Many books can meet most if not all CC Standards. However, we have found that some books speak strongly to a few Standards. These one-page applications connect a focused text and the Common Core Standards as written for fifth graders—leaning on this text’s literary strengths.

**RL.5.2**

Ask readers to determine central ideas or themes of a text, to analyze the development of these central ideas and summarize key supporting details and events. This text is rich in events and colorful details. Readers could be invited to record information as they are reading, either on a graphic organizer or in a reader’s notebook. Grace Lin creates a fantasy-inspired book that weaves multiple characters and actions. Readers can collect their thinking across a few chapters, then stop and think—what do I need to hold onto as I continue? Students could jot notes and questions as they are reading. (Post-its might be helpful here.) Ultimately, readers can form ideas about themes of the text; constructs of family, forgiveness, and responsibility may surface as central ideas.

**RL.5.1**

This reading standard requests that readers quote from text to express what the text tells explicitly about events and then to make inferences as they read. In some ways, this book is like a mystery. Much foreshadowing exists from the very start with hints for the reader. Readers are encouraged to utilize reading strategies like asking questions, drawing inferences, and confirming their ideas. Early in the text Mr. Shan states that he lost the book—this is an example of an early clue that leads to asking why and making inferences about the character (and the intricate inner happenings in this text), and Madame Chang adds to the mystery as soon as she is introduced. Readers can then formulate the ideas as RL5.5 invites them to explain how the chapters come together to form the fuller story!

**RL.5.3**

Compare and contrast characters, settings, or events. This text has strong possibilities for characters and events. Parallel stories exist within the text to compare and contrast. Even better, encourage your students to choose a character that begins to grow on them; they can pick two or more events that impact the character and unpack how the events are similar and how they are different.
**RL.5.6**

This standard speaks to the point of view of the narrator’s voice and how that voice influences and affects the telling of the story. This book connects folklore from China with the story of a young run-away, Rendi. The narrator’s voice is consistent throughout the text—encourage readers to seek evidence of the narrator’s voice. How does the point of view impact how events are described? Where does this point of view work for you? (This first person narrator pulls readers into Rendi's story, focusing on his thoughts, feelings, and actions.) How does the author’s choice of narrator voices work for your readers?

This work-around point of view emphasizes **STORYTELLING**, which is celebrated throughout this text. For example, Madame Chang announces, “If I can make you smile...no, if I can make you laugh with this next story, then for every story I tell, you must tell one of your own stories.” (p. 63) At first Rendi asks, “Why does she want me to tell a story anyway?” In the end (spoiler alert), Madame Chang replies, “Because I wanted to know you and when people tell stories, they share things about themselves.” (p. 264). Messages like these can really open readers’ eyes that everyone to tell—and it can motivate them to perhaps write their own.

Storytelling connects to writing standard W.5.3: Invite readers to create their own imagined experiences; students can build on Lin’s mentor texts, not only the novel as a whole, but one or more of the “stories” embedded within the book. Standard W.5.3 outlines five stages to students’ writing their own narratives: orient the reader (setting), narrative techniques (dialogue, description, & pacing), transitional phrases, concrete words and phrases, and conclusion. Or consider writing your own informational texts; the earlier work of Standards RL.5.1, RL.5.2, and RL.5.3 builds toward, Standard W.5.9 which calls for writing a piece based on text evidence from literary texts, supporting readers’ analysis of the story components (characters, events,...).

**SL 5.2**

Summarize a written text aloud. Have students choose chapters to retell for either small group work or for the whole class. Another possibility is to encourage a reader or two to prepare a verbal summary of one of the stories—either focusing on a character or an event as a “Book Talk” to encourage other readers to take interest in this rich text. You can also incorporate video technology to record students’ summarizing, providing important opportunities to reach across the digital divide.

Note: These later ideas refer to the standards across reading, writing, listening, and speaking, four components to grow strong language usage.