

American Born Chinese Chapters 7-9 Analyzing Allusions

Directions: Today you are going to complete an analysis of each of the following panels in *American Born Chinese* reading. Yang uses religious and cultural allusions (references) to tell his story and effectively communicate his message. To help you understand these allusions, you are being given the panel and the allusion. Use both to help you answer the questions.

Religious Allusions: When asking about his writing influences, Yang said: "Religion and culture are two important ways in which we as humans find our identity. That's certainly true for me. My experiences growing up in both a Chinese American household and the Catholic Church define much of who I am" (Pinti 235). Such religious references are clearly present in *American Born Chinese*, where Yang references both Taoism (eastern religion) and Christianity (western religion). Below are panels from the text alongside the religious writings that they reference.



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One night I dreamed a dream. I was walking along the beach with my Lord. Across the dark sky flashed scenes from my life. For each scene, I noticed two sets of footprints in the sand, one belonging to me and one to my Lord.

When the last scene of my life shot before me I looked back at the footprints in the sand. There was only one set of footprints. I realized that this was at the lowest and saddest times of my life. This always bothered me and I questioned the Lord about my dilemma.

"Lord, You told me when I decided to follow You, You would walk and talk with me all the way. But I'm aware that during the most troublesome times of my life there is only one set of footprints. I just don't understand why, when I need You most, You leave me."

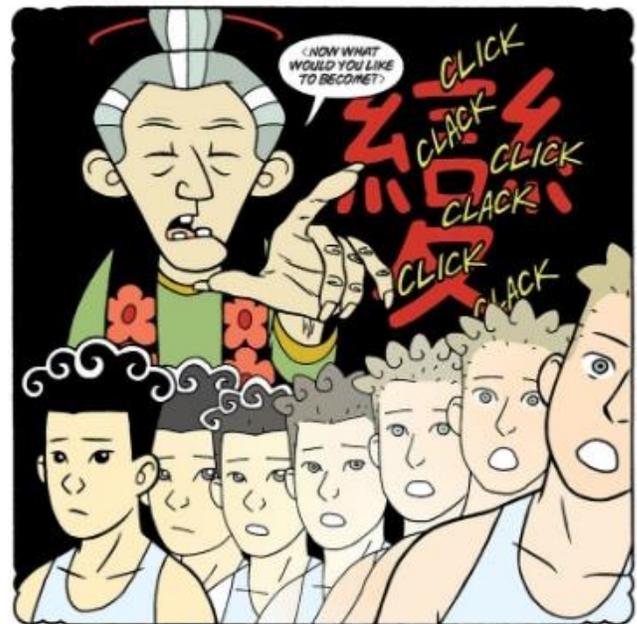
He whispered, "My precious child, I love you and will never leave you, never, ever, during your trials and testings. When you saw only one set of footprints, it was then that I carried you."

1. What do you notice about the sand in the image and the sand in the poem? Make multiple, specific observations and provide an analytical meaning.

Observations	Meaning of Observations
Panel:	
Poem:	

- In the poem, what do the footprints in the sand indicate about the relationship between God and the narrator?
- How does Yang's use of the "footprints in the sand" image differ from the footprints in the poem?
- How does Yang's visualization (turning an idea into an image) of the "Footprints in the Sand" poem (Christian reference) help to develop a theme in the Monkey King's story?

Transformers Allusion:



- Describe Transformers – if you have to, research the toy. What does it do (avoid using the word transform)? Where did it originate?

6. How does Yang use a transformer metaphor to represent Jin’s experience as a Chinese American kid?

7. A transformer is either an alien robot or a vehicle – there is no in-between or mixing of these two aspects. By using a transformer metaphor to describe his Chinese American experience, what is Yang saying about being part of Chinese and American cultures? Provide an example of something Jin does at the end of the comic to support your claim.

American Idol Allusion:



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iOS5EITWmi8>

8. How do the judges/America respond to William Hung?

9. This comic came out 2 years after William Hung’s fame. Now that you have seen the audition and people’s response to him, what is Yang saying about American culture through this panel?