

obstetrics Caring for women who are having babies.

Wordsworth A Romantic poet who wrote during the 18th and 19th centuries.

'I do believe you have potential. Tell me, what would you study?'

My heart gave a giant lurch as it dawned on me that he was agreeing to let me go. How marvellous it was simply to be alive! Study? I thought. Going to England is like entering heaven. Does it matter what you do after you get to heaven?

But Father was expecting an answer. What about creative writing? After all, I had just won first prize in an international writing competition!

'I plan to study literature. I'll be a writer.'

'Writer!' he scoffed. 'You are going to starve! What language are you going to write in and who is going to read your writing? Though you may think you're an expert in both Chinese and English, your Chinese is actually rather elementary. As for your English, don't you think the native English speakers can write better than you?'

I waited in silence. I did not wish to contradict him.

'You will go to England with Third Brother this summer and you will go to medical school. After you graduate, you will specialise in **obstetrics**. Women will always be having babies. Women patients prefer women doctors. You will learn to deliver their babies. That's a foolproof profession for you. Don't you agree?'

Agree? Of course I agreed. Apparently, he had it all planned out. As long as he let me go to university in England, I would study anything he wished. How did that line go in **Wordsworth's** poem? *Bliss was it in that dawn to be alive.*

'Father, I shall go to medical school in England and become a doctor. Thank you very, very much.'

ACTIVITY 1

A01

SKILLS

REASONING, CREATIVITY,
INTERPERSONAL SKILLS

▼ CHILDHOOD AUTOBIOGRAPHIES

In a small group or with a partner, discuss the following questions.

- 1 Do you think that adults always remember the incidents of their childhood accurately? Do you think that this matters when reading a book like *Chinese Cinderella*?
- 2 Some critics think that characters in *Chinese Cinderella* are either all good or all bad, and that very few of the characters are realistic. What do you think of this point of view?

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Adeline Yen Mah writes to inform, explain and describe. She is writing for a general audience which may be interested in childhood memoirs, or perhaps in understanding the culture that Yen Mah comes from. Yen Mah writes in such a way that you can understand not only what is happening, but also the emotional impact of each incident in the passage.

The key to understanding the piece is to understand Adeline and her thoughts and feelings about boarding school and her ambition to travel to England. Most important of all is her relationship with her father.