



INTRODUCTION

Think about and/or discuss these questions:

1. In many cultures, it has been traditional for a couple to want sons. What might some of the reasons be behind this preference? Are sons still preferred today? Discuss.
2. Is there a special ceremony or party after a baby is born in your country? Who participates? What happens? Are there different ceremonies for boys and girls?
3. How many children do you think make a "perfect-sized" family? Explain why.
4. In your country, are babies generally born at home or in a hospital?
5. In your culture, what are some of the reasons a man might divorce his wife or a wife divorce her husband?
6. In your country, are men and women allowed to work together? Live in the same space? Eat together? Touch?

LIBRARY / INTERNET TASKS

Before you read the story:

1. Find a world map that shows countries where Islam is the main religion.
2. Find information about how Muslim men and women dress in different Islamic countries.

Amina

Shirley Saad

Shirley Saad was born in Egypt to a Polish-Romanian mother and a Lebanese father. She was educated by Irish nuns. She has always felt torn between her European heritage and education, and her Arab origins and environment. She has written many short stories about the lives of women in the Arab world.

The bold words should be learned. The numbered words are explained to help you understand the story. Some words have more than one meaning. The meaning we give is the closest synonym.

- 1 bouncing: very active
- 2 *Allah yi barek fi omrek* (Arabic): May God send blessings to your life
- 3 scattered: ran in different directions
- 4 peek through: take a quick look
- 5 partition: division in a room
- 6 *majilis* (Arabic): areas where men and women sit separately
- 7 sipping: drinking in small quantities
- 8 bustle: running around
- 9 hennaed: painted with reddish-brown dye
- 10 turned out to be: to show a different side than what was expected

Amina opened her eyes and for a moment wondered where she was. Then she remembered and a **moan** escaped her lips. The English nurse hurried over and bent down, "Don't you worry now," she said. "You'll be fine and the baby is all right."

Amina asked, **not daring** to hope, "Is it a boy or a girl?"

"A girl," replied the nurse cheerfully. "A beautiful, bouncing¹, four kilograms girl. *Mabruk*, congratulations."

"*Allah yi barek fi omrek*?" murmured Amina as she **sank back** on her pillows. Another girl!

What a **catastrophe**. What would happen to her now? She had brought four girls into the world, four girls in six years of marriage. She felt tears running down her cheeks, and she remembered how proud and happy she had been when her mother had told her she was engaged to be married.

She had seen Hamid twice, once at her cousin's house when he arrived **unexpectedly**. The girls all scattered³ to their quarters to put on their **masks and veils**. The next time, he came with his father to ask for her hand in marriage. The houseboy serving the coffee told the Indian housegirl who in turn ran and told her mistress. So, she had gone to peek through⁴ the partition⁵ between the men's and women's *majilis*⁶. She saw Hamid and his father sipping⁷ coffee and being congratulated by all the men in the family. They **embraced** and rubbed noses, big smiles on everyone's faces.

- ☞ Why does Amina cry after the birth of her baby?
- ☞ When does she see her husband before they are married?
- ☞ What do the girls do when Hamid arrives at her house?

Amina remembered her wedding, the noise and the bustle⁸, her hennaed⁹ hands and feet, the whispers among the older women which frightened her and the **anticipation**. Finally, she found herself alone with this stranger, who had turned out to be¹⁰ very kind and gentle and **considerate**.

Well, there would be no henna and celebration for this girl. God, why couldn't she have a boy? Just one, that's all she wanted, just one little baby boy. She wished the **midwife** hadn't told her when she **had the miscarriage** that it had been a boy. The only one in six years and she had to go and lose it. It was her fault too. She had no business climbing a ladder at five months. She slipped and fell and the doctors kept her in the hospital for a week, then told her she was all right and could go home. But there was no movement, no life, so she went back to the hospital and after two weeks of tests and X-rays and hope and **despair**, they finally decided the baby was dead.

moan: long, low, sad sound

not daring: afraid

sank back: laid back, reclined

catastrophe: terrible thing, disaster

unexpectedly: as a surprise

masks and veils: cloth coverings for the face and head

embraced: put their arms around each other

anticipation: excitement about what is coming

considerate: thoughtful of others

midwife: woman who helps at childbirth

had the miscarriage: had the baby too early

despair: deep unhappiness

After that she had two more girls, and now the fourth.

Would Hamid divorce her? Would he take a second wife? His older brother had been pressing for¹¹ two years, urging¹² him to take a second wife. Hamid loved Amina and his daughters, but he was human. He did have all that money and the social and political position and no boy to leave it to.

Her mother came in, then her sisters-in-law. Each one kissed her and said, "*Mabruk*¹³," but she could tell they were not really happy. Her mother was especially fearful for her daughter's future and felt that some of the **disgrace** fell on her and the family too. The sisters-in-law were secretly jubilant¹⁴, because they had boys. Hamid's social **status** and half his fortune would revert to¹⁵ their own sons if he never had boys of his own. Of course, he was still young and he and Amina might try again. But for the moment the in-laws felt **reassured** and falsely commiserated¹⁶ with Amina on her bad luck.

"It's God's will," they murmured, smiling under their masks. Their mouths were sad but Amina could see the **twinkle** in their eyes. "God's will be done."

- ☞ What happens to Amina in her second pregnancy?
- ☞ What advice does Hamid receive from his older brother?
- ☞ What is Amina's mother afraid of?
- ☞ What do Amina's sisters-in-law hope?

Friends started coming into the room. They kissed Amina and said, "*Mabruk*," then sat on the floor, cross-legged. Arranging their robes around them, they sipped coffee from little thimble cups¹⁷, eating fruits and sweets.

Her cousin Huda came too. She wore a long, velvet dress, embroidered¹⁸ on the sides and bodice¹⁹, loose and flowing, to conceal her **belly**. She was in the sixth month and looked radiantly serene²⁰.

Amina thought **bitterly**, "She already has two daughters and three sons. What does she need another baby for? She's not so young anymore."

As if she read her thoughts, Huda said, "This is my last baby. It will be a baby for my old age. The others are married or away at school all day. An empty house is a sad house. You need many sons and daughters to keep your husband happy. You are still young, Amina. God has given you four daughters, maybe the next four will be boys, God's will be done."

"As God wills it, so be it," **murmured** the other ladies smugly²¹.

disgrace:
social failure, disapproval

status: position, rank

reassured: free from anxiety

twinkle: small, bright light

11 pressing for:
speaking urgently

12 urging: insisting

13 *mabruk* (Arabic):
congratulations

14 jubilant: very happy

15 revert to: return to

16 commiserated:
sympathized

17 thimble cups:
very small cups

18 embroidered:
decorated with
stitched designs

19 bodice:
top part of a dress

20 radiantly serene:
shining with
peaceful happiness

21 smugly:
with self-satisfaction

belly: stomach

bitterly:
with anger and sadness

murmured: whispered

- 22 deferentially:
with polite respect
- 23 repudiated:
rejected, divorced
- 24 burst into:
suddenly began
- 25 crows:
large, noisy, black birds
- 26 eager for: excited for
- 27 solicitously:
with love and concern
- 28 year's reprieve:
a year of delay,
temporary relief

Hamid came in and the ladies all stood up deferentially²², and **hastily** went into the next room. The maid served them more coffee.

hastily: quickly

Hamid looked at his wife, tried to smile and searched for something nice to say. He thought she must be tired, disappointed, ashamed of having failed him one more time and afraid of being repudiated²³.

He sat down near the bed and said, "Well, mother of my children, we will just have to try again, won't we?"

Amina burst into²⁴ tears of sorrow, shame, and relief.

"Don't cry," he said, **distressed**. "The important thing is that you and the girls are in good health," he said smiling. "As long as we are young we will try again, eh?"

distressed: upset

Amina **blushed** under her mask and pulled her veil around her face. He patted her hand, got up, and left the room.

blushed: turned red

The ladies came rushing back in, like a flock of crows²⁵, eager for²⁶ the news, good or bad.

Amina's mother said solicitously²⁷, "What did he say, my daughter?" He said better luck next time, Mother!"

The mother let out a sigh of relief. They had another year's reprieve²⁸. The women congratulated Amina and left to spread the news.

Amina sank back on her pillows and **drifted off to sleep**.

drifted off to sleep:
slowly went to sleep

- ↻ Why is Amina's cousin Huda having another baby?
- ↻ Why does Amina start crying?
- ↻ What is most important to Hamid?
- ↻ What is Hamid's solution?

EXPLORING THE STORY

AN ACTIVITY FOR GROUP DISCUSSION, HOMEWORK, OR YOUR JOURNAL

A good writer will not only describe interesting characters and an interesting plot—what happens in the story—but will also provide extra ideas or opinions that are not always easy to see.

Read the questions below and think about them. Always go back to the story to explain your answers.

1. Why do you think the author begins the story with the contrast of the cheerful English nurse and Amina's tears?
2. Why does Amina accept the blame for having only daughters?
3. Consider the other characters in the story. Who gives Amina support? Who does not and why? Who is her best ally (supporter)?
4. Choose five adjectives that describe Hamid. Explain your choices.

EXPLORING THE VOCABULARY

Complete the following sentences with bold words from the story. Change the form of the word when necessary.

1. In some countries, a man and woman cannot _____ in the street.
2. I felt such _____ when I failed my driving test again.
3. The girl _____ when he told others how much he loved her.
4. They could see the _____ of candles in the window.
5. In a hospital ward, patients sometimes _____ in pain.
6. An earthquake can be a _____ for highly populated areas.
7. In some countries, copying your friend's answers at school is a _____.
8. He _____ an excuse to the teacher as he arrived late to class.
9. When Susan heard the sad news, she was _____.

Now choose ten of the numbered words and write a sentence for each one. You may copy sentences from your dictionary.

EXPLORING THE LANGUAGE

LANGUAGE CHUNKS

Many students like to learn fixed expressions (words that usually go together) and then use these "chunks" of language in speaking or writing. This kind of learning is very common when you learn your first language. We recommend that you learn these language chunks.

Here is a list of chunks from "Amina." Study them. They are explained in the margins of the story.

sank back	turned out to be
peek through	burst into
pressing for	revert to
year's reprieve	eager for
drifted off	



The USA

The United Kingdom

Sweden

Antigua

Jamaica

Nigeria

Ghana

200



Japan

Korea

The Middle East

India

Vietnam

Singapore

Botswana

EXPLORING THE VOCABULARY

Complete the following sentences with bold words from the story.
Change the form of the word when necessary.

1. In some countries, a man and woman cannot _____ in the street.
2. I felt such _____ when I failed my driving test again.
3. The girl _____ when he told others how much he loved her.
4. They could see the _____ of candles in the window.
5. In a hospital ward, patients sometimes _____ in pain.
6. An earthquake can be a _____ for highly populated areas.
7. In some countries, copying your friend's answers at school is a _____.
8. He _____ an excuse to the teacher as he arrived late to class.
9. When Susan heard the sad news, she was _____.

Now choose ten of the numbered words and write a sentence for each one. You may copy sentences from your dictionary.

EXPLORING THE LANGUAGE

LANGUAGE CHUNKS

Many students like to learn fixed expressions (words that usually go together) and then use these "chunks" of language in speaking or writing. This kind of learning is very common when you learn your first language. We recommend that you learn these language chunks.

Here is a list of chunks from "Amina." Study them. They are explained in the margins of the story.

sank back	turned out to be
peek through	burst into
pressing for	revert to
year's reprieve	eager for
drifted off	

Now complete these sentences with one of the expressions, changing the form of the words when necessary.

1. Everyone was _____ the dance contest to begin.
2. Of all the participants, most of the crowd was _____ the couple wearing green shirts to win.
3. At the sound of the music, the dancers _____ action. They danced as if they were on fire!
4. Who would win? As good as the couple wearing green looked, everyone's attention kept _____ the dancers in purple.
5. Unexpectedly, the judges took hours to decide. It _____ the longest dance contest in history!

EXPLORING THE WRITING

ITALICS

Italics are used in a text for different reasons:

1. To indicate the title of a book, movie, song, or newspaper.
The title of this book is *Views and Voices*.
2. To indicate the name of a ship, car, plane or any other vehicle.
He sailed to England on *The Empire Windrush*.
3. To put an emphasis on a word or group of words. In this unit, the directions for the exercises are italicized (written in italics).
4. To identify foreign words and phrases.
"Mabruk, congratulations."

Note that frequently the author will directly give you the meaning of the word, as in example 4. If not, you can often guess the meaning of a word or a phrase by its context (the information in the sentences around the italicized word). Of course, you should always look for clues in the text when you come across an English word that you don't know.

Look rapidly through the texts of Unit 5 and Unit 9. Write down the italicized words and check which of the above four categories they belong to.

22 deferentially:
with polite respect

23 repudiated:
rejected, divorced

24 burst into:
suddenly began

25 crows:
large, noisy, black birds

26 eager for: excited for

27 solicitously:
with love and concern

28 year's reprieve:
a year of delay,
temporary relief

Hamid came in and the ladies all stood up deferentially²², and **hastily** went into the next room. The maid served them more coffee. Hamid looked at his wife, tried to smile and searched for something nice to say. He thought she must be tired, disappointed, ashamed of having failed him one more time and afraid of being repudiated²³.

He sat down near the bed and said, "Well, mother of my children, we will just have to try again, won't we?"

Amina burst into²⁴ tears of sorrow, shame, and relief.

"Don't cry," he said, **distressed**. "The important thing is that you and the girls are in good health," he said smiling. "As long as we are young we will try again, eh?"

Amina **blushed** under her mask and pulled her veil around her face. He patted her hand, got up, and left the room.

The ladies came rushing back in, like a flock of crows²⁵, eager for²⁶ the news, good or bad.

Amina's mother said solicitously²⁷, "What did he say, my daughter?" He said better luck next time, Mother!"

The mother let out a sigh of relief. They had another year's reprieve²⁸. The women congratulated Amina and left to spread the news.

Amina sank back on her pillows and **drifted off to sleep**.

hastily: quickly

distressed: upset

blushed: turned red

drifted off to sleep:
slowly went to sleep

- ☞ Why is Amina's cousin Huda having another baby?
- ☞ Why does Amina start crying?
- ☞ What is most important to Hamid?
- ☞ What is Hamid's solution?

EXPLORING THE STORY

AN ACTIVITY FOR GROUP DISCUSSION, HOMEWORK, OR YOUR JOURNAL

A good writer will not only describe interesting characters and an interesting plot—what happens in the story—but will also provide extra ideas or opinions that are not always easy to see.

Read the questions below and think about them. Always go back to the story to explain your answers.

1. Why do you think the author begins the story with the contrast of the cheerful English nurse and Amina's tears?
2. Why does Amina accept the blame for having only daughters?
3. Consider the other characters in the story. Who gives Amina support? Who does not and why? Who is her best ally (supporter)?
4. Choose five adjectives that describe Hamid. Explain your choices.



INTRODUCTION

Think about and/or discuss these questions:

1. When parents divorce, what happens to the children?
Which parent should they live with?
2. At what age can children be told the truth about divorce?
3. Describe your favorite toys when you were little. Do you know who or what Pooh Bear is?
4. What kind of games and bedtime stories did you enjoy as a child?
Who played with you?

LIBRARY/INTERNET TASKS

Before you read the story:

1. Find out where Singapore is located, what languages are spoken there, and what the main cultures of Singapore are.
2. Find out why English is commonly used in Singapore.
3. Find out more about Winnie the Pooh (Pooh Bear), a famous character in English children's literature.

The Visit

Catherine Lim

Catherine Lim grew up in Malaysia and lives and writes in Singapore. She is Chinese and her first language is English. An author of many collections of short stories and novels, Catherine Lim's story "The Visit" is from her book *Or Else, The Lightning God and Other Stories*.

The bold words should be learned. The numbered words are explained to help you understand the story. Some words have more than one meaning. The meaning we give is the closest synonym.

Yen Li lay very still on his bed, his eyes tightly closed, his arms around Pooh Bear. He waited for his Daddy and Auntie Poh Har—he must remember to call her Mummy, otherwise his Daddy would have that angry look on his face again—he waited for them to leave the room, for he wanted to be by himself. But they **remained** sitting on his bed, talking in low tones¹ to each other and thinking he was asleep and couldn't hear them. But he heard everything, though he kept his eyes tightly closed and lay **perfectly** still.

remained: stayed

perfectly: completely

1 tones: sounds

- 2 sobbing: crying loudly
- 3 clucking:
making a sound
with her tongue

They were talking of his Mummy, he knew. They only talked of his Mummy when they thought he was asleep and not around, and once they talked of her when they thought he was out playing in the garden, but all the time he was behind them, in the little space behind the **curtains**, holding Pooh Bear tightly in his arms. He had stopped playing and talking to Pooh Bear when he heard them come into the room, and he had sat very still for the whole time that they were in the room. His Auntie Poh Har was saying, "You're being rather **hard** on the boy, darling," but his Daddy had replied, "No, I want nothing more to do with her, and I don't want her to come within a mile of this house. The boy will soon get over it."

His Daddy had told him, "You have a new Mummy now, Yen Li. She loves you very much," and Auntie Poh Har had **bent down** and softly touched his cheek. He wanted to ask, "Where's my Mummy? Where's my Mummy gone to?" but he knew what the look on his father's face and the tone in his father's voice meant, so he never asked any questions about his mother.

One night in his room, he thought about his Mummy and his eyes filled with tears. He began sobbing² on his pillow and the old servant Ah Keem Chae came in (his Daddy and Auntie Poh Har had gone out). Ah Kheem Chae sat with him for a while, saying all sorts of things to make him stop crying. He cried so much that he **threw up**, and Ah Kheem Chae, shaking her head and clucking³ her tongue, cleaned him and changed his pajamas.

The next evening, just before dinner, his Daddy came home with a big **parcel wrapped** in shiny red paper, and Auntie Poh Har also had a parcel under her arm. They put the parcels in front of him, smiling and asking him to unwrap them. There was a **handsome**, shiny gun, and a motorcycle. His father showed him how to shoot with the gun and how to make the motorcycle go very fast, and for a while, he played with the toys and did not cry so much. As he was playing with his motorcycle in the kitchen one morning, he heard Ah Kheem Chae talking to Ah Soh, the washerwoman and he knew they were talking of his Mummy, for they both kept turning to look at him, and shaking their heads.

- ☞ What does Yen Li have to call Auntie Poh Har?
- ☞ When does his father get angry?
- ☞ How does Yen Li's father feel about the boy's mother?
- ☞ What does Yen Li's father do to try to make him happy again?

He thought they were saying something bad about his Mummy, and again he wanted to ask, "Where's my Mummy?" but he **did not dare** to, as he knew his father would be angry with him for that.

curtains:
cloth over windows

hard: strict

bent down:
bend her body at the
knees or waist

threw up:
vomited, food came up
from the stomach

parcel: package

wrapped: covered

handsome: beautiful

did not dare: was afraid

recovered:
become well again

invented: made up, created

act out: perform, do

still: quietly

roles: actor's part in a play

robber: person who steals

giant: very large, tall person

territory: area

hero: brave one

adventures:
exciting or dangerous
experiences

gave her a hug:
put his arms around her

released: freed

faithful: exact

senses:
sight/seeing, smell, taste,
hearing, touch

magical: wonderful

supposed to: should

Once his Mummy had telephoned him. He was in his room, talking to Pooh Bear, when Ah Kheem Chae called from downstairs in a shrill excited voice, "Yen Li, it's your Mummy! Quick!" He had rushed⁴ down the stairs, breathless, clutching⁵ Pooh Bear. It was indeed his mother. He didn't even hear what she wanted to tell him, for at the sound of her voice, he had started to cry. He sobbed so miserably⁶ that Ah Kheem Chae took over the phone from him and spoke to his mother. By the time he had **recovered** sufficiently⁷ to speak to her, his father had come home and could be heard coming out of his car, so Ah Kheem Chae quickly put down the phone and hurried him downstairs.

He wanted his Mummy. He wanted his Mummy to come back to him. Most of all, he wanted his Mummy to come back so they could continue their game with Pooh Bear. It was a game that they had both **invented**. In this game, he would lie under his blanket, and his mother would tell him a story about Pooh Bear, and **act out** Pooh Bear's actions on him, as he lay very **still** under his blanket. His mother would make Pooh Bear walk over his stomach, jump up and down on his head, dig⁸ its toes into his ribs. Pooh Bear took on⁹ many **roles**—as a hunter¹⁰, fisherman, **robber**, **giant**, crab¹¹, elephant—and his body, as he lay snugly¹², with the blanket drawn right over his head was the **territory** over which the **hero** roamed¹³ and had his **adventures**. But the part Yen Li liked the best was the end of the story, when Pooh Bear invariably¹⁴ returned home to his mother. His Mummy's words, "So Pooh Bear ran and ran and when he saw his Mummy, he **gave her a hug**, hug, hug, and a kiss, kiss, kiss!" were the cue¹⁵ for him to be **released** from the self-imposed immobility¹⁶, and to jump up, throw his arms round her and kiss her resoundingly¹⁷ three times in **faithful** re-enactment¹⁸ of Pooh Bear's homecoming.

Every night he waited for his Mummy to come and say Goodnight and play the game, his little body taut¹⁹ with eager anticipation²⁰ as he lay under the blanket. All his **senses** were strained²¹ to catch the **magical** words at the end of the story, and the moment the first 'hug' was uttered²². He sprang up²³ with the agility²⁴ of a monkey and flung²⁵ himself into his mother's arms, covering her with kisses.

Now his Mummy had gone away, and she hadn't even finished the last story. He remembered it clearly. Pooh Bear was climbing a mountain in search of a house full of gold coins. His head was Pooh Bear's mountain, and he giggled²⁶ convulsively²⁷, though he was **supposed to** lie very still, when he felt the bear's feet moving all over his face.

His mother was halfway through the story when his father came into the room. There was an angry look on his father's face. He heard his father shouting at his mother; she got up from the bed, and stood there, shouting back at him. Then they left the room. He could hear

4 rushed: run fast

5 clutching: holding

6 miserably: sadly

7 sufficiently: enough

8 dig: push, poke

9 took on: played

10 hunter:
one who catches
and kills animals

11 crab: a sea animal

12 snugly:
warmly, comfortably

13 roamed: traveled

14 invariably: always

15 cue: sign, signal

16 self-imposed immobility:
chosen stillness

17 resoundingly: loudly

18 re-enactment:
replay, repetition

19 taut: tight, stiff

20 eager anticipation:
great excitement

21 strained: trying hard

22 uttered: said

23 sprang up: jumped

24 agility: quickness

25 flung: threw

26 giggled: laughed

27 convulsively: strongly

- 28 air conditioner:
cooling machine
- 29 pretended to be:
made believe he was
- 30 fearfully: with fear
- 31 dreadful: very bad, terrible
- 32 tractor: farm vehicle
- 33 quivered: shook
- 34 pining away:
sick with sadness
- 35 state: condition
- 36 expectation: hope
- 37 swept: picked him up

them still shouting at each other, as he lay very still on his bed, his eyes wide open in the darkness. Soon Ah Kheem Chae came in, and she turned off the air-conditioner²⁸ in his room, as she always did when it started to rain. She moved softly towards his bed and bent down to make sure he was asleep. He pretended to be²⁹ asleep. But his little heart was beating fearfully³⁰, for he knew something dreadful³¹ was happening.

- Was Yen Li able to talk to his mother on the telephone?
- Describe the game that Yen Li loves.
- What happens at the end of the game?
- What happens between his parents to upset Yen Li so much?
- Who takes care of Yen Li except for his mother?

The next morning his father called him and said that his mother had gone away; she would not be coming back, and when his eyes filled with tears, his father said, "Don't cry, son, for God's sake, don't cry." Later that afternoon, his father bought him a toy tractor³², but his little heart was too heavy to play with anything; he wanted his Mummy.

He couldn't eat, and when he thought no one was looking, his lips quivered³³ and the tears would come again. He wanted his mother **especially** at night; he wanted her to continue the story of Pooh Bear. He waited a long time but his mother did not come back.

When he lay ill in bed, he heard Auntie Poh Har (he must remember to call her Mummy) say to his father, "You must **allow** him to see her at least once, darling. Look the child's pining away³⁴," and then he heard his father say, "Let him get better first. I don't want him to be **upset** while in this state³⁵."

And now his Mummy was coming! He had been told by his father and Auntie Poh Har that his Mummy would be coming for a short visit. It was true, for he heard them talking about it again, as he lay pretending to be asleep, while they sat on his bed.

"Let it be over with," he heard his father say, and add, "the boy should be told the truth one of these days. Then his eyes will be opened." He heard Auntie Poh Har say, "He's only a child, darling. You mustn't be too hard on him."

Yen Li waited, clutching Pooh Bear, his little body **tense** with expectation³⁶. His Daddy and Auntie Poh Har were out. Ah Kheem Chae was in the kitchen. He heard the sound of a car in the drive. He leapt from his seat and ran to the door. He saw his mother getting out of the car, and was about to rush to her when he saw her turn to speak to somebody who had got out of the car with her. He was a tall man, much taller than his Daddy. His mother then saw him, rushed to him, swept³⁷ him up in her arms and held him very tight.

especially: mainly, mostly

allow: permit, agree to

upset: sad, worried

tense: stiff, tight

"My little son," she said, her face glowing³⁸ with joy, and she turned to the man and said, "This is the Yen Li I've been speaking to you about," and the man said, "Fine boy," and then looked around the place, commenting³⁹ that it was a fine house and garden.

"Yen Li, this is Uncle Bill, say 'hello' to Uncle Bill, darling," she coaxed⁴⁰, leading the boy forward to where Uncle Bill had seated himself. Yen Li said 'Hello' very **shyly**, and then abruptly⁴¹ turned to his mother and clung⁴² to her. She drew him close to her again and kissed him. Then, still holding him in her arms, she turned to Uncle Bill and said, "They wouldn't let me see him, darling. They wouldn't let me see my own son. This visit was practically⁴³ forced out⁴⁴ of them. My own little Yen Li," she said again and again, ruffling⁴⁵ his hair.

shyly: without confidence

- ✎ How does Yen Li's father expect him to behave?
- ✎ How do we know that Yen Li is very unhappy?
- ✎ Do his father and stepmother agree on when Yen Li will see his mother again?
- ✎ Who comes to see Yen Li with his mother?
- ✎ What do you know about Uncle Bill?

drag: pull

He would have liked to **drag** her upstairs by the hand to make her continue the game with Pooh Bear, to have her all to himself, but she was talking to Uncle Bill all the time as she held him close to her. At one point, she moved over to sit very close to Uncle Bill and put her head on his shoulder, **sighing**, "I'm happy at last, Bill. Nobody can take this happiness away from me." Then she went back to sit with Yen Li and she put her face against his murmuring⁴⁶, "Mummy's very happy at last, darling. Aren't you glad that your Mummy is happy at last?"

sighing:
breathing heavily with relief

Yen Li wanted to ask, "When is Uncle Bill going off? I want you to come upstairs with me so that we can play with Pooh Bear!" but started crying instead. He sobbed⁴⁷ loud and long, his little body convulsed⁴⁸ with the pain of it all. His mother tried to comfort him.

sweetheart: loved one

"Ssh, silly, silly boy," she said stroking⁴⁹ his hair. "You love Mummy very much, don't you? Never mind, **sweetheart**, Uncle Bill and I will be coming to see you again. Won't we, Uncle Bill? And Uncle Bill said in a **cheerful**, booming⁵⁰ voice, "Of course⁵¹, of course. We're going to Europe soon, boy, and we'll come to see you directly⁵² when we return. Okay, sonny? And he continued to look around the house, saying, for the second time, "Mmm, fine place, this."

cheerful: happy

managed: was able to
puzzled:
not understanding, confused

Yen Li, his eyes brimming⁵³ with tears, **managed** to say, between sobs, "Pooh Bear." His mother looked **puzzled** then noticing the rumbled⁵⁴ bear in his arms, leaned back and laughed, "Of course,

38 glowing: shining

39 commenting:
saying, stating

40 coaxed:
talked sweetly, persuaded

41 abruptly: suddenly

42 clung: held on tight

43 practically: almost

44 forced out: pulled out

45 ruffling: playing with

46 murmuring:
speaking softly

47 sobbed: cried loudly

48 convulsed: shook

49 stroking: touching gently

50 booming: very loud

51 of course: clearly

52 directly: soon

53 brimming: filled with

54 rumbled: worn, well-loved

- 55 inseparable:
unable to be parted
- 56 entertained:
amused, pleased
- 57 no end: a lot, very much
- 58 conspiratorially:
in a secret way
- 59 crept: moved very quietly
- 60 trussed up: thrown away

sweetheart! Pooh Bear—your favorite toy. I shall get you a bigger one when I return from Europe, darling, much bigger and nicer than this one. Poor thing, one of its eyes is falling out." She tried to fix it back, gave up, and turned to Uncle Bill, laughing, "His favorite toy, darling. Inseparable⁵⁵. I used to **amuse** him for hours with it. Silly little game that entertained⁵⁶ him no end⁵⁷."

amuse: have fun with

When it was time for her to go, she hugged him close and promised to write to him from Europe.

"We'll send you postcards, sweetheart, only to you, no one else," she said conspiratorially⁵⁸ and Uncle Bill said, "Bye, sonny, be a good boy," and then they were gone.

Yen Li went up to his room and crept⁵⁹ into bed. He lay still a long time and then fell asleep. When his Daddy and Auntie Poh Har came back, he was awake, but he pretended to be asleep when they came into his room and stood by his bed. His father saw Pooh Bear in a corner where it had been flung in anger so that it lay trussed up⁶⁰ in an untidy heap. Picking it up, he **gently** put it back in the arms of the sleeping boy.

gently: kindly and carefully

- 📖 How does Yen Li's mother feel?
- 📖 What does Yen Li want his mother to do with him?
- 📖 How does Yen Li feel about Uncle Bill?
- 📖 Where is his mother going?
- 📖 What does the father do to show that he cares about his son?

EXPLORING THE STORY

AN ACTIVITY FOR GROUP DISCUSSION, HOMEWORK, OR YOUR JOURNAL

A good writer will not only describe interesting characters and an interesting plot—what happens in the story—but will also provide extra ideas or opinions that are not always easy to see.

Answer the following activities and questions. Always go back to the story to find the answers to the questions.

1. There are six characters in "The Visit." Look at the adjectives below and on the next page and write the name of the character that fits the description and the sentence in the text that supports it. Adjectives may fit more than one character.

Cruel _____
 Understanding _____
 Betrayed _____

Angry _____
Lonely _____
Loving _____
Indifferent _____
Vulnerable _____
Secretive _____
Controlling _____
Kind _____

2. What do the phrases "very still," "they thought he was asleep," "they thought he wasn't around," and "he pretended to be asleep" tell you about Yen Li and the adults around him?
3. What does Pooh Bear represent for Yen Li? Why does he throw the bear across the room after his mother's visit?
4. The central character of the story is Yen Li. How would the author's message change if she had chosen to tell the story from another character's point of view? Give some examples.
5. In what way did your feelings for the characters change as you read the story? Give examples.
6. What indications do you get from the text that Uncle Bill is not Chinese?
7. Why do you think the author called this story "The Visit?" Can you think of other titles for this story?

EXPLORING THE VOCABULARY

Complete the following sentences with bold words from the story. Change the form of the word when necessary.

1. The teacher told the students who came late to _____ after class.
2. The boy _____ his friend to jump off the roof.
3. The gift was _____ in bright red paper.
4. Many people I know think that Nelson Mandela is a modern _____.
5. Parents are not _____ do their children's homework for them in some countries.
6. Let's _____ that we are very rich and can buy whatever we want.
7. I was most _____ when he didn't phone after he said he would.

- 1 bouncing: very active
- 2 *Allah yi barek fi omrek* (Arabic): May God send blessings to your life
- 3 scattered: ran in different directions
- 4 peek through: take a quick look
- 5 partition: division in a room
- 6 *majilis* (Arabic): areas where men and women sit separately
- 7 sipping: drinking in small quantities
- 8 bustle: running around
- 9 hennaed: painted with reddish-brown dye
- 10 turned out to be: to show a different side than what was expected

Amina opened her eyes and for a moment wondered where she was. Then she remembered and a **moan** escaped her lips. The English nurse hurried over and bent down, "Don't you worry now," she said. "You'll be fine and the baby is all right."

Amina asked, **not daring** to hope, "Is it a boy or a girl?"

"A girl," replied the nurse cheerfully. "A beautiful, bouncing¹, four kilograms girl. *Mabruk*, congratulations."

"*Allah yi barek fi omrek*²," murmured Amina as she **sank back** on her pillows. Another girl!

What a **catastrophe**. What would happen to her now? She had brought four girls into the world, four girls in six years of marriage. She felt tears running down her cheeks, and she remembered how proud and happy she had been when her mother had told her she was engaged to be married.

She had seen Hamid twice, once at her cousin's house when he arrived **unexpectedly**. The girls all scattered³ to their quarters to put on their **masks and veils**. The next time, he came with his father to ask for her hand in marriage. The houseboy serving the coffee told the Indian housegirl who in turn ran and told her mistress. So, she had gone to peek through⁴ the partition⁵ between the men's and women's *majilis*⁶. She saw Hamid and his father sipping⁷ coffee and being congratulated by all the men in the family. They **embraced** and rubbed noses, big smiles on everyone's faces.

- ☞ Why does Amina cry after the birth of her baby?
- ☞ When does she see her husband before they are married?
- ☞ What do the girls do when Hamid arrives at her house?

Amina remembered her wedding, the noise and the bustle⁸, her hennaed⁹ hands and feet, the whispers among the older women which frightened her and the **anticipation**. Finally, she found herself alone with this stranger, who had turned out to be¹⁰ very kind and gentle and **considerate**.

Well, there would be no henna and celebration for this girl. God, why couldn't she have a boy? Just one, that's all she wanted, just one little baby boy. She wished the **midwife** hadn't told her when she **had the miscarriage** that it had been a boy. The only one in six years and she had to go and lose it. It was her fault too. She had no business climbing a ladder at five months. She slipped and fell and the doctors kept her in the hospital for a week, then told her she was all right and could go home. But there was no movement, no life, so she went back to the hospital and after two weeks of tests and X-rays and hope and **despair**, they finally decided the baby was dead.

moan: long, low, sad sound

not daring: afraid

sank back:
laid back, reclined

catastrophe:
terrible thing, disaster

unexpectedly: as a surprise

masks and veils:
cloth coverings for the face and head

embraced:
put their arms around each other

anticipation:
excitement about what is coming

considerate:
thoughtful of others

midwife:
woman who helps at childbirth

had the miscarriage:
had the baby too early

despair: deep unhappiness

After that she had two more girls, and now the fourth.

Would Hamid divorce her? Would he take a second wife? His older brother had been pressing for¹¹ two years, urging¹² him to take a second wife. Hamid loved Amina and his daughters, but he was human. He did have all that money and the social and political position and no boy to leave it to.

Her mother came in, then her sisters-in-law. Each one kissed her and said, "*Mabruk*¹³," but she could tell they were not really happy. Her mother was especially fearful for her daughter's future and felt that some of the **disgrace** fell on her and the family too. The sisters-in-law were secretly jubilant¹⁴, because they had boys. Hamid's social **status** and half his fortune would revert to¹⁵ their own sons if he never had boys of his own. Of course, he was still young and he and Amina might try again. But for the moment the in-laws felt **reassured** and falsely commiserated¹⁶ with Amina on her bad luck.

"It's God's will," they murmured, smiling under their masks. Their mouths were sad but Amina could see the **twinkle** in their eyes. "God's will be done."

- ☞ What happens to Amina in her second pregnancy?
- ☞ What advice does Hamid receive from his older brother?
- ☞ What is Amina's mother afraid of?
- ☞ What do Amina's sisters-in-law hope?

Friends started coming into the room. They kissed Amina and said, "*Mabruk*," then sat on the floor, cross-legged. Arranging their robes around them, they sipped coffee from little thimble cups¹⁷, eating fruits and sweets.

Her cousin Huda came too. She wore a long, velvet dress, embroidered¹⁸ on the sides and bodice¹⁹, loose and flowing, to conceal her **belly**. She was in the sixth month and looked radiantly serene²⁰.

Amina thought **bitterly**, "She already has two daughters and three sons. What does she need another baby for? She's not so young anymore."

As if she read her thoughts, Huda said, "This is my last baby. It will be a baby for my old age. The others are married or away at school all day. An empty house is a sad house. You need many sons and daughters to keep your husband happy. You are still young, Amina. God has given you four daughters, maybe the next four will be boys, God's will be done."

"As God wills it, so be it," **murmured** the other ladies smugly²¹.

disgrace:
social failure, disapproval

status: position, rank

reassured: free from anxiety

twinkle: small, bright light

11 pressing for:
speaking urgently

12 urging: insisting

13 *mabruk* (Arabic):
congratulations

14 jubilant: very happy

15 revert to: return to

16 commiserated:
sympathized

17 thimble cups:
very small cups

18 embroidered:
decorated with
stitched designs

19 bodice:
top part of a dress

20 radiantly serene:
shining with
peaceful happiness

21 smugly:
with self-satisfaction

belly: stomach

bitterly:
with anger and sadness

murmured: whispered

22 deferentially:
with polite respect

23 repudiated:
rejected, divorced

24 burst into:
suddenly began

25 crows:
large, noisy, black birds

26 eager for: excited for

27 solicitously:
with love and concern

28 year's reprieve:
a year of delay,
temporary relief

Hamid came in and the ladies all stood up deferentially²², and **hastily** went into the next room. The maid served them more coffee. Hamid looked at his wife, tried to smile and searched for something nice to say. He thought she must be tired, disappointed, ashamed of having failed him one more time and afraid of being repudiated²³.

He sat down near the bed and said, "Well, mother of my children, we will just have to try again, won't we?"

Amina burst into²⁴ tears of sorrow, shame, and relief.

"Don't cry," he said, **distressed**. "The important thing is that you and the girls are in good health," he said smiling. "As long as we are young we will try again, eh?"

Amina **blushed** under her mask and pulled her veil around her face. He patted her hand, got up, and left the room.

The ladies came rushing back in, like a flock of crows²⁵, eager for²⁶ the news, good or bad.

Amina's mother said solicitously²⁷, "What did he say, my daughter?" He said better luck next time, Mother!"

The mother let out a sigh of relief. They had another year's reprieve²⁸. The women congratulated Amina and left to spread the news.

Amina sank back on her pillows and **drifted off to sleep**.

hastily: quickly

distressed: upset

blushed: turned red

drifted off to sleep:
slowly went to sleep

- ↻ Why is Amina's cousin Huda having another baby?
- ↻ Why does Amina start crying?
- ↻ What is most important to Hamid?
- ↻ What is Hamid's solution?

EXPLORING THE STORY

AN ACTIVITY FOR GROUP DISCUSSION, HOMEWORK, OR YOUR JOURNAL

A good writer will not only describe interesting characters and an interesting plot—what happens in the story—but will also provide extra ideas or opinions that are not always easy to see.

Read the questions below and think about them. Always go back to the story to explain your answers.

1. Why do you think the author begins the story with the contrast of the cheerful English nurse and Amina's tears?
2. Why does Amina accept the blame for having only daughters?
3. Consider the other characters in the story. Who gives Amina support? Who does not and why? Who is her best ally (supporter)?
4. Choose five adjectives that describe Hamid. Explain your choices.



INTRODUCTION

Think about and/or discuss these questions:

1. When parents divorce, what happens to the children?
Which parent should they live with?
2. At what age can children be told the truth about divorce?
3. Describe your favorite toys when you were little. Do you know who or what Pooh Bear is?
4. What kind of games and bedtime stories did you enjoy as a child?
Who played with you?

LIBRARY/INTERNET TASKS

Before you read the story:

1. Find out where Singapore is located, what languages are spoken there, and what the main cultures of Singapore are.
2. Find out why English is commonly used in Singapore.
3. Find out more about Winnie the Pooh (Pooh Bear), a famous character in English children's literature.

The Visit

Catherine Lim

Catherine Lim grew up in Malaysia and lives and writes in Singapore. She is Chinese and her first language is English. An author of many collections of short stories and novels, Catherine Lim's story "The Visit" is from her book *Or Else, The Lightning God and Other Stories*.

The bold words should be learned. The numbered words are explained to help you understand the story. Some words have more than one meaning. The meaning we give is the closest synonym.

Yen Li lay very still on his bed, his eyes tightly closed, his arms around Pooh Bear. He waited for his Daddy and Auntie Poh Har—he must remember to call her Mummy, otherwise his Daddy would have that angry look on his face again—he waited for them to leave the room, for he wanted to be by himself. But they **remained** sitting on his bed, talking in low tones¹ to each other and thinking he was asleep and couldn't hear them. But he heard everything, though he kept his eyes tightly closed and lay **perfectly** still.

remained: stayed

perfectly: completely

¹ tones: sounds

2 sobbing: crying loudly

3 clucking:
making a sound
with her tongue

They were talking of his Mummy, he knew. They only talked of his Mummy when they thought he was asleep and not around, and once they talked of her when they thought he was out playing in the garden, but all the time he was behind them, in the little space behind the **curtains**, holding Pooh Bear tightly in his arms. He had stopped playing and talking to Pooh Bear when he heard them come into the room, and he had sat very still for the whole time that they were in the room. His Auntie Poh Har was saying, "You're being rather **hard** on the boy, darling," but his Daddy had replied, "No, I want nothing more to do with her, and I don't want her to come within a mile of this house. The boy will soon get over it."

His Daddy had told him, "You have a new Mummy now, Yen Li. She loves you very much," and Auntie Poh Har had **bent down** and softly touched his cheek. He wanted to ask, "Where's my Mummy? Where's my Mummy gone to?" but he knew what the look on his father's face and the tone in his father's voice meant, so he never asked any questions about his mother.

One night in his room, he thought about his Mummy and his eyes filled with tears. He began sobbing² on his pillow and the old servant Ah Keem Chae came in (his Daddy and Auntie Poh Har had gone out). Ah Kheem Chae sat with him for a while, saying all sorts of things to make him stop crying. He cried so much that he **threw up**, and Ah Kheem Chae, shaking her head and clucking³ her tongue, cleaned him and changed his pajamas.

The next evening, just before dinner, his Daddy came home with a big **parcel wrapped** in shiny red paper, and Auntie Poh Har also had a parcel under her arm. They put the parcels in front of him, smiling and asking him to unwrap them. There was a **handsome**, shiny gun, and a motorcycle. His father showed him how to shoot with the gun and how to make the motorcycle go very fast, and for a while, he played with the toys and did not cry so much. As he was playing with his motorcycle in the kitchen one morning, he heard Ah Kheem Chae talking to Ah Soh, the washerwoman and he knew they were talking of his Mummy, for they both kept turning to look at him, and shaking their heads.

- ❧ What does Yen Li have to call Auntie Poh Har?
- ❧ When does his father get angry?
- ❧ How does Yen Li's father feel about the boy's mother?
- ❧ What does Yen Li's father do to try to make him happy again?

He thought they were saying something bad about his Mummy, and again he wanted to ask, "Where's my Mummy?" but he **did not dare** to, as he knew his father would be angry with him for that.

curtains:
cloth over windows

hard: strict

bent down:
bend her body at the
knees or waist

threw up:
vomited, food came up
from the stomach

parcel: package

wrapped: covered

handsome: beautiful

did not dare: was afraid

recovered:
become well again

invented: made up, created

act out: perform, do

still: quietly

roles: actor's part in a play

robber: person who steals

giant: very large, tall person

territory: area

hero: brave one

adventures:
exciting or dangerous
experiences

gave her a hug:
put his arms around her

released: freed

faithful: exact

senses:
sight/seeing, smell, taste,
hearing, touch

magical: wonderful

supposed to: should

Once his Mummy had telephoned him. He was in his room, talking to Pooh Bear, when Ah Kheem Chae called from downstairs in a shrill excited voice, "Yen Li, it's your Mummy! Quick!" He had rushed⁴ down the stairs, breathless, clutching⁵ Pooh Bear. It was indeed his mother. He didn't even hear what she wanted to tell him, for at the sound of her voice, he had started to cry. He sobbed so miserably⁶ that Ah Kheem Chae took over the phone from him and spoke to his mother. By the time he had **recovered** sufficiently⁷ to speak to her, his father had come home and could be heard coming out of his car, so Ah Kheem Chae quickly put down the phone and hurried him downstairs.

He wanted his Mummy. He wanted his Mummy to come back to him. Most of all, he wanted his Mummy to come back so they could continue their game with Pooh Bear. It was a game that they had both **invented**. In this game, he would lie under his blanket, and his mother would tell him a story about Pooh Bear, and **act out** Pooh Bear's actions on him, as he lay very **still** under his blanket. His mother would make Pooh Bear walk over his stomach, jump up and down on his head, dig⁸ its toes into his ribs. Pooh Bear took on⁹ many **roles**—as a hunter¹⁰, fisherman, **robber**, **giant**, crab¹¹, elephant—and his body, as he lay snugly¹², with the blanket drawn right over his head was the **territory** over which the **hero** roamed¹³ and had his **adventures**. But the part Yen Li liked the best was the end of the story, when Pooh Bear invariably¹⁴ returned home to his mother. His Mummy's words, "So Pooh Bear ran and ran and when he saw his Mummy, he **gave her a hug**, hug, hug, and a kiss, kiss, kiss!" were the cue¹⁵ for him to be **released** from the self-imposed immobility¹⁶, and to jump up, throw his arms round her and kiss her resoundingly¹⁷ three times in **faithful** re-enactment¹⁸ of Pooh Bear's homecoming.

Every night he waited for his Mummy to come and say Goodnight and play the game, his little body taut¹⁹ with eager anticipation²⁰ as he lay under the blanket. All his **senses** were strained²¹ to catch the **magical** words at the end of the story, and the moment the first 'hug' was uttered²². He sprang up²³ with the agility²⁴ of a monkey and flung²⁵ himself into his mother's arms, covering her with kisses.

Now his Mummy had gone away, and she hadn't even finished the last story. He remembered it clearly. Pooh Bear was climbing a mountain in search of a house full of gold coins. His head was Pooh Bear's mountain, and he giggled²⁶ convulsively²⁷, though he was **supposed to** lie very still, when he felt the bear's feet moving all over his face.

His mother was halfway through the story when his father came into the room. There was an angry look on his father's face. He heard his father shouting at his mother; she got up from the bed, and stood there, shouting back at him. Then they left the room. He could hear

4 rushed: run fast

5 clutching: holding

6 miserably: sadly

7 sufficiently: enough

8 dig: push, poke

9 took on: played

10 hunter:
one who catches
and kills animals

11 crab: a sea animal

12 snugly:
warmly, comfortably

13 roamed: traveled

14 invariably: always

15 cue: sign, signal

16 self-imposed immobility:
chosen stillness

17 resoundingly: loudly

18 re-enactment:
replay, repetition

19 taut: tight, stiff

20 eager anticipation:
great excitement

21 strained: trying hard

22 uttered: said

23 sprang up: jumped

24 agility: quickness

25 flung: threw

26 giggled: laughed

27 convulsively: strongly

- 28 air conditioner:
cooling machine
- 29 pretended to be:
made believe he was
- 30 fearfully: with fear
- 31 dreadful: very bad, terrible
- 32 tractor: farm vehicle
- 33 quivered: shook
- 34 pining away:
sick with sadness
- 35 state: condition
- 36 expectation: hope
- 37 swept: picked him up

them still shouting at each other, as he lay very still on his bed, his eyes wide open in the darkness. Soon Ah Kheem Chae came in, and she turned off the air-conditioner²⁸ in his room, as she always did when it started to rain. She moved softly towards his bed and bent down to make sure he was asleep. He pretended to be²⁹ asleep. But his little heart was beating fearfully³⁰, for he knew something dreadful³¹ was happening.

- Was Yen Li able to talk to his mother on the telephone?
- Describe the game that Yen Li loves.
- What happens at the end of the game?
- What happens between his parents to upset Yen Li so much?
- Who takes care of Yen Li except for his mother?

The next morning his father called him and said that his mother had gone away; she would not be coming back, and when his eyes filled with tears, his father said, "Don't cry, son, for God's sake, don't cry." Later that afternoon, his father bought him a toy tractor³², but his little heart was too heavy to play with anything; he wanted his Mummy.

He couldn't eat, and when he thought no one was looking, his lips quivered³³ and the tears would come again. He wanted his mother **especially** at night; he wanted her to continue the story of Pooh Bear. He waited a long time but his mother did not come back.

When he lay ill in bed, he heard Auntie Poh Har (he must remember to call her Mummy) say to his father, "You must **allow** him to see her at least once, darling. Look the child's pining away³⁴," and then he heard his father say, "Let him get better first. I don't want him to be **upset** while in this state³⁵."

And now his Mummy was coming! He had been told by his father and Auntie Poh Har that his Mummy would be coming for a short visit. It was true, for he heard them talking about it again, as he lay pretending to be asleep, while they sat on his bed.

"Let it be over with," he heard his father say, and add, "the boy should be told the truth one of these days. Then his eyes will be opened." He heard Auntie Poh Har say, "He's only a child, darling. You mustn't be too hard on him."

Yen Li waited, clutching Pooh Bear, his little body **tense** with expectation³⁶. His Daddy and Auntie Poh Har were out. Ah Kheem Chae was in the kitchen. He heard the sound of a car in the drive. He leapt from his seat and ran to the door. He saw his mother getting out of the car, and was about to rush to her when he saw her turn to speak to somebody who had got out of the car with her. He was a tall man, much taller than his Daddy. His mother then saw him, rushed to him, swept³⁷ him up in her arms and held him very tight.

especially: mainly, mostly

allow: permit, agree to

upset: sad, worried

tense: stiff, tight

"My little son," she said, her face glowing³⁸ with joy, and she turned to the man and said, "This is the Yen Li I've been speaking to you about," and the man said, "Fine boy," and then looked around the place, commenting³⁹ that it was a fine house and garden.

"Yen Li, this is Uncle Bill, say 'hello' to Uncle Bill, darling," she coaxed⁴⁰, leading the boy forward to where Uncle Bill had seated himself. Yen Li said 'Hello' very **shyly**, and then abruptly⁴¹ turned to his mother and clung⁴² to her. She drew him close to her again and kissed him. Then, still holding him in her arms, she turned to Uncle Bill and said, "They wouldn't let me see him, darling. They wouldn't let me see my own son. This visit was practically⁴³ forced out⁴⁴ of them. My own little Yen Li," she said again and again, ruffling⁴⁵ his hair.

shyly: without confidence

- 🐼 How does Yen Li's father expect him to behave?
- 🐼 How do we know that Yen Li is very unhappy?
- 🐼 Do his father and stepmother agree on when Yen Li will see his mother again?
- 🐼 Who comes to see Yen Li with his mother?
- 🐼 What do you know about Uncle Bill?

drag: pull

He would have liked to **drag** her upstairs by the hand to make her continue the game with Pooh Bear, to have her all to himself, but she was talking to Uncle Bill all the time as she held him close to her. At one point, she moved over to sit very close to Uncle Bill and put her head on his shoulder, **sighing**, "I'm happy at last, Bill. Nobody can take this happiness away from me." Then she went back to sit with Yen Li and she put her face against his murmuring⁴⁶, "Mummy's very happy at last, darling. Aren't you glad that your Mummy is happy at last?"

sighing:
breathing heavily with relief

Yen Li wanted to ask, "When is Uncle Bill going off? I want you to come upstairs with me so that we can play with Pooh Bear!" but started crying instead. He sobbed⁴⁷ loud and long, his little body convulsed⁴⁸ with the pain of it all. His mother tried to comfort him.

sweetheart: loved one

"Ssh, silly, silly boy," she said stroking⁴⁹ his hair. "You love Mummy very much, don't you? Never mind, **sweetheart**, Uncle Bill and I will be coming to see you again. Won't we, Uncle Bill? And Uncle Bill said in a **cheerful**, booming⁵⁰ voice, "Of course⁵¹, of course. We're going to Europe soon, boy, and we'll come to see you directly⁵² when we return. Okay, sonny? And he continued to look around the house, saying, for the second time, "Mmm, fine place, this."

cheerful: happy

managed: was able to
puzzled:
not understanding, confused

Yen Li, his eyes brimming⁵³ with tears, **managed** to say, between sobs, "Pooh Bear." His mother looked **puzzled** then noticing the rumpled⁵⁴ bear in his arms, leaned back and laughed, "Of course,

38 glowing: shining

39 commenting:
saying, stating

40 coaxed:
talked sweetly, persuaded

41 abruptly: suddenly

42 clung: held on tight

43 practically: almost

44 forced out: pulled out

45 ruffling: playing with

46 murmuring:
speaking softly

47 sobbed: cried loudly

48 convulsed: shook

49 stroking: touching gently

50 booming: very loud

51 of course: clearly

52 directly: soon

53 brimming: filled with

54 rumpled: worn, well-loved

55 inseparable:
unable to be parted

56 entertained:
amused, pleased

57 no end: a lot, very much

58 conspiratorially:
in a secret way

59 crept: moved very quietly

60 trussed up: thrown away

sweetheart! Pooh Bear—your favorite toy. I shall get you a bigger one when I return from Europe, darling, much bigger and nicer than this one. Poor thing, one of its eyes is falling out." She tried to fix it back, gave up, and turned to Uncle Bill, laughing, "His favorite toy, darling. Inseparable⁵⁵. I used to **amuse** him for hours with it. Silly little game that entertained⁵⁶ him no end⁵⁷."

When it was time for her to go, she hugged him close and promised to write to him from Europe.

"We'll send you postcards, sweetheart, only to you, no one else," she said conspiratorially⁵⁸ and Uncle Bill said, "Bye, sonny, be a good boy," and then they were gone.

Yen Li went up to his room and crept⁵⁹ into bed. He lay still a long time and then fell asleep. When his Daddy and Auntie Poh Har came back, he was awake, but he pretended to be asleep when they came into his room and stood by his bed. His father saw Pooh Bear in a corner where it had been flung in anger so that it lay trussed up⁶⁰ in an untidy heap. Picking it up, he **gently** put it back in the arms of the sleeping boy.

amuse: have fun with

gently: kindly and carefully

- 🔍 How does Yen Li's mother feel?
- 🔍 What does Yen Li want his mother to do with him?
- 🔍 How does Yen Li feel about Uncle Bill?
- 🔍 Where is his mother going?
- 🔍 What does the father do to show that he cares about his son?

EXPLORING THE STORY

AN ACTIVITY FOR GROUP DISCUSSION, HOMEWORK, OR YOUR JOURNAL

A good writer will not only describe interesting characters and an interesting plot—what happens in the story—but will also provide extra ideas or opinions that are not always easy to see.

Answer the following activities and questions. Always go back to the story to find the answers to the questions.

1. There are six characters in "The Visit." Look at the adjectives below and on the next page and write the name of the character that fits the description and the sentence in the text that supports it. Adjectives may fit more than one character.

Cruel _____
Understanding _____
Betrayed _____

Phrasal Verbs (*get up / break down / fill in, etc.*)

A

We often use verbs with the following words:

in	on	up	away	around	about	over	by
out	off	down	back	through	along	forward	

So you can say put out / get on / take off / run away, etc. These verbs are *phrasal verbs*.

We often use out/off/up, etc., with verbs of movement. For example:

get on	☛	The bus was full. We couldn't get on.
drive off	☛	A woman got into the car and drove off.
come back	☛	Sally is leaving tomorrow and coming back on Saturday.
turn around	☛	When I touched him on the shoulder, he turned around.

But often the second word (out/off/up, etc.) gives a special meaning to the verb. For example:

break down	☛	Sorry I'm late. The car broke down. (= the engine stopped working)
look out	☛	Look out! There's a car coming. (= be careful)
take off	☛	It was my first flight. I was nervous as the plane took off. (= went into the air)
get up	☛	I was very tired this morning. I couldn't get up. (= get out of bed)
get by	☛	My Japanese isn't very good, but it's enough to get by. (= to manage)

B

Sometimes a phrasal verb is followed by a *preposition*. For example:

<i>phrasal verb</i>	<i>preposition</i>	
run away	from	☛ Why did you run away from me?
keep up	with	☛ You're walking too fast. I can't keep up with you.
look forward	to	☛ Are you looking forward to your vacation?

C

Sometimes a phrasal verb has an *object*. Usually there are two possible positions for the object. So you can say:

☛ I turned	☐	<i>object</i>	☛ I turned	☐	<i>object</i>	☛
off	the light.	or	the light	off.		

If the object is a *pronoun* (it/them/me/him, etc.), only one position is possible:

☛ I turned it off. (not I turned off it)
--

Some more examples:

☛	Could you	{	fill out this form?
		}	fill this form out?
<i>but</i>	They gave me a form and told me to fill it out. (not fill out it)		
☛	The police got into the house by	{	breaking down the door.
		}	breaking the door down.
<i>but</i>	The door wasn't locked. Why did the police break it down? (not break down it)		
☛	I think I'll	{	throw away these newspapers.
		}	throw these newspapers away.
<i>but</i>	Do you want these newspapers, or should I throw them away? (not throw away them)		
☛	Don't	{	wake up the baby.
		}	wake the baby up.
<i>but</i>	The baby is asleep. Don't wake her up. (not wake up her)		

Exercises

133.1 Complete the sentences using one of these phrasal verbs in the correct form:

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|--|
| break down | drop out (= stop taking part in something) |
| clear up (= get better) | move in (= start living in a house, etc.) |
| close down (= go out of business) | show up (= appear/arrive) |
| doze off (= fall asleep) | |

- Sorry I'm late. The car broke down on the way here.
- I arranged to meet Jane after work last night, but she didn't _____.
- "We've bought a new house." "Oh, you have? When are you _____?"
- There used to be a store on the corner, but it _____ a year ago.
- I ran in a marathon last week but _____ after 15 miles.
- I was very sleepy. I was sitting in an armchair and _____.
- The weather is terrible outside, isn't it? I hope it _____ later.

133.2 Complete the sentences using a word from List A and a word from List B. You need to use some words more than once.

- A: along away back forward out up B: at of to with

- You're walking too fast. I can't keep up with you.
- My vacation is almost over. Next week I'll be _____ work.
- We've nearly run _____ money. We hardly have any left.
- Martin isn't very happy in his job because he doesn't get _____ his boss.
- I love to look _____ the stars in the sky at night.
- Are you looking _____ the party next week?
- There was a bank robbery last week. The robbers got _____ \$30,000.

133.3 Complete the sentences using one of these verbs in the correct form + *it/them/her/you*:

- | | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-------------|--------------------------------|
| cross out | give away | make up | see off (= see somebody leave) |
| fill out | give back | show around | turn down (= refuse) |

- They gave me a form and told me to fill it out.
- If you make a mistake on the form, just _____.
- The story she told you wasn't true. She _____.
- I don't like people who borrow things and don't _____.
- Kathy is going to Australia tomorrow. I'm going to the airport to _____.
- I had a lot of books that I didn't want to keep, so I _____ to a friend.
- Would you like to see the factory? Would you like me to _____?
- Sue was offered a job as a translator, but she _____.

133.4 Complete the sentences. Use the word in parentheses (*away/up*, etc.) with one of the following:

- ~~that box~~ your cigarette a jacket the television a word it it them him

- Don't throw away that box / that box away. I want to keep it. (away)
- "Do you want this box?" "No, you can throw it away." (away)
- Shh! The children are asleep. Don't wake _____ . (up)
- We can turn _____ . Nobody is watching it. (off)
- Tom got very angry and started shouting. I tried to calm _____ . (down)
- I tried _____ in the store, but I didn't buy it. (on)
- Please put _____ . This is a no-smoking area. (out)
- It was only a small fire. I was able to put _____ quite easily. (out)
- You can look _____ in a dictionary if you don't know what it means. (up)