

Discussion Questions for
Peanut Butter Friends in a Chop Suey World
By Deb Brammer

In this book Amy Kramer moves from one culture to another. Each country or a group of people from an area shares ideas and beliefs and attitudes that make up their culture. This culture affects how those people think and talk and act. Amy moved from an American culture to a Chinese culture.

When people move from one culture to a very different culture they often go through three phases:

Phase 1: Wow! This is so cool! Everything is new and different and exciting. It's easy to see the good in the differences.

Phase 2: This stinks! The things that are different seem stupid and disgusting. You feel like you could tell people in the new culture how to do things better, like people do things in your home culture.

Phase 3: This is life. The new culture has both good and bad things. You learn to accept the new culture and change your ways to make the new culture work for you.

As you read *Peanut Butter Friends* notice how Amy works through these three stages.

1. Of all the things Amy experienced in phase 1, when she first moved to Taiwan, which things do you think you would enjoy?
2. If you have read *Two Sides to Everything*, also by Deb Brammer, contrast Amy Kramer's original home in Pinedale, Wyoming with Josh McKay's in Denver, Colorado. Then compare their new homes in Taiwan and New Zealand. What changes did each of them have to make? Why do you think the author chose to make Amy from a small town and Josh from a big city?
3. Do you know any words in a foreign language? Have you ever used them to talk to people in that language who didn't know English? Did they understand what you said?
4. Do you know anyone like Mickey who gets left out by other kids? How do you think the left-out kid feels? Why do you think the other kids leave that person out? Have you ever tried to be friends with a left-out kid? Why is that hard to do?
5. Jessica lives in a beautiful house in Taiwan which is almost like living in America. Her school is similar to an American school and her friends act a lot like Americans, though they live in a Chinese country. Do you think she misses out on anything because of this? What?
6. In chapter eleven Amy goes to Jessica's birthday party, and we begin to see her move into stage 2. How does the party affect Amy's attitude toward her Chinese neighbors?

7. Amy doesn't like these things about her Chop Suey friends: They keep repeating "hallo" and "A-tok-a" when they see her. They stare at her. They give her things she doesn't like. How does the difference in culture affect these things? Are her Chop Suey friends trying to be rude or mean when they do these things? Why do you think they act like this?

8. On page 110 Amy decides she needs to treat her Chop Suey friends better. She decides if she looks them in the eye, smiles at them, and doesn't do anything to hurt them, that is enough. What is she missing?

9. In chapter thirteen Amy defends Mickey's rock drawings and Jessica gets mad. Why do you think this makes Jessica so mad?

10. Throughout the book Jessica tries to change everyone to be like her. Amy tries to change Mickey. In the end Amy learns to accept Mickey for who she is, even though Amy hopes Mickey will become a Christian. How does the author use this to say something about Amy's change in culture?

11. On page 147 Dawn talks about the differences in people, language and food between the American culture and the Chinese culture. When does being different make a culture exciting and when does it make it annoying? How can our attitude make the difference?

12. In chapter seventeen Amy meets the neighbor girl and sees her in a new way. Why does that push Amy toward phase 3?