

Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress

Part One:

Chapter One:

1. What is the setting of the novel? Who are the main characters? Where are the main characters?
2. Why were the villagers so suspicious of the narrator's Violin?
3. What did the headman mean when he called the violin a *bourgeois* toy? What was he implying? What evidence from the text supports your answer?
4. Why did Luo change the name of the song to "Mozart is Thinking of *Chairman Mao*?" Was this an intelligent thing to do?
5. Look at the definition of audacity. How was Luo's action an audacious act? What would have been another audacious act Luo could have committed?
6. Who was Chairman Mao? What were some of the actions Mao took after coming to power?
7. Why would Mao hate intellectuals? What are some actions he took against intellectuals?
8. What did Luo and the narrator's parents do? Why were they considered enemies of the people? Is that an appropriate label for the parents? Why/why not?
9. What did Luo's father do that would upset Mao? Why was Luo's father labeled a reactionary?
10. Did Luo's father sleep with the nurse? What evidence from the text makes you believe that?
11. Why did Luo's father admit he slept with the nurse? What makes you believe that? Why would he admit that?
12. Why did Luo hit the narrator when he saw him crying? Was this action justified? What was going on in Luo's mind that would cause him to act this way? What could have Luo done instead?

Chapter Two (pg. 11)

1. Where were the boys banished to? Why was this name appropriate?
2. Where did the boys live?
3. Why do you think their house would become a central point in the village? What in the story makes you believe that? Why might Luo become the master of it? What traits does he exhibit that would illustrate his ability to control it?
4. What was significant about the boys' interaction with the clock? How did they use it to their advantage? Was what they were doing justified?
5. What skills does the narrator have? What skills does Luo have? Whose skills will be more useful during their time at the reeducation camp? What evidence from the story makes you think that?
6. Why were the villagers so drawn to the boys' presentation of the film they saw?