

# WRITING STYLE

In *Chinese Cinderella*, Adeline Yen Mah shapes our understanding of the world in which she grew up through her choice of language features, which help keep us interested in her story.

## **First person point of view**

In first person narrative, the story is told from the perspective of the main character. The point of view is identified by personal pronouns such as 'I', 'my' and 'we', e.g. "We had nothing to wear except our school uniforms." (pg. 41) First person narrative helps the reader feel as if they are being told the story directly from the author, as if Adeline is telling the story to us.

## **Rhetorical questions**

No answer is required for these types of questions, but they cause the reader to pause and consider a response. This also helps make us feel involved in the story. For example, Adeline describes her thoughts after Niang accuses her of bragging about being elected class president "What will my friends say this time? How will my voters look at me? Will I be the laughingstock of my class? Will everyone sneer and whisper about me during recess?" (pg. 132) This helps the reader understand the author's internal voice and the anxiety and distress that Niang's treatment causes her to feel.

## **Dialogue**

Direct speech records exactly what the characters say to each other. This helps us imagine them saying it and 'hear' the characters' voices. For example, when Adeline's father notices the medal that she won for topping her class pinned to her chest, he asks "is the left side of your chest heavier?" Father continued, beaming with pride. 'Are you tilting?'" (pg. 12) Whether someone uses formal language or slang, the way they speak to others, whether they adopt a different way of speaking in front of people they respect – these facets of direct speech tell us about their character.

## **Connotations**

The author's choice of words helps us visualise the scenes and understand the characters she describes. By using verbs, adjectives, or adverbs with positive or negative connotations, we can see what the narrator thinks of the people she describes and how she perceives their actions. For example, when she describes Niang "screaming futilely... again and again... in a piercing voice".

## **Chronological Order**

The story is told in chronological order, starting with some of Adeline's earliest memories and detailing the events in a linear format. The author does not skip forward or flash back to the past or future. Although this strictly logical timeline might make the narrative a little less surprising or compelling, the format makes the story seem more realistic and believable, and easier to follow for younger readers.

## **Similes**

A simile compares one thing to another using the words 'like' or 'as', helping to create a picture in the reader's mind. One example is when the author says: "I lied, squirming like a worm" (pg. 111). Here Adeline compares herself to a worm because she feels so uncomfortable and unhappy about lying to Niang. We have an image in our minds of Adeline physically twisting with discomfort, like a worm trying to escape from a hungry bird by burrowing safely down into the earth.