



Chinese Cinderella

By Adeline

Questions to help with your Venn diagram

Thinking about the traditional story of Cinderella, give a ~~description~~ of what each character's role was within the story:

phrase or adjective

Family members: _____

What has happened to her mother and father? _____

Friends: _____

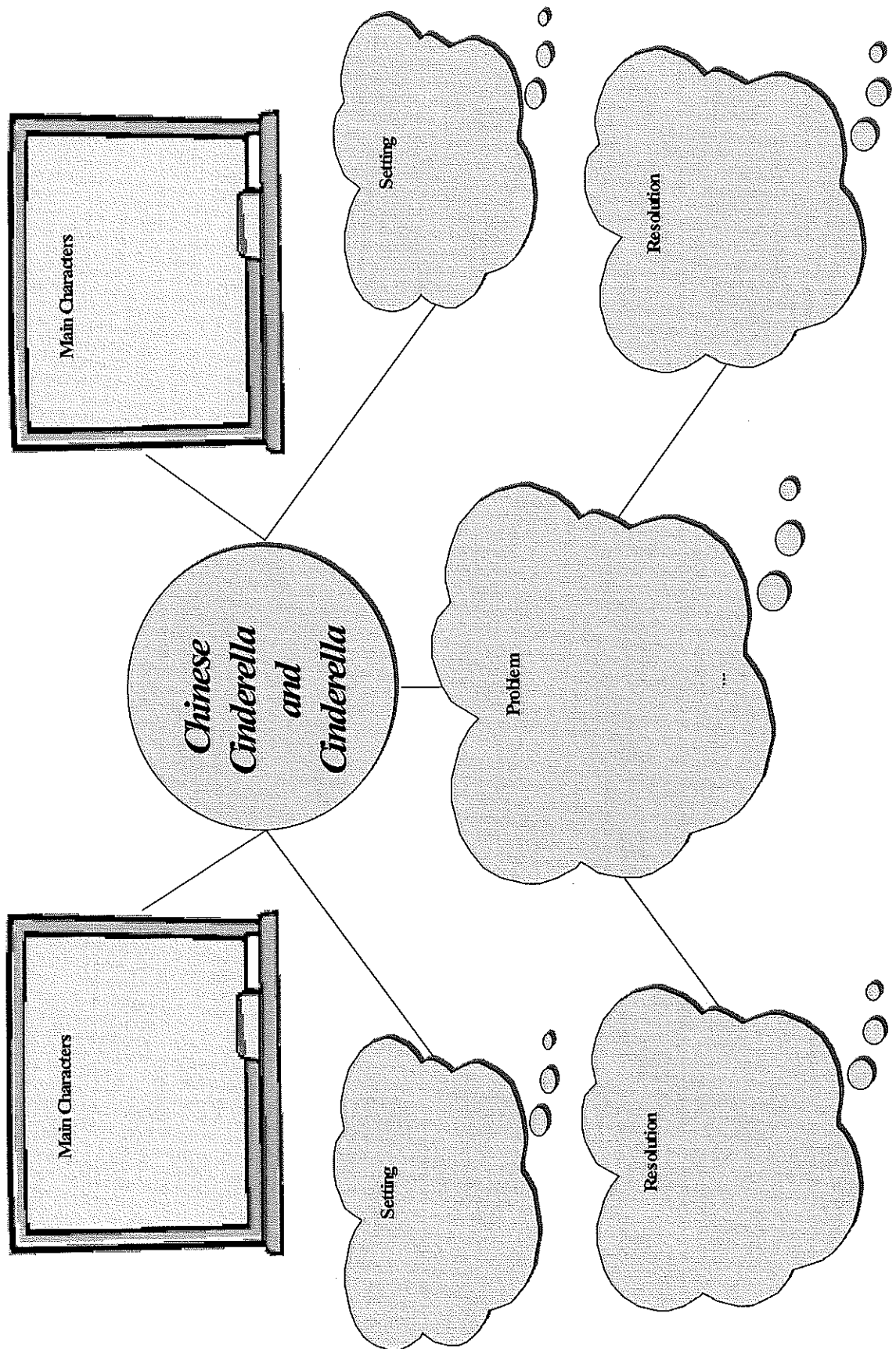
Magic person: _____

Special clothes: _____

How her stepmother feels about her: _____

What happens to her slippers? _____

Add Venn Diagram



Focus on vocabulary: words in context

When you read a new text, you may find words that you do not understand. It can be very tiring and time-consuming trying to understand the text, especially if you stop to look up all of the new words in the dictionary. Below are some helpful strategies and exercises to help you to deal with new words while reading the novel.

Possible Strategies:

1. **Ignore the word**

This is a good strategy if you can still understand most of the meaning of the sentence.

2. **Guess the meaning of the word**

This is a good strategy to use all the time to improve your reading skills and expand your vocabulary.

3. **Ask a friend what the word means**

This is a good strategy if you don't have much time and think your friend will know.

4. **Look up the new word in the dictionary**

This is a good strategy for important words that you must know. You can also use the dictionary if you want to check if your guess was correct.

A closer look at strategy 2. Guessing the meaning

You can guess the meanings of words by looking at the following features:

1. The **context of the word** in the sentence or paragraph that you read or hear it in. The ideas in the paragraph or sentence can give you clues about what the word means.

Example sentence:

Cats are **fastidious** animals that can often be seen cleaning their coats with their tongues.

The word '**fastidious**' is written in the context of a sentence about cats. The other information that we learn from the sentence is that fastidious cats clean themselves a lot.

2. We can also guess the meaning of words **by considering the form of the word**.

Example sentence:

Cats are **fastidious** animals that can often be seen cleaning their hairy coats with their tongues.

The word 'fastidious' ends in 'ious' like the words 'delicious' or 'suspicious' so it is probably the same kind of word as these words. We know that 'fastidious' describes the noun 'animals'. From this we know that 'fastidious' is a describing word or adjective. From the context we know that it describes something that cleans itself a lot.

So what does the word '**fastidious**' mean?

Dictionary definition: possessing or displaying careful, meticulous attention to detail; difficult to please; exacting

3. Sometimes you can guess a word because **you know the meaning of part of the word.**

Example sentence:

It was an **eventful** day.

The word eventful contains the root word 'event' which is something that happens, such as a party or a meeting. Therefore an eventful day is probably a day when several important or interesting things happen.

A closer look at strategy 4. Looking the words up in the dictionary

Go to the section of your dictionary with words starting with 'f'. Find 'fateful' in the entries.

Fateful: *adj.* involving momentous consequences or decisively important.

You may notice that there are other similar words in the dictionary such as, 'fated' and 'fate'. These are related words. Sometimes if you cannot find the word you are looking for, you need to look at the meaning of its root word instead. In the case of the word 'fateful', the root word is 'fate'.

Discuss as a class some of the problems associated with using a dictionary and list them below?

- Words listed in the dictionary are in alphabetical order, but if a person does not know how to spell a word, how can they look it up?
- Time – it takes time to look up a word, especially if you are reading a novel and there are a lot of words that we are not sure of the meaning.
- The conveying of the correct pronunciation of a word

- Definitions - Words also often have more than one meaning. *Run*, for example, generally means "to move fast on foot". However, that is not what we mean when we say "the water is running." *Run* can also mean "to flow (said of liquids)".

Reading Log

As you read the book:

- Keep a record of the main events and characters you meet or learn about in each group of chapters
- Record your comments and predictions about the plot, your response to characters' thoughts and actions
- Record new words you have learnt

Chapters: 1 - 4

Key Events:

Characters: (include thoughts and feelings)

Your comments:

Interesting words and their meanings: (Write down at least 5 and record the page numbers)

As you read the book:

- Keep a record of the main events and characters you meet or learn about in each group of chapters
- Record your comments and predictions about the plot, your response to characters' thoughts and actions
- Record new words you have learnt

Chapters: 5 - 6

Key Events:

Characters: (include thoughts and feelings)

Your comments:

Interesting words and their meanings: (Write down at least 5 and record the page numbers)

As you read the book:

- **Keep a record of the main events and characters you meet or learn about in each group of chapters**
- **Record your comments and predictions about the plot, your response to characters' thoughts and actions**
- **Record new words you have learnt**

Chapters: 7 - 8

Key Events:

Characters: (include thoughts and feelings)

Your comments:

Interesting words and their meanings: (Write down at least 5 and record the page numbers)

As you read the book:

- Keep a record of the main events and characters you meet or learn about in each group of chapters
- Record your comments and predictions about the plot, your response to characters' thoughts and actions
- Record new words you have learnt

Chapters: 9 - 13

Key Events:

Characters: (include thoughts and feelings)

Your comments:

Interesting words and their meanings: (Write down at least 5 and record the page numbers)

As you read the book:

- **Keep a record of the main events and characters you meet or learn about in each group of chapters**
- **Record your comments and predictions about the plot, your response to characters' thoughts and actions**
- **Record new words you have learnt**

Chapters: 14 - 17

Key Events:

Characters: (include thoughts and feelings)

Your comments:

Interesting words and their meanings: (Write down at least 5 and record the page numbers)

As you read the book:

- Keep a record of the main events and characters you meet or learn about in each group of chapters
- Record your comments and predictions about the plot, your response to characters' thoughts and actions
- Record new words you have learnt

Chapters: 18 - 22

Key Events:

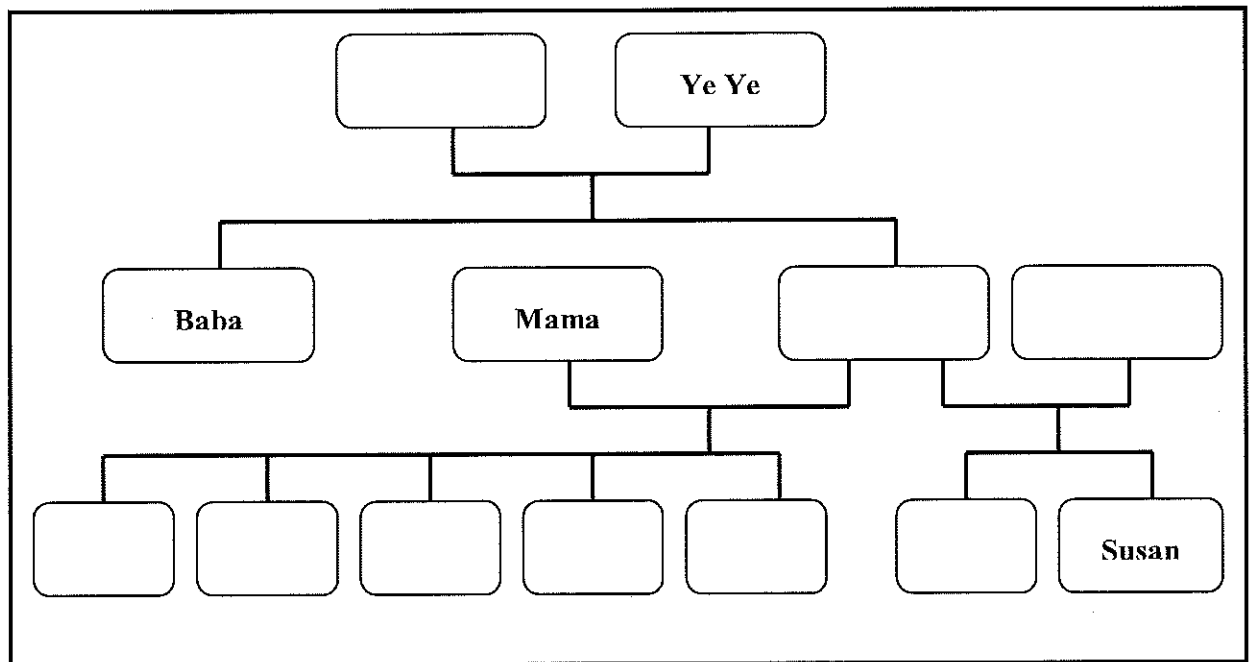
Characters: (include thoughts and feelings)

Your comments:

Interesting words and their meanings: (Write down at least 5 and record the page numbers)

The Yen family Tree

1. After reading the Author's Note (pages xi-xiii) in the front of the book and Chapter 2, complete the Yen Family Tree. Use their European names if you can find them.



2. What was the Chinese name that Adeline was given at birth?

3. Where is the surname written in a Chinese name?

4. What is the oldest daughter called at home?

5. What was Adeline called at home?

6. What did her younger brother and sister call her?

7. The older generation called Adeline Wu Mei. What does this mean?

8. What do you think the word 'di' means?

9. What is the Chinese term for 'mother'?

10. Using the method of naming a child in a Chinese home, work out what you would be called (hint: what is your order of birth in your family)

Creating character through implication

Much of the information the reader gains about Niang's character and motivation is gained indirectly through her actions and words, rather than from Adeline's explicit descriptions of her. The only explicit statement that Adeline gives about Niang is very brief and comes at the end of her account. This statement has been included below.

In the following exercise, sentences that have indirect or implied information have been listed. For each example, write down what characteristics of Niang are implied for each extract.

Implied examples	Implied characteristics
Niang was dressed in a dark brown Parisian silk dress, with dangling pearl earrings and a string of large pearls around her neck.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Stylish▪ Expensive taste▪ Non – traditional
Surprised and hurt, Niang bent down to pick up her baby, who was wriggling and resisting with all her might. An unnatural hush fell upon the room.	
“Keep still!” Niang screamed futilely, again and again, in a piercing voice.	
This proved simply too much for Niang. Thoroughly exasperated, she gave a stinging slap across her baby's face.	
Deliberately and viciously, Niang now set about beating her daughter in earnest. Her blows landed indiscriminately on Little Sister's ears, cheeks, neck and head.	
Niang glared at me. Her large, prominent eyes appeared to be popping out of their orbits with fury. “How dare you!” she hissed.	

More language techniques

Adeline Yen Mah shapes our understanding of the world in which she grew up through her choice of language features, which help keep us interested in her story. As we have already seen, for example, her use of adjectives helps us to visualise the scenes and understand the characters she describes.

Other language features, which Adeline Yen Mah uses, include:

- first person narrative
- rhetorical questions
- direct speech
- similes

Each language feature has an effect on us. For example, use of first person narrative and rhetorical questions help the reader feel involved in the story as we feel that Adeline is talking directly to us, like she would to a special friend. Similes help create a visual image in our minds about what is being described and direct speech or dialogue gives us the exact information about conversations between the characters and helps us imagine them talking to each other.

First person narrative

In first person narrative the story is told from the point of view or perspective of the main character. It is identified by the use of personal pronouns such as 'I', 'my' and 'we', e.g.:

- 'As soon as I got home from school, Aunt Baba noticed the silver medal dangling from the left breast-pocket of my uniform.' (page 1)
- 'We had nothing to wear except our school uniforms.' (page 41)

First person narrative helps the reader feel as if they are being told the story directly from the lips of the author. In *Chinese Cinderella* it makes us feel as if Adeline is telling the story just to us. Find two other examples from the novel that show the story has been written from Adeline's point of view.

Example 1:

Example 2:

Rhetorical questions

No answer to these types of questions is needed, but they cause the reader to pause and consider a response and this also helps make us feel involved in the story, e.g., on page 132, Adeline describes her thoughts after Niang accuses her of bragging about being elected class president: 'What'll my friends say this time? How will my voters look at me? Will I be the laughing stock of my class? Will everyone sneer and whisper about me during recess?'

Find another two examples of rhetorical questions on page 133.

Example 1:

Example 2:

Direct speech

Direct speech records exactly what the characters say to each other and therefore helps us imagine them saying it and how it is said, e.g, Adeline's father notices the medal she won for topping her class pinned to her chest and says, 'Is the left side of your chest heavier?' Father continued, beaming with pride. 'Are you tilting?' (page 12)

Find another two examples from the story of direct speech with information that describes clearly how it is said.

Example 1:

Example 2:

Similes

A simile compares one thing to another, using the words 'like' or 'as'. They help create a picture in the reader's mind.

One example of a simile in *Chinese Cinderella* is found on page 111: 'I lied, squirming like a worm.'

Here Adeline compares herself to a squirming worm because she feels so uncomfortable and unhappy about lying to Niang. We have an image in our minds of Adeline being like a poor, vulnerable worm, squirming because it cannot find the earth to burrow safely into.

You will find another two examples of similes on pages 111-112. Write them here and explain what they mean in the context in which they have been used.

Example 1:

Example 2:

Themes

The themes of a story are

Events that occur in the plot of a story may indicate its themes. In *Chinese Cinderella*, the main themes:

- family and relationships
- abandonment and loneliness
- self-esteem.

Use the story to find events that illustrate the themes and choose a quote to support your choice. You will find that some themes overlap.

Family & relationships	Abandonment & loneliness	Self-esteem
<p><i>Example:</i> Adeline is unhappy with her family life, but does not tell anyone out of embarrassment. 'They didn't know that, in front of them, I was desperate to keep up the pretence that I came from a normal, loving family.' (page 63)</p>	<p><i>Example:</i> Adeline wonders what her fate will be when she is punished for her friends visiting her. She is constantly afraid of being made an orphan. 'What's going to happen to me? Will I be sold?' (page 131)</p>	<p><i>Example:</i> Adeline is constantly reminded that the treatment of her and her siblings is her fault (despite that not really being true). 'If you had not been born, mama would still be alive. She died because of you. You are bad luck.' (page 3)</p>

Linking quotations to themes

The main themes of the story, *Chinese Cinderella*, are:

- Family and relationships
- Abandonment and loneliness
- Self-esteem

Read the quotes below, identify which theme each relates to and explain how it illustrates that theme.

Quote	How quote relates to theme(s)
'If you had not been born, Mama would still be alive. She died because of you. You are bad luck.' (page 3)	This quote relates to the theme of self-esteem. The reader feels very sorry for Adeline and it is easy to see why she does not feel good about herself and carries guilt if she is constantly spoken to in this way?
'Continue studying hard and bringing honour to the Yen family name so we can be proud of you.' (page 11)	
'Unlike my siblings, no-one looked down on me.' (Refers to people at school) (page 14)	
'I was winning the medal every week and wearing it constantly... it was the only way to make father take notice and be proud of me.' (page 16)	
'To her we are not separate people. Over here, we have become one single unit known as <i>all of you</i> .' (page 28)	
'One by one they were greeted and led away by anxious mothers. Nobody came for me.' (page 30)	
'We merely want you to acknowledge your errors in the past... We'll only give you the tram fares if you are truly contrite.' (page 45)	
'In no time at all big sister went over to the other side. I knew Niang loathed me and despised my aunt.' (page 59)	

Chinese Cinderella

Traditional Cinderella Fairytale

