

Lowji Discovers America

by Candace Fleming

THEME Cultures

This book is about a boy from India who moves with his family to America. It helps students explore the Big Question: *What happens when two ways of life come together?*



This book will help build students' understanding of world geography, Indian culture, and religious customs.



Genre **Realistic fiction** tells stories of imaginary people who seem real and imaginary events that could really happen.

SUMMARY

This book is about Lowji, a boy who moves with his family from India to a quiet suburb in Illinois. Lowji wants a pet, but Mrs. Crisp, the family's landlady, doesn't allow pets—at least not until Lowji suggests that animals can help her with her chores. Then animals suddenly surround him! When Lowji isn't with the animals, he is in the woods trying to figure out whose hand- and footprints are scattered throughout the forest.

Other Books by Candace Fleming

- *Boxes for Katje*
- *The Hatmaker's Sign*

SNEAK PREVIEW

Match Students and Books

This book will appeal to students who

- enjoy stories with animals in them
- are interested in Indian culture
- enjoy solving mysteries

Comprehension Skills and Strategies

- compare and contrast
- visualize
- draw conclusions
- ask questions
- realism and fantasy
- prior knowledge
- critical thinking

Literary Devices

- figurative language (metaphor)

Vocabulary Strategy

- context clues (synonyms)

How to Use the Book

Students may work independently, as partners, or in small groups.
This book may be divided into four parts for reading.

Before Reading

BUILD BACKGROUND

Display a world map and have students locate India. Write *curry*, *rupee*, *bape*, and *ma* on the board. Tell students that these are some of the Indian words in the book. Challenge students to guess the words' meanings (a mix of hot spices, Indian money, Dad, Mom). Then talk with students about India. Ask: *Have you ever eaten Indian food? Do you know what language people speak in India? Do you know what types of animals live in India?* Ask students to consider what it might be like to live in India. Then have students locate Illinois on the map. Talk about Illinois and what it might be like for a person from India to live in Illinois.

PRACTICE
PAGE

7

Students can use **Student Practice Page 7** to begin thinking about what they would miss if they moved to another country and what they would want in their new country to remind them of home.

INTRODUCE VOCABULARY

PRACTICE
PAGE

8

Use **Student Practice Page 8** to introduce vocabulary or to assess students' understanding of the words before they read. If necessary, provide additional practice with the words. For example, ask students to say or write a new sentence for each word.

Words to Know

expression
landlady
crumpled
sacred
scat
haggled
coincidence
routine
pet sitter
flourish

Reading the Book

PART 1 • PAGES 1–45 In Part 1, students meet Lowji, a nine-year-old boy who leaves Bombay, India, to live in Hamlet, Illinois. Lowji is homesick, but remembers the words his father told him, "Find the silver lining."

COMPREHENSION SKILL Compare and Contrast

PRACTICE
PAGE

9

On **Student Practice Page 9**, students use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast what it is like to live in Bombay and Hamlet. Review with students what they have learned about comparing and contrasting.

- When you compare and contrast, you tell how things are alike and different.
- Clue words such as *like*, *same*, *both*, *also*, and *as well as* can signal that things are alike.

- Clue words such as *different*, *but*, *however*, and *instead of* can signal that things are different.

COMPREHENSION STRATEGY Visualize

Remind students that visualizing is a strategy that can help them compare and contrast. By picturing characters, events, and objects in their minds, they can better understand how those things are alike and different.

Reader Response

See **Teacher’s Guide Page 9** for a possible response to the question, “Lowji’s family moved to America because his mother found a new job there. If you could move anywhere in the world, where would you move to? Why?”

PART 2 • PAGES 46–103 In Part 2, Lowji finds a way to help his landlady with all her work and have animals at the apartment. He also becomes more curious about the mysterious clues he finds in the woods.

COMPREHENSION SKILL Draw Conclusions

On **Student Practice Page 10**, students complete a web with details that describe what kind of person Lowji is. Review with students what they have learned about drawing conclusions.

- A conclusion is a decision you reach after thinking about details and facts in your reading.
- You can use what you already know to draw conclusions about characters and things that happen.

COMPREHENSION STRATEGY Ask Questions

Remind students that good readers ask themselves questions as they read to help themselves draw conclusions. Asking questions such as *What do I know about this character? How has this character acted in the past?* and *What does this event have to do with what has already happened?* can help students understand actions and events that the author doesn’t explain.

Reader Response

See **Teacher’s Guide Page 10** for a possible response to the question, “Mrs. Crisp gets several different animals to help her with her work. What animal do you think could be helpful to you in your life?”

PART 3 • PAGES 104–123 In Part 3, the fun begins as the cat gets a mouse, the dog meets a skunk, the two goats get loose, and the pig and the dog chase each other in the neighbor’s yard.

COMPREHENSION SKILL Realism and Fantasy

On **Student Practice Page 11**, students decide if certain events in the book are realistic or unrealistic (a fantasy). Review realism and fantasy.

- A realistic story tells about something that could happen.

PRACTICE
PAGE

10

PRACTICE
PAGE

11

- A fantasy is a story about something that could not happen.
- Some stories are mostly realistic but may include events that are fantasy.

COMPREHENSION STRATEGY Prior Knowledge

Remind students that good readers use their prior knowledge to help them judge whether or not what they are reading is realistic. When readers think about what they know about real life, they can better understand whether or not the things that happen in a book could happen in real life.

Reader Response

See **Teacher’s Guide Page 11** for a possible response to the question, “Mrs. Pendergast is scared of mice. What is something you are scared of? Why are you scared of it?”

PART 4 • PAGES 124–152 In Part 4, Lowji has his best idea yet. Life in America is full of smiles and new beginnings as Lowji solves a mystery and finds new friends.

LITERARY DEVICE Figurative Language (Metaphor)

On **Student Practice Page 12**, students answer questions about the metaphor included in the story. Help students understand the use of metaphor.

- A metaphor is a comparison between two unlike things.
- Metaphors can become familiar expressions in a language.

Reader Response

See **Teacher’s Guide Page 12** for a possible response to the question, “Do you think silver is a good metaphor for the positive or happy things in life? What would be your metaphor for all the good in your life?”



PRACTICE
PAGE

12

After Reading

COMPREHENSION CHECK

PART 1 • PAGES 1–45

1. **Why do you think Lowji feels sick on the first day in his new apartment in America?** Lowji probably feels sick because he misses India. He misses his friends, his extended family, his servant, and his old home so much that it is making him feel as though he is sick. ( Draw Conclusions)
2. **How is shopping in Hamlet different from shopping in Bombay? How is it similar?** Different: Bombay has many different shopping malls with escalators, elevators, and automatic doors that are often broken, and shoppers haggle before paying. In Hamlet there is one-stop shopping, automatic doors that work, and people who greet you when you walk in. ( Compare and Contrast)

3. **Why did Lowji make a photograph book when he learned he was moving to America?** He made a photograph book because he was afraid that he would forget the faces of his friends and family. (Cause and Effect)
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PART 2 • PAGES 46–103

4. **What is the first animal that Mrs. Crisp gets? Why does she get it?** Mrs. Crisp gets a cat to help her catch the mice in her apartment building. (Sequence)
5. **How would you describe Ironman, or Virgil?** Ironman looks tough and mean, but he is really a nice person. He cares very much for his pet pig, and he is a friend to Lowji, even when no one else is. (Character)
6. **Why do you think Mrs. Crisp will not refer to the animals that she gets as pets?** She will not refer to them as pets because she does not allow pets in her building. She would rather think of them as mousetraps and burglar alarms because that way they serve a purpose. (👁️ Draw Conclusions)
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PART 3 • PAGES 104–123

7. **What fantasy does Lowji make up to make Mrs. Pendergast less scared? How can you tell it is a fantasy?** He tells her that the rats in Bombay have their own city that people go to visit. He says that there are thousands of rooms in the city for all of the rats to live in. It is a fantasy because rats do not have their own cities or their own rooms. (👁️ Realism and Fantasy)
8. **How would you describe the next-door neighbor's yard after the animals have been in it?** The yard is destroyed. All of the flowers and vegetables are ruined. (Setting)
9. **Why do you think Mrs. Crisp's voice sounds sad and tired when she tells Lowji to stay out of her way?** Her voice sounds sad and tired because she has too much work to do and too many animals to take care of. (👁️ Draw Conclusions)

PART 4 • PAGES 124–152

- 10. How is Mrs. Crisp different now compared to how she was at the beginning of the book? How is she the same?** Different: She cares for her animals now, and she calls them pets and thinks of them as family. Similar: She still has a lot of work to do and cannot seem to get it all done by herself. (🔍 Compare and Contrast)
- 11. Why do you think the author called the chapter that starts on page 129 “New Beginnings”?** Possible response: I think the author called it “New Beginnings” because it is the point in the book where Lowji finally has pets to take care of, is not bored in the afternoon, solves the mystery in the woods, and seems happy in America. All of these are new beginnings for Lowji. (Author’s Purpose)
- 12. How are the plants from India and Lowji similar? How are they different?** Similar: They can both grow and flourish in America. Different: Lowji is a person. (🔍 Compare and Contrast)

CRITICAL THINKING

- 1. Lowji guesses that one of Tamika’s wishes is for a pet. What do you think her other wish is for? Explain your answer.** Possible response: I think Tamika wishes that she and Lowji could be good friends. I think she wishes this because she has been trying to get his attention since he moved to Hamlet, and she seems to get along with him. (Inferring)
- 2. Why do you think the author included the Indian-American dictionary at the end of the book? Do you think it is helpful? Why or why not?** Possible response: I think the author included the dictionary so that readers could better understand the different Indian words that appear in the book. I think the dictionary is helpful because it helps readers understand the way Lowji speaks throughout the book. (Evaluating and Critiquing Ideas and Text)

ASSESSMENT

Use the Selection Test on **Student Practice Page 13** to assess students’ understanding of the book. See **Teacher’s Guide Page 13** for answers.

**PRACTICE
PAGE****13**

If You Moved to Another Country

Directions Imagine that you have to move to another country. What things about your life in America would you miss? What things would you want in your new country that would make you feel more at home? Fill in the chart below.

What I Would Miss in My Town	What I Would Want in My New Country

Words to Know

Directions Read the definitions. Then use the words to complete the sentences.

coincidence, *n.* the happening by chance of two or more events at the same time

crumpled, *v.* crushed something together or out of its original shape

expression, *n.* a word or group of words with a particular meaning

flourish, *v.* to grow and develop well

haggled, *v.* argued for the lowest price

landlady, *n.* a woman who owns buildings or land that is rented to others

pet sitter, *n.* someone who takes care of another person's pets

routine, *n.* activities performed at the same time in the same way every day

sacred, *adj.* holy, religious

scat, *v.* to go away or leave quickly

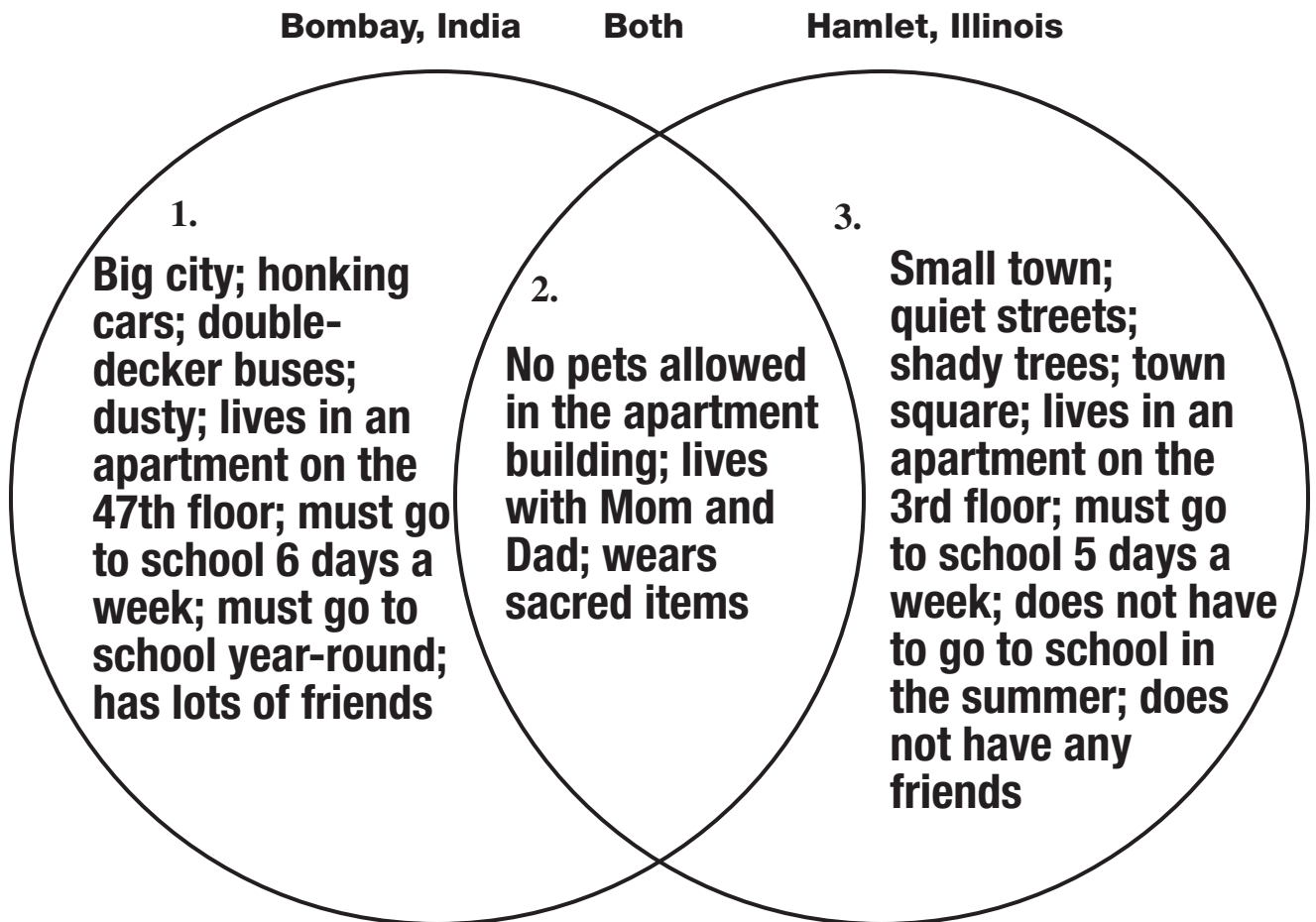
- The customer **haggled** with the shop owner over the price.
- It was a **coincidence** that the two girls wore the same skirt.
- The flowers will **flourish** if you give them plenty of water.
- You should call the **landlady** if something breaks in your apartment.
- The neighbor did not like children in her yard so she told them to **scat**.
- The church we visited had beautiful **sacred** objects on the altar.
- My parents hired a **pet sitter** to feed and walk our dog while we were away.
- Howdy* is an English **expression** that means "hello."
- Brushing my teeth is part of my morning **routine**.
- Rob made a mistake in his letter so he **crumpled** it up.

Synonyms are words that have the same or nearly the same meaning. For example, *student* and *pupil* are synonyms. Write a synonym for each of the words below.

- crumpled **Possible responses: squashed, wrinkled**
- flourish **Possible responses: grow, thrive**

Life in India and Life in America

Directions In Part 1 of *Lowji Discovers America*, Lowji moves from Bombay, India, to Hamlet, Illinois. In the diagram below, write details you learned about Lowji’s life in Bombay in the circle on the left. Write details you learned about Lowji’s life in Hamlet in the circle on the right. Where the two circles overlap, write details about Lowji’s life that are the same in both places. **Possible responses:**



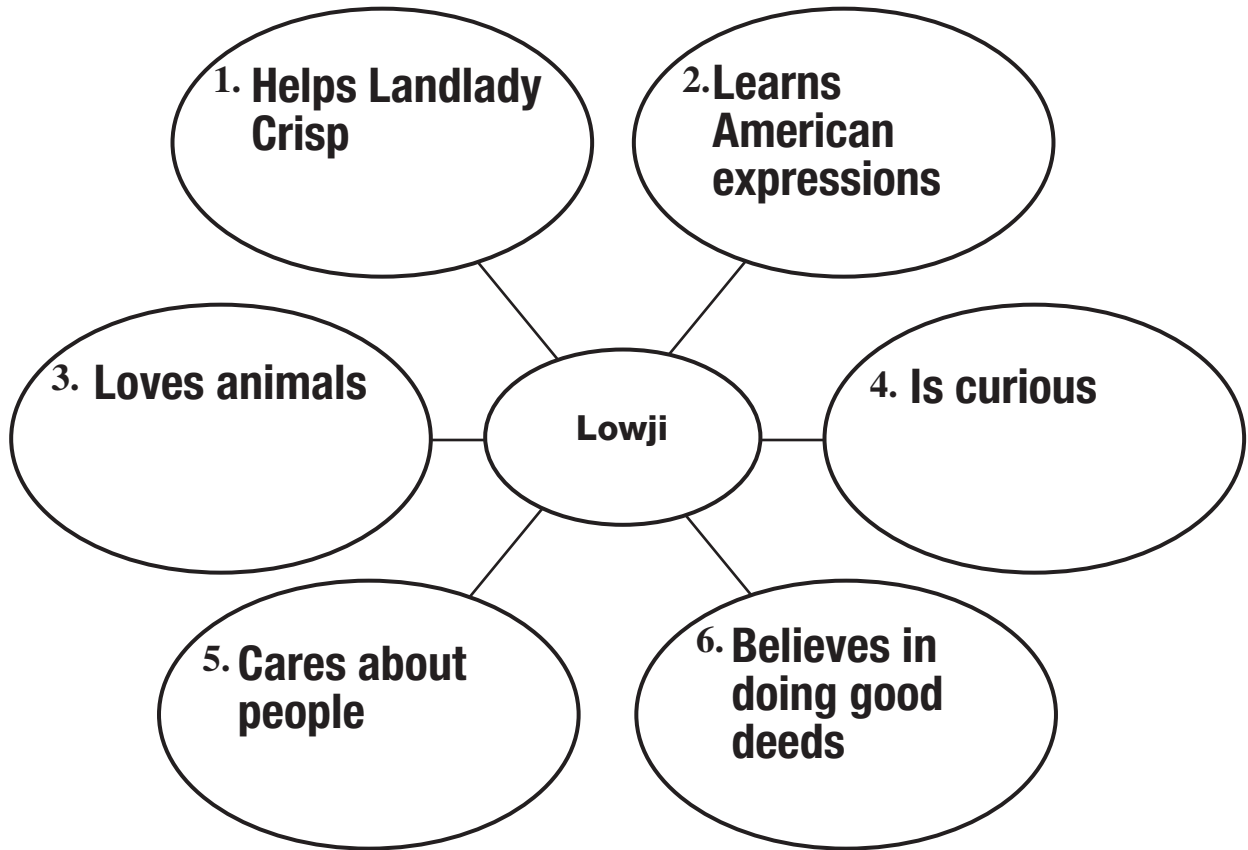
Reader Response Text to Self

4. Lowji’s family moved to America because his mother found a new job there. If you could move anywhere in the world, where would you move to? Why?

Possible responses: I would move to China so I could see the Great Wall. I would move to Australia so I could surf and see kangaroos.

What Is the Boy from Bombay Like?

Directions Read Part 2 of *Lowji Discovers America*. Fill in the web below with details you learn about Lowji. **Possible responses:**



7. Look at the details you wrote in the web. What can you conclude about Lowji based on those details?

Lowji is a kind person who cares about others. He loves animals, his family, and his friends. He is curious and enjoys having fun and staying busy.

Reader Response Text to Self

8. Mrs. Crisp gets several different animals to help her with her work. What animal do you think could be helpful to you in your life? **Possible response: I think a horse would be helpful for carrying heavy loads, a dog would be helpful for fetching things, or a snake would be helpful for catching mice.**

Realistic Events or Fantasy Events?

Directions Read Part 3 of *Lowji Discovers America*. Then use what you know to judge whether or not the events below are realistic. In the second column of the chart, write *Realistic* if the event could happen in real life. Write *Fantasy* if the event could only happen in a fantasy.

Event	Realistic or Fantasy?
1. Trapper catches a mouse.	Realistic
2. King gets sprayed by a skunk.	Realistic
3. Lowji rides on Blossom's back as he runs around the neighborhood.	Fantasy
4. Blossom and King destroy a vegetable garden.	Realistic
5. The rats in Bombay have their own city.	Fantasy

6. Why do you think the author includes some events that are realistic and some events that are fantasy?

Possible response: I think the author includes realistic events so that readers can connect with the characters. I think fantasy is included because it adds excitement.

7. Is *Lowji Discovers America* a realistic story or a fantasy? Tell why you think so.

Possible response: It is a realistic story because almost all of the events that take place in the book could happen in real life.

Reader Response Text to Self

8. Mrs. Pendergast is scared of mice. What is something you are scared of? Why are you scared of it? **Possible responses: I am afraid of the dark because I am not able to see what is around me. I am afraid of heights because I am scared of falling.**

Exploring a Metaphor

A **metaphor** is a comparison between two unlike things.

Directions Answer the questions below about how the expression “Every cloud has a silver lining” is used as a metaphor in *Lowji Discovers America*.

Possible responses:

1. What do you think the expression “Every cloud has a silver lining” means? What does “cloud” stand for? What does “silver lining” stand for?

In every bad situation (cloud), you can find some good (silver lining).

2. Why do you think Lowji’s father tells him to “Find the silver lining” before they move to America?

His father wants him to look for the good in moving to America instead of concentrating on the bad.

3. In the story, “silver lining” becomes shortened to “silver.” What are some things that are silver to Lowji?

Some things that are like silver to Lowji are Mrs. Crisp’s animals; kids that are friendly to him; Ironman and his pig; his new friend, Tamika; and the seeds from India that grow into plants in America.

4. How does “finding the silver lining” help Lowji change from the beginning of the story to the end?

Whenever Lowji feels sad, he remembers what his father said. It helps Lowji recognize when good things are happening to him, and it gives him hope that things will get better when he is feeling bad.

Reader Response Text to Self

5. Do you think silver is a good metaphor for the positive or happy things in life? What would be your metaphor for all the good in your life? **Possible response: I think silver is a good metaphor because it is bright and shiny and reminds me of good things. I would compare the good in my life to ice cream because ice cream is really sweet.**

Selection Test

Directions Mark the space for your answer.

- Why is Lowji looking forward to moving to America?
 He will go to a new school.
 He wants to leave his friends.
 He hopes he will get a pet.
- What does Lowji find in the woods behind his apartment?
 a horse, a cat, and two goats
 a kid's footprints
 a boy who wants friends
- What does the paper bird that Lowji makes stand for?
 his wish
 his age
 his pet bird
- What can you conclude about Lowji based on the way he helps the pig outside All-Mart?
 He does not listen to rules or to what adults tell him to do.
 He cares about animals and knows when they are not well.
 He only cares about impressing other children his age.
- Why does Mrs. Crisp get a cat?
 to catch the mice in the apartment building
 to scare away the other animals in the neighborhood
 to have a pet that she can play with and cuddle
- Whom does Mrs. Crisp teach Lowji about?
 Abraham Lincoln
 the girl next door
 Elvis Presley
- What is something that Lowji and Mrs. Crisp have in common?
 Neither of them likes animals.
 They both wear sacred items.
 They are both from India.
- Which event could not really happen?
 The picture of Jamshed talks to Lowji.
 Lowji and his family move to America.
 Mrs. Crisp gets two goats.
- What is Lowji's last, best idea?
 to go for a walk in the woods
 to write a letter to his friend
 to be Mrs. Crisp's pet sitter
- Whose mystery handprints and footprints were in the woods?
 Trapper's
 Tamika's
 Mrs. Pendergast's