (or draw) the differences in transport, roading, power supply, money, fashions. Was anything the same as city life today? Find some old photos of Dunedin streets.
2. Women: Read the author's note at the start about the first Chinese woman in New Zealand. Find the site for the Dictionary of NZ Biography, and look up the name Lo Keong (Matilda). Find out about her life in Dunedin and the kind of person she was.
3. Chinese Miners: Who were the heathen cargo? (p. 10). What does 'heathen' mean? (p. 70) Who were the 'Heavenly People'? (pp. 31–2). Why did some people dislike the Chinese gold miners? (pp. 27, 70, 84, 105) What did the Chinese think of the Big Nose Devils? (pp. 70, 75) Why did the Chinese think that their 'industry' would make them rich? Research facts about Chinese gold miners in Otago, using the internet and books.
4. Ireland: Read p. 29 and find out about life in Ireland in the late 1800s. What went wrong for farmers? Who was the Gombeen man?
5. Gold Mining: How did they get the gold out of the ground / rivers? Draw a diagram of one method. How did gold mining help New Zealand's economy? Where and how is gold still mined?
6. Attitudes:
 - * How is the miners' attitude like today's attitude towards Asian immigrants? Why do some people dislike foreigners working in New Zealand? Are people from other countries always treated badly?
 - * Interview someone who has come to New Zealand from a different culture (Asian, Middle Eastern, African). What attitudes have they experienced?
7. History:
 - * 'History repeats itself'. What does this mean? If we know about the past, can it help us in the future?
 - * How do people find out what happened in the past? Where do they look? How do we know if information is true?

Activities

Language Study:

1. Sayings; What do these strange old sayings mean: Shanks' pony (p. 8), 'dough-faced flunkeys' (p. 19), 'in for a penny, in for a pound' (p. 30), 'all men like a little honey' (p. 52), slap-up grub (p. 62), I can't pay me whack' (p. 62), 'bailing up' (p. 100).
2. Similes: Draw cartoon characters who show what these similes mean: 'preening himself like a peacock (p.64), 'armoured like lobsters' (p.66), 'growled like dogs seeing a rabbit' (p.84), 'shouts like a loud storm' (p.85)

Creative Writing:

1. Point of View: Catran describes incidents from two angles: from Lin's viewpoint and Declan's (e.g. the card-playing incident in chapter 10). Write an incident such as a robbery from the point of view of the robber and then a victim.
2. Alien Culture: Imagine you find yourself in a completely strange country (or planet) with a different language. Write a short story about how you try to make friends and deal with enemies.
3. Imagine Lin and Declan write to each other after 10 years. Write a letter from each telling what has happened in their lives.

Character Study

The story is cleverly divided between the two main characters. Slowly their paths come together: 'Like river currents, their lives had swirled together.'

- * Draw a timeline of main events for each character, showing the important moments where they meet. The timelines should join at these points. Are these turning points for Lin and Declan?
- * Lin and Declan have some similar hopes, fears, strengths and family background. Draw two overlapping circles for Lin and Declan. List the similarities in the middle and differences in the outer circles.

- * For both Lin and Declan: describe their character at the start of the story, then at the end of the story. Have they changed very much? What caused any changes in attitude?

Opinions

1. Stealing: Do you think it was right for Declan to steal from the rich and the greedy (like Robin Hood)? Is it ever right to steal?
*This could be a whole class debate topic using evidence from the book.
2. Immigration: Is it acceptable for immigrants to come to New Zealand and work in jobs that local people could do?
3. Women: What did you think of the place of women at this time? E.g. Lin's father sold her. (p.58)

Book Review

Write a review of the book using these questions:

Which character did you like the most?

Which parts made you feel angry, scared or sad?

Did you think this was an exciting book?

Were you surprised by any parts?

Was the ending a good one? Why or why not?

Did you enjoy the story?

How would you rate it?

What kind of reader do you think would enjoy this book?