



## Discussion Questions for **ONLY ONE YEAR**

by **Andrea Cheng**  
illustrated by **Nicole Wong**

1. At the beginning of *Only One Year*, Mama tells Sharon that Di Di is going to China for a year to be taken care of by relatives. Sharon asks why a babysitter or day care center can't just watch him. What is Mama's response? Do you agree with what Mama says? Why or why not?
2. Do you have family that lives in another city or country? Have you ever gone to visit them? If so, what was it like?
3. How do you think Di Di felt when he arrived in China? Why?
4. The family keeps a photo album of each child's stay in China. How does Di Di's album help Sharon and Mary after he has left?
5. Sharon and her family speak both English and Chinese. How does this affect their interactions with one another, especially after Di Di returns from China? If people in your family speak more than one language, under what circumstances is each language spoken?
6. In the chapter "Photos" (page 13), why don't Sharon's grandparents want Mama to buy them a computer and digital camera? Why do you think they feel the way they do? If your grandparents don't have these items, how do you think they would react to such an offer? Why?
7. In the chapter "School Shoes" (page 16), Sharon picks out a pair of slippers while Mama picks out sturdy shoes. Why do Sharon and her mother disagree? Can you remember a time shopping when you wanted to get one thing and an adult thought you should get something else? What happened?

8. In the same chapter, why does looking at shoes for toddlers make Sharon and Mary sad?
9. In the chapter “Getting Ready” (page 20), Mary is nervous about starting first grade. How did you feel before your first day of school, or before your first day at a new school? If you were nervous or scared, what made you feel better?
10. In the chapter “First Day” (page 23), what does Sharon say when Isabelle asks where Di Di is? Why?
11. During the year Di Di is away, Sharon and Mary build a miniature house, and after Di Di returns, they make him a book for his first day of preschool. What do you learn about Sharon and Mary from the descriptions in the book of how they create and work on these projects?
12. In the chapter “Home Again” (page 45), Mama compares two apple slices on a plate to America and China and says, “They are far apart, but they are all in one circle, like our family.” What do you think Mama means by this?
13. Why does Di Di cry so much when he gets back home from China? Why does Sharon cry? Find a passage in the book that shows how Sharon feels.
14. In “The Playground” (page 53), Sharon says, “Di Di cries too much. I wish he had stayed in China.” Why does she say this? What does she really mean? Have you ever said something you didn’t mean when you were upset or angry? Do you wish to tell us what you said and why?
15. Even though Sharon, Mary, and Di Di fight sometimes, they love each other. Find some passages in the book that let readers know this is true.
16. The Author’s Note at the end of *Only One Year* provides some background about the story. What are some reasons the author gives for why parents might choose to send their children far away from their immediate families to spend time with relatives in another country?

#### **ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR**

**Andrea Cheng** has written numerous books for young readers. Cheng hopes her books will help readers understand the role different cultural customs play in the ways loving families raise their children. Cheng lives in Cincinnati, Ohio. You can find her online at [andreacheng.com](http://andreacheng.com).

**Nicole Wong** is a full-time illustrator with a BFA degree from the Rhode Island School of Design. Her illustrations have appeared in magazines and several children's educational and trade books. Wong was drawn to the story in *Only One Year* because it presents a Chinese American experience that is different from her own. She lives in Fall River, Massachusetts. Wong's Web site is [nicole-wong.com](http://nicole-wong.com).

### **Book Information**

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(Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula)

Interest Level: Grades 2-5

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### **RESOURCES ON THE WEB**

Learn more about *Only One Year* at

[http://www.leeandlow.com/books/380/hc/only\\_one\\_year](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/380/hc/only_one_year)

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