

American Born Chinese

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Published by First Second, 2006

**During Reading Strategy:
Revising Meaning Storyboard**

Context:

This strategy is recommended as a post-reading strategy, but can also be used toward the end of the novel (after completing Chapter 8 on page 198) as a way of summarizing complex storylines before they are tied together in the final chapter. It is a chance to step back from the consistent reading of the novel and see how separate events contribute to the bigger story.

Purpose:

The revising meaning storyboard strategy is meant to allow students to discuss what they think the most important events in the book are by choosing which panels they feel are most important in each chapter. As they discuss in small groups, they can revise their opinions and expand their understanding after hearing their classmates' interpretations. Building on others' ideas and expressing their own helps students to collaborate and synthesize greater meaning from the text. They will also pay greater attention to what is expressed in individual panels, heightening their awareness of what can be conveyed visually.

Materials Needed:

- Copies of *American Born Chinese*
- Scratch paper for small-group quizzes
- Camera and uploading and printing tools (optional)

Time Allotted:

10-15 minutes

Steps:

1. Assign students to small groups of about three each (with eight or nine total, for however many chapters you have read so far), thinking especially about which groupings would allow quieter students to open up. Ask students to find which single panel is the most important in the whole chapter, doing so first *on their own*. They can know this by asking questions such as “When do the main characters make important decisions? Is there a turning point in the chapter? What would be the most dramatic part in a movie version?”

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2. Tell students to now discuss with their group members which panels they think are most important to the story, trying to come to agreement on one for their group. Remind students that there is no one right answer, and that their group quiz grade will be based on how well they support their choice as well as how well they understand the plot. Also remind them that the point is to listen to everyone as a team.
3. Ask one member of each group (you can cold call because you have prepared all of them to contribute) to explain the group's choice and justify it. When they are done, you may choose to ask the other students if they want to add anything. Between presentations, consider commenting on how panels might have been connected to ideas from previous ones as a way of connecting the learning of different groups.
4. (Optional) Once this is completed, you may decide to emphasize the storyboarding aspect of the activity by taking pictures of the panels students choose to represent their sections and combining them in a slideshow or printing them on a poster to be displayed in the classroom. A printed storyboard could be used to teach students about the elements of a narrative (Freytag's pyramid) as they prepare to create their own graphic novel panels. It could also be used to show how visual images can tell a story and indicate a character's inner state.

Assessment:

Assign each small group of students a holistic grade based on the quality of their reasoning for the panels they chose. Probably half of this grade should also reflect how well students comprehend the plot of the novel. Here are some sample events and reasonings that could be used as a guide.

- Chapter 1—The Monkey King notices a party in heaven, important because he leaves the comfort of his kingdom to explore it
- Chapter 2—Wei-Chen shares his toy robot with Jin Wang, important because they both are lonely and need a friend
- Chapter 3—Chin-Kee arrives and embarrasses Danny, all the more because it is in front of the girl he likes
- Chapter 4—The Monkey King angrily tries to prove his power to the other deities, important because the head god Tze-Yo-Tzuh steps in to correct him
- Chapter 5—Jin changes his hairstyle to attract Amelia, important because he isn't being himself