



Kids Book Club Kit | Darien Library

Maizy Chen's Last Chance by Lisa Yee

Recommended for grades 4 to 6

Summary: Maizy has never been to Last Chance, Minnesota until now. Her Mom's plan is just to stay for a couple of weeks, until her grandfather gets better. But plans change, and Maizy ends up spending more time in Last Chance (where she and her family are the only Asian-Americans) and at The Golden Palace—the restaurant that's been in her family for generations—than she expected. When she discovers that a beloved family treasure has gone missing, and someone has left a racist note, Maizy decides to get to the bottom of this hurtful incident.



Discussion Questions:

1. The author begins *Maizy Chen's Last Chance* with "No story starts at the beginning." Why do you think she starts the book with this statement? What does it mean in relation to the structure of the novel and in the way Maizy understands her own story?
2. Maizy and her grandfather, or opa, develop a very close relationship. Who are some of the important elders in your life?
3. Opa starts looking and feeling better when he begins telling Maizy stories about Lucky. Why do you think that is? And why do these particular stories brighten him up?
4. When Maizy is exploring the town, she observes, "It seems like everything here is also something else. I wonder what the Golden Palace doubles as" (p.16). What do you think the Golden Palace doubles as?
5. Racist bullying and discrimination happen multiple times throughout the story. When Maizy talks with Riley about her friends being mean to her (p.81), she says, "Maybe you can tell them to stop" Riley says, "You can ask them to stop, too." Whose responsibility is it to stop bullying?
6. When Bud the Bear was first kidnapped, who did you suspect? Why? What clues were in the story?
7. Maizy's initial perceptions of some of the Last Chance residents turn out to be wrong. How does her opinion change throughout the story of characters like Lady Macbeth, Riley, or Principal Holmes?
8. Throughout the story, Daisy speaks about the importance of recycling. What is your city's or county's policy on recycling? What can you, your family, and your friends do to be better stewards of the environment?
9. Oma tells Maizy, "Not everything illegal is wrong" (p.97). What are some things that were once illegal but are not now? Are there any laws today that you think are wrong? How are laws made and changed? What steps can you and the people around you take to change unjust laws?

Further Resources:

Stop AAPI Hate: <https://stopaapihate.org/>

Museum of Chinese in America: <https://www.mocanyc.org/>

Chinese American Museum: <https://camla.org/>

Activities:

1. Write a letter to a grandparent or older neighbor or family friend about *Maizy Chen's Last Chance*.
2. Make a timeline of the most important things that happen while Maizy is in Minnesota.
3. Write some messages to put inside a fortune cookie just like Maizy does for the people in Last Chance.

Readalikes: If you liked this book, you may enjoy one of the books below!

- *When You Trap a Tiger* by Tae Keller
- *The Many Meanings of Meilan* by Andrea Wang
- *Song for a Whale* by Lynne Kelly

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