



RICK RIORDAN PRESENTS



# Winston Chu

## *vs. the Whimsies*

BY NEW YORK TIMES BEST-SELLING AUTHOR

**STACEY LEE**

**EDUCATOR'S GUIDE**

Disney • HYPERION



# WINSTON CHU VS. THE WHIMSIES

## ABOUT THE BOOK

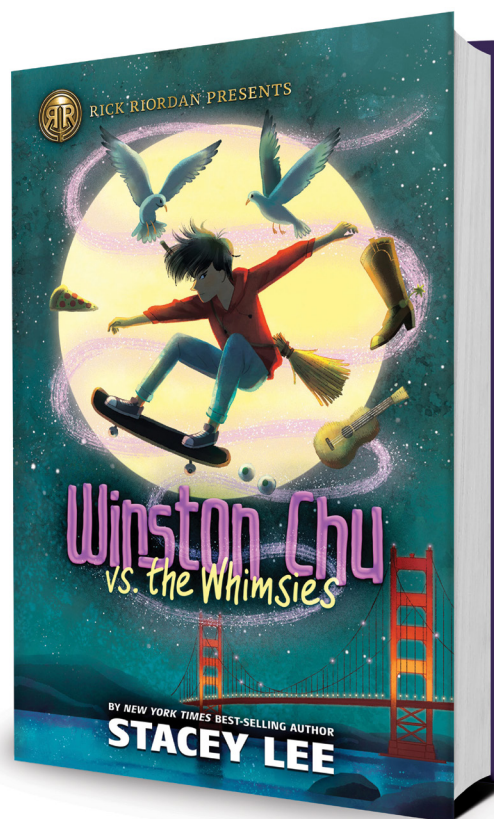
Best-selling author Rick Riordan presents best-selling author Stacey Lee's modern reimagining of a classic Chinese folktale—replete with magic, boba, and lots of trash talking.

Twelve-year-old Winston Chu is supposed to learn impulse control at the cooking academy his mom enrolled him in. But learning to think before he acts won't happen overnight.

While skateboarding home with a pie in hand, Winston inadvertently stops a robbery at Mr. Pang's Whimsies, an oddities shop in Chinatown. As a reward, Mr. Pang invites Winston to choose any item in the store. But the strange old man warns Winston to browse carefully, for the first thing Winston touches will be the thing he gets. Before Winston can decide, a magpie flies under a shelf, and he impulsively grabs an old broom to sweep it out.

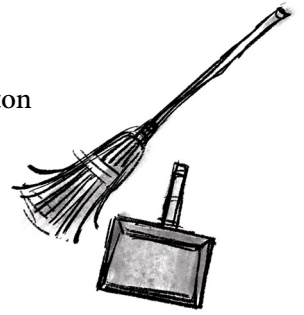
Mr. Pang hands him the broom, along with a dustpan. "Two for one. Congratulations." Deflated, Winston returns home, determined to put the broom incident behind him. Or at least in the closet. But when some of his most beloved possessions go missing, all Winston can think about are the broom and dustpan. Did they somehow take his stuff? And what—or who—will they dispose of next?

It's time to break into Mr. Pang's Whimsies, where clearly there's more going on than meets the far-seeing eyeball. It's time to fight magic with magic. And this time, Winston better have a plan.



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Do you believe in luck? Has anything ever happened to you that you think was due to good luck or bad luck? Explain.
2. Do you have a good luck charm or a phrase you think to yourself, like “knock on wood” to ward off bad luck? Do you have any traditions or customs that you believe bring good luck (like Winston’s mom serving fish on Lunar New Year). Elaborate. To study this topic in more detail, see the first activity listed under the section titled “Extend the Learning & Make Connections.”
3. Compare the four best friends in the novel. How are they similar, and how are they different?
4. Mr. Pang’s deep pockets seem to hold more than normal pockets. If you had pockets like Mr. Pang, what would you keep in them?
5. Do you think it was a good idea for Winston and his friends to enter Mr. Pang’s shop? Why or why not?
6. What are some clues that Mr. Pang is a bit strange? Think about what he says when he first meets Winston and his friends.
7. Describe Mr. Pang’s shop. Is it what you expected? Why or why not?
8. Name three items in Mr. Pang’s shop that seem unusual. Describe what they are and predict how they can be more than what they appear to be on the surface.
9. Winston considered getting the Luke Skywalker trading card to help with the rent and the Warm Fuzzies Ukulele to help Coco with her teething. What does this reveal about Winston? Elaborate.
10. Out of everything that Winston saw at Mr. Pang’s Whimsies shop, what would you have grabbed first? Explain why you’d choose this object and how you would use it.
11. Winston was disappointed that he was given a broom and dust pan from Mr. Pang’s shop. He said that it felt like losing “a tournament [they’d] been favored to win” (p. 25). Describe a time when things didn’t go quite the way you had hoped. How did you deal with it?
12. Winston said that he “wasn’t even cheered by [his] favorite boba drink” (p. 25). Do you have a special drink, food, or activity that makes you feel better when you’re having a bad day?
13. When Cassa looked up Mr. Pang on the internet, she discovered an obituary about Ross Pang. Do you think this obituary is the Mr. Pang they met? If you think he is the same Mr. Pang, do you think there’s a reasonable explanation for who he is, or do you think there’s a supernatural explanation? Explain.
14. Describe each member of Winston’s family. What is his relationship with each of them like?
15. In Chapter 5, you learn more about Winston’s father. What happened to his father? How does he feel about him? What emotions does Winston feel when he thinks about his father?
16. In Chapter 5, there are hints that something a bit strange is happening in his room. Name at least two things that don’t seem normal.





17. At the end of Chapter 5, Winston discovers information about Mr. Pang that should really concern him. What information does Shaggy share with him about Mr. Pang?
18. In Chapter 6, we are introduced to Monroe. Who is he, and what favor does he want from Winston?
19. At the end of Chapter 6, Winston and his friends discover something shocking about Mr. Pang's shop. What did they learn about the shop, and whom do they run into?
20. In Chapter 7, it becomes clear that Mr. Pang's shop is not a normal one. What do Winston and his friends learn about the shop and the objects in the shop?
21. In Chapter 7, Coco flips to a page about brooms in her favorite book, *Tales from the Middle Kingdom*. What information hints at what the broom can do?
22. What do you think happened to Babar the plushy and Lucky the goldfish? It's okay to make guesses as long as they are plausible.
23. What talent does Winston pretend he has? Why? Have you ever stretched the truth a little to impress someone? Explain.
24. In Chapter 9, Coco seems different. Describe how she's different. What does Winston think happened to her?
25. Winston tries to convince Philippa that Coco's not the same. What evidence does he use to persuade her? Does Philippa believe Winston? How do you know?
26. Winston has a theory on who the two spirits are that appeared in the laundry closet. Who does he think they are? Do you agree or disagree with him?
27. In Chapter 14, Winston and his friends met with Mr. Suresh, and they learned that Mr. Pang's shop used to be a different business called Dream Castle. They learned that Dream Castle caught fire due to a random lightning strike. Winston and his friends don't believe that the lightning was random. Can you infer what they think is the cause of the lightning?
28. In Chapter 15, Winston and his friends ran into the flood specialists who came to inspect the building. Who are they really?
29. In Chapter 15, Winston discovers what happened to Coco. Whom did he talk to, and what does she reveal about Mr. Pang, Putty, the dust pan, Chang-Ah-Ling, and the lightning bolt?
30. What does the following statement mean: "Always looking right when he should've been looking left" (p. 133)? This does not have to be a literal interpretation. Think figuratively. Have you ever found yourself figuratively "looking right" when you should have been "looking left"? Explain.
31. How does Not-Coco fool Winston's mom and sister? How does she act around them compared to how she acts around Winston?
32. What creepy thing does Not-Coco say to Winston at the end of Chapter 16? How would you react if a family member or friend acted like Not-Coco?



33. If you had a sibling that was taken over by another being, what would you do? How would you handle it? Would you tell someone? Why or why not?
34. Is there someone or something in your life that you would go to the ends of the earth to protect or look for? Explain.
35. If a parent, sibling, or relative gave away something you owned by accident, how would you react? Explain.
36. In Chapter 17, Not-Coco tries to get Winston in trouble for something he didn't do. Have you ever been in a situation when someone tried to blame you for something you didn't do? How did you deal with it?
37. When Winston tells his mom that Coco has been possessed, how does she react? How would you react if someone told you that your sibling (or friend if you don't have a sibling) was possessed?
38. Dani tells Winston that her umbrella is an "anti-rain charm" (p. 144). What does she mean? In what ways is her umbrella special? Why do you think it never rains when she has her umbrella? Make some guesses.
39. What does Mav discover about the chocolate kitty Peep that got stuck to his shirt? What does he think it can do?
40. In Chapter 18, Winston and his friends pay a visit to Micelli's Cakes. Remember that Micelli's Cakes used to be where Mr. Pang's shop was before these owners moved to Fisherman's Wharf. What do they learn about the Micellis' time there? What strange things did Mr. Micelli use to see and hear? What do you think of Mr. Micelli's experience at his old shop?
41. In Chapter 19, Winston and his friends make plans to break into Mr. Pang's shop. How do they plan to do this without any of the parents finding out? Explain their plans for that evening.
42. In Chapter 20, they manage to find Mr. Pang's shop but are stopped by Mr. Pang's security system. Explain how Mr. Pang's security system is not your typical, ordinary system.
43. If you could design your own security system to protect your house or your room, what features would you invent?
44. In Chapter 21, we discover Mr. Pang's real identity. Explain how Winston and his friends found out the truth and who or what Mr. Pang really is.
45. Explain how Winston and his friends work together to catch the magpie. Discuss the steps they take.
46. Winston and his friends couldn't have captured the magpie without teamwork. Discuss the benefits of teamwork and how working together can help you in class and in life.
47. In Chapter 23, Cassa reveals many of her innermost feelings. What does she confess, and what does it reveal about her?
48. Many times we feel stressed and could use a Brain Strainer to reduce our worries. Would you want a Brain Strainer for your own use? Are there things in your life that cause you worries or stress?
49. Philippa and Winston talk to Vic to make sense of their dad's death and to get some answers. What do they learn from Vic? Do you blame Vic for what happened? Why or why not?
50. Do you think Monroe and Philippa would make a good couple? Why or why not?







- 51.** Mr. Pang's popcorn machine doesn't make popcorn. What is it really for?
- 52.** Bijal found a box in Mr. Pang's shop that was addressed to two people. What's in the box, and whom do the items belong to?
- 53.** In Chapter 27, we learn that Winston and his friends each took an item from Mr. Pang's shop. What did they take? How could these items help them?
- 54.** After Winston and his friends return Anna's bracelet, Anna tells them that her bracelet "looks dead" (p. 225). What does she mean? What happens to the objects that are put into Mr. Pang's "popcorn" machine?
- 55.** At the end of Chapter 27, Mav's mom calls him and delivers some bad news. What happened to the magpie?
- 56.** Winston and his friends are very tight-knit, and it's obvious they would do anything for each other. Do you have someone in your life (family or friends) whom you can also count on? Explain.
- 57.** After Winston lost the Far-Seeing Eyeballs, he became very upset and took it out on his friends. When he realized that he was being unreasonable, how did Winston try to patch things up between him and his friends?
- 58.** All of us have gotten mad at someone we cared about and acted less than ideal. Share about a time when you have acted similarly. How could you have approached the situation better?
- 59.** In Chapter 31, we get confirmation that Dani's umbrella is special. Explain Winston's theory of how it works and how he knew.
- 60.** Where did Chef Kim say she got Dani's umbrella?
- 61.** Now that you know what many of Mr. Pang's whimsical items can do, which one would you want to have, and why?
- 62.** If you could turn anything in your home into a magical item like the things in Mr. Pang's shop, what would you choose, and what special powers would you give it?
- 63.** What is Not-Coco afraid of? How did Winston discover this secret?
- 64.** When Winston interrogates Not-Coco, what does he learn about what happened to his real sister?
- 65.** Not-Coco managed to get Winston in trouble even though she was holding the lighter. Why do you think she got away with it?
- 66.** Winston discovers that the Pikachu he took from Mr. Pang's shop has a special ability. What can it do? Would you want to keep it? Why or why not?
- 67.** In Chapter 32, Winston admits to the class that he lied about being able to play the ukulele. Would you have done the same in his shoes? Why or why not?
- 68.** What do they discover about the seagulls that keep appearing in the novel?
- 69.** What happened when Winston tried to use the Far-Seeing Eyeballs in class? Who took them, and how does he plan to get them back?
- 70.** Why did Philippa start believing Winston's story about Mr. Pang?
- 71.** When did Philippa realize that Not-Coco was not her sister? Explain.
- 72.** In Chapter 34, Winston and Philippa discover where Coco is. Explain what they find out.



73. Who is Sorrow, and how is he connected to Cloud Weaver and the cowherd? Explain the background of the story and how Mr. Pang became human.
74. Philippa, Winston, and his friends decide to join forces with Cloud Weaver and Cowherd and confront Mr. Pang. Explain their plan. Do you trust Cloud Weaver and Cowherd? Why or why not?
75. Do you think the plan they created is a good plan? Why or why not?
76. The Mischief Mustache turns out to be on Winston's side. How did it help him? Explain.
77. How do Winston and Philippa come to terms with their dad's death? Explain.
78. Explain how Winston and his friends elicit help from the Ask-Me-Anything Beethoven Busts.
79. In Chapter 37 and 38, when Winston and his friends are in Mr. Pang's shop, they run into many different problems. Name at least three of the challenges they face and explain how they deal with each one.
80. How do Winston and his friends escape from Mr. Pang's shop?
81. Winston and his friends face one obstacle after another. How does Dani help them? Why do they need her?
82. Winston's dad's dog tags have special powers. Explain what these tags can do.
83. Mr. Pang and Mirth have a long history. What do we learn about the two of them and why they don't get along?
84. Where did Dani's aunt buy the umbrella, and how is Mr. Pang connected to the person who sold the umbrella to Dani's aunt?
85. Who does Ernie and Bert work for?
86. Who is Mirth in human form?
87. Who created the hissing squirrels, and why were they created?
88. Why does Mr. Pang need the moon's qi? What can it do? What are Mr. Pang's plans?
89. What does Mr. Pang threaten to do with Coco?
90. Winston and his friends put their soccer skills to use. How do they use these skills to save Coco and keep her away from Mr. Pang?
91. How does Winston use Pikachu to prevent Mr. Pang from taking the moon's qi?
92. How do Winston and his friends trick Mr. Pang at the end of Chapter 41?
93. What happens if the unicorn piñatas get wet?
94. What is the sea monster Winston and his friends fear? What does it turn out to be? How does it save them?
95. Why did Mr. Pang chose the Chu family to accomplish his plans? What's so special about them?
96. How does Cloud Weaver help get the real Coco back into her body? Explain what happened.
97. What do you think of the ending?
98. How does the Chu family find closure with their loss?



# CHARACTER PROFILE

Have students choose a character they want to analyze or evenly assign students different characters. Have each student work on a character profile. When they're done, have them form small groups so that different characters are represented. Students then take turns presenting their character profile to the group.

## CHARACTER PROFILE

*Name of Character*

DESCRIPTIVE ADJECTIVE	DESCRIPTIVE ADJECTIVE	DESCRIPTIVE ADJECTIVE
SUPPORTING QUOTE	SUPPORTING QUOTE	SUPPORTING QUOTE
EXPLANATION OF CHOSEN QUOTE	EXPLANATION OF CHOSEN QUOTE	EXPLANATION OF CHOSEN QUOTE



# WINSTON'S FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Winston seems to have different relationships with each member of his family. Examine how he treats them or how they treat him. Complete this graphic organizer to create a full picture.

## WINSTON'S FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

<b>CLAIM</b> (DESCRIBE WINSTON'S RELATIONSHIP WITH HIS MOM.)	>	<b>SUPPORTING QUOTE</b>	>	<b>EXPLANATION OF CHOSEN QUOTE</b>
<b>CLAIM</b> (DESCRIBE WINSTON'S RELATIONSHIP WITH PHILIPPA.)	>	<b>SUPPORTING QUOTE</b>	>	<b>EXPLANATION OF CHOSEN QUOTE</b>
<b>CLAIM</b> (DESCRIBE WINSTON'S RELATIONSHIP WITH COCO.)	>	<b>SUPPORTING QUOTE</b>	>	<b>EXPLANATION OF CHOSEN QUOTE</b>

# MR. PANG'S WHIMSIES

What kinds of whimsical items does Mr. Pang sell in his store? Let's make a list of his inventory!

NAME OF ITEM AND EXPLAIN WHAT IT DOES	>	ILLUSTRATION: MAKE A SKETCH OF WHAT YOU THINK THIS ITEM LOOKS LIKE
NAME OF ITEM AND EXPLAIN WHAT IT DOES	>	ILLUSTRATION: MAKE A SKETCH OF WHAT YOU THINK THIS ITEM LOOKS LIKE
NAME OF ITEM AND EXPLAIN WHAT IT DOES	>	ILLUSTRATION: MAKE A SKETCH OF WHAT YOU THINK THIS ITEM LOOKS LIKE
NAME OF ITEM AND EXPLAIN WHAT IT DOES	>	ILLUSTRATION: MAKE A SKETCH OF WHAT YOU THINK THIS ITEM LOOKS LIKE



# EXTEND THE LEARNING & MAKE CONNECTIONS

1. As an introductory activity, read “12 of the Most Fascinating Good Luck Charms from Around the World” ([www.rd.com/list/good-luck-charms](http://www.rd.com/list/good-luck-charms)). Discussion questions: What do you think of these different good luck charms? Have you ever used any of them? Do you do anything to encourage good luck: say a mantra, follow a routine, or carry a charm?
2. To build background knowledge and help students visualize San Francisco, have them explore this “Welcome to San Francisco” guide ([www.sftravel.com](http://www.sftravel.com)). Taking it further: Break students into groups and assign different topics on this website to each group like “Things to Do,” “Eat & Drink,” “Golden Gate Bridge,” “Alcatraz,” etc. Have each group create a slide deck highlighting what they learned about their topic. Jigsaw activity: Have a representative from each topic form a new group with students who all read something different. Each representative will take on the role of an ambassador to share what they learned with other ambassadors.
3. Have students create a welcome guide to their hometown. They can build a website using Google Sites, Wix, or Weebly. Alternatively, they can create it using Google Slides, Canva, or on paper. In this guide, students should include similar topics like the “Welcome to San Francisco” guide: “Things to Do,” “Where to Eat,” “Where to Stay,” ([www.sftravel.com](http://www.sftravel.com)) etc.
4. Watch these short videos to learn about the Cloud Weaver and Cowherd: *Miscellaneous Myths: The Cowherd And The Weaver Girl* ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=NphDVU1rmRw](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NphDVU1rmRw)) and *The Myth of the Original Star-Crossed Lovers* ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=s\\_TGkDcjBqI](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s_TGkDcjBqI)).
5. Watch this short video to learn about qi: *What Is Qi? A Simple Explanation* ([www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtjZ1E8WdA0](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gtjZ1E8WdA0)).
6. Create a timeline of important events from this novel. For each event on the timeline, have students write a justification for their choices.

## COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1, 8.1, 9.1, 10.1, 11.1, 12.1  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2, 8.2, 9.2, 10.2, 11.2, 12.2  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3, 8.3, 9.3, 10.3, 11.3, 12.3  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.9  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.7, 8.7, 9.7, 10.7, 11.7, 12.7  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.9, 8.9, 10.9, 11.9, 12.9  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1, 8.1, 9.1, 10.1, 11.1, 12.1  
CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.A, 8.1.A, 9.1.A, 10.1.A, 11.1.A, 12.1A



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

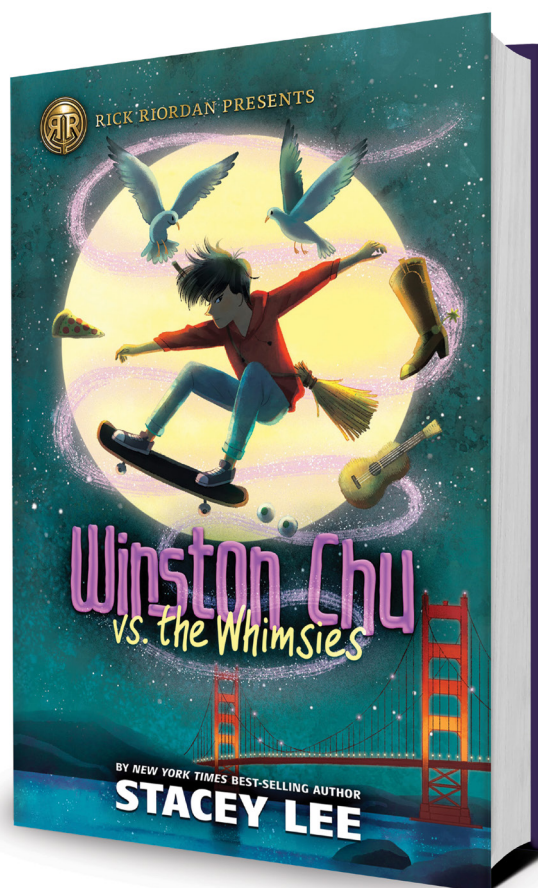
Stacey Lee is the *New York Times* and Indie best-selling author of historical and contemporary young adult fiction, including *The Downstairs Girl*, a Reese's Book Club Late Summer 2021 YA pick, and her most recent novel, *Luck of the Titanic*, which received five starred reviews. A native of Southern California and fourth-generation Chinese American, she is a founder of the We Need Diverse Books movement and writes stories for all kids (even the ones who look like adults). Stacey loves board games, has perfect pitch, and, through some mutant gene, can smell musical notes through her nose.



Photo Credit: Jerrick Mitra



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