

# American born chinese essay (critical writing)



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The graphic novel American Born Chinese was published by Gene Luen Yang in 2006, and quickly won the author and the colorist who took part in its creation fame. The reason for extreme popularity of the book seems to be in the topics explored by the American Chinese person who gets a deeper insight into what it means to be someone a person really does not represent.

The work is dedicated to the gap drawn between the Chinese and American people, even in case the former are American-born. More than that, the book is also about the gap between Chinese – those residing in China, or coming as immigrants to the USA, as compared to those born in the United States.

As one can see, there are many allegories in the work indicating the discrepancy between self-perception of Chinese, and perception that Americans adopt towards them.

The first allegory used in the book is the one of the Monkey King who was a great person, who was recognized by gods from the very first moment of his birth, and who worked restlessly on the improvement of his skills and strength to build a strong kingdom and to become a deity for his people (Yang 7-9). However, as soon as Monkey King decided to attend the party of gods he was rejected because he was a monkey and had no shoes.

The present story is very educative regarding the stereotypes attitude of one category of people towards others – no matter how great one is, and how much he or she is honored by his own nation, he will never be recognized equally by another society (it may seem an allegory for the Chinese coming to the USA – no matter how educated and intelligent they are, they will still never gain equal recognition and respect from Americans.

Another story is about the boy whose name is Jin Wang; he is a typical representative of the Chinese culture, though he is an American born Chinese - he eats with chopsticks, and the teacher who introduces him to the new class does not even try to find out where he is from, stating that Jin moved to their neighborhood from China, though he actually came from San Francisco (Yang 30).

The stereotypical attitude of the teacher is also felt in the fact that she does not try to dismiss the question about eating dogs from Jin's classmates, and assumes that Jin's family has probably seized the practice when moving to the USA (Yang 30).

Finally, Jin reveals the shame he has about being Chinese when the new boy from Taiwan asks him in Chinese, and hears " You are in America. Speak English" (Yang 37). Hence, Jin shows that he has accepted the American style of life (at first he ate dumplings with chopsticks, but then the reader sees him eat a typical American sandwich, after mocking of schoolboys) (Yang 32, 37).

The third story is also a representation of hardships Chinese have in the USA, no matter whether they are American born or not. Jin who experiences constant mispronunciation of his name realizes that he will never be treated well until he replaces a Chinese name with an American one: "" A new face deserved a new name.

I decided to call myself...Danny" (Yang 198). However, the morale of this part is that the name is only a superficial representation of one's self, and changing the name will never help an individual change his or her essence,

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still remaining a Chinese. The gap is even wider between Americans and Chinese when the former see how the latter try to resemble them, and reject their effort (returning to the Monkey King's topic - his might and grandeur was never appreciated by deities, as they pointed at his being a monkey).

Drawing a conclusion from the present response paper, one has to pay attention to the central figure introduced by Yang - the supreme deity Tze-Yo-Tzuh. The present deity has a symbolic name meaning ' he who is'; therefore, the topic of the book becomes transparent - people in the USA have long ago forgotten about getting those they really are, as they try to make an impression on others, they try to be better than they are, as a result losing their identity, their history and culture, as well as their pride.

Being the one a person really is represents a luxury not everyone, but only supreme deities may afford, which is highly allegoric of the American nation refusing to accept immigrants and forgetting that they are actually an initially immigrant nation with the only difference - they came only a couple of centuries earlier.

Yang, Gene Luen. American Born Chinese. New York: Square Fish, 2006.