

The Indian in the Cupboard by Lynne Reid Banks

Discussion Guide

About this book

Age: Age 8, Age 9, Age 10

Genre: Adventure, Series, Fantasy

Subject: Equality, Fairness, Justice, Magic and Supernatural, Friends and Friendship, Native American

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT

COMPREHENSION AND RECALL

- 1.** Why is Omri disappointed with Patrick's gift? (*It's secondhand, he's outgrowing toy figures; it's an Indian and he has no cowboys.*)
- 2.** Why doesn't Omri call his family when he discovers the Indian is alive? (*He's afraid they won't believe him; he also wants to keep it to himself.*)
- 3.** Why does Omri experiment with things in the cupboard? (*He wants to find out what makes the Indian come alive or return to plastic.*)
- 4.** Why does Omri wonder if he should put Little Bear into the cupboard and turn him into plastic again? (*He's appalled about the 30 scalps.*)
- 5.** How does Omri keep Little Bear and the horse from running away outside? (*He tells them there are mountain lions.*)
- 6.** What are the things that Little Bear thinks Omri learns in school? (*Law of the tribe, honor for ancestors, ways of the spirit*)
- 7.** How does Omri get help for Little Bear when his knee is hurt? (*He puts a toy soldier/medic in the cupboard and makes him come alive.*)

HIGHER LEVEL THINKING SKILLS

- 8.** Why does Omri come to respect Little Bear? (*He's brave and stands up to Omri' despite their difference in size; he's a real person.*)
- 9.** What are some misconceptions Omri has about Little Bear? (*He rides horses, lives in a tepee, knows about cowboys.*)

10. How does Little Bear cause changes for Omri at school? (*Omri reads a difficult book on the Iroquois; is patient in handicrafts class; feels a strain in his relationship with Patrick.*)

11. Why does Omri do almost everything Little Bear wants? (*He wants him to be happy; admires him; is fascinated by him.*)

12. Why does Omri sometimes wonder if he's right to give Little Bear certain things? (*Little Bear has his own ideas about what he will do, things which might get him or Omri in trouble.*)

LITERARY ELEMENTS

13. Foreshadowing: How does the author suggest that the key might be special? (*Mother saved it from her mother's things; wore it on a ribbon around her neck.*)

PERSONAL RESPONSE

14. Omri debates whether to tell an adult about the cupboard and Little Bear. What would you have done? Why?

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT

COMPREHENSION AND RECALL

1. Why does Omri agree to show the Indian to Patrick? (*He's afraid he'll lose his friendship; he's also dying to show someone.*)

2. Why does Omri worry whenever he leaves his room? (*He doesn't know who will go in, what they might find or what Little Bear will do.*)

3. Why does the cowboy pour out the water? (*He thinks it's alcohol; thinks he's hallucinating.*)

4. How does Omri get Little Bear to promise not to kill Boone? (*He says he won't bring him a wife.*)

5. Why does Omri make Little Bear and Boone have breakfast together? (*He wants them to understand they have to get along.*)

HIGHER LEVEL THINKING SKILLS

6. Why can't Omri put all his plastic toys in the cupboard? (*They'd become real people from their own period. They'd be confused and endangered. Omri would be responsible for them.*)

7. How does Little Bear act toward Omri? (*Possible: imperious, demanding, bossy.*)

8. Why is Omri so sure that Patrick has put a plastic figure in the cupboard while he is in the kitchen? (*He knows how much Patrick wants to bring a toy to life; they fought about this before.*)

9. What are the dangers if Omri's classmates see Little Bear and Boone? (*The little men might get hurt; classmates might tell adults; people might take advantage.*)

10. How does Omri show he is more responsible about the little men than Patrick? (*He thinks about the consequences more and realizes the men are real people with their own lives and feelings.*)

11. How has the secret of the cupboard changed Omri? (*He's become deceptive and secretive; he lies; he thinks about others more; recognizes the difference between a game and real-life events.*)

LITERARY ELEMENTS

12. Character: How would you describe Little Bear's personality? (*Possible: fierce, stubborn, self-centered, demanding, brave, assured.*)

PERSONAL RESPONSE

13. What do you think about the idea of Omri taking Little Bear and Boone to school? Why?

14. What parts of the story do you find funny? Why?

QUESTIONS TO TALK ABOUT

COMPREHENSION AND RECALL

1. Why doesn't Omri want Patrick to have the little men? (*He thinks Patrick uses them and doesn't treat them as people.*)

2. Why is Mr. Yapp so suspicious of Omri? (*He loses a lot of merchandise to kids; he saw Omri put two figures in his pocket.*)

3. How does Patrick save Omri from Mr. Yapp? (*He says he saw the figures in school and describes them.*)

4. Why does Little Bear shoot Boone? (*They argue about the cowboys and Indians on television; for them it's real.*)

HIGHER LEVEL THINKING SKILLS

5. Why does Omri think it's fun when the art teacher sees Boone's drawing? (*She's amazed and bewildered but his secret is safe. He's having a joke on her.*)

6. Why is Omri surprised that Boone and Little Bear Want to go back to their own worlds? (*He hasn't been thinking about what they might want; he's been looking at the situation from his point of view.*)

7. How does Little Bear show his concern about Boone? (*He's very upset; he goes under the floorboards to find the key.*)

LITERARY ELEMENTS

8. Conflict: How do Omri and Patrick resolve their conflict? (*The problems they face in dealing with the little men help bring them together. Patrick stands up for Omri at Mr. Yapp's; Omri invites him home. They work together to find the lost key and tend to Boone. They both recognize that the little men have to go back, but the boys have shared a terrific secret.*)

PERSONAL RESPONSE

9. How do you feel about the way Mr. Johnson reacts to Little Bear and Boone? How would you have reacted?

10. How do you feel about the way Adiel and Omri express anger toward one another? How else could they work out their problems?

11. Do you think Omri and Patrick are right to send Little Bear and Boone back to their own time? Explain.

12. If you could live in another time, when would it be?

13. What did you learn from this book about being responsible for other people?