

Daughter of the Mountains Study Guide

Daughter of the Mountains by Louise S. Rankin

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Plot Summary

Daughter of the Mountains is a story about a little Tibetan girl named Momo who had always wanted a red-gold Lhasa Terrier like those owned by Tibetan Buddhist priests. The story begins with Momo's obsession to acquire a Lhasa Terrier for herself and then receiving one tied to a prophecy that the dog will bring adventure and fortune. When the dog, Pempa, is stolen by a trader, Momo pursues him all the way to India, by herself, until she finally tracks down the British woman to whom Pempa was sold. When the woman, Lady Paton, hears Momo's story and sees the bond she has with Pempa, Paton graciously returns Pempa to Momo and showers fortune on her family.

The book contains eight chapters. Chapter one, The Gift of a Red-Gold Lhasa Terrier, introduces Momo and her family, along with Momo's obsession with acquiring a red-gold Lhasa Terrier for herself that had started when she was four years old. The text takes the reader through the next several years, with Momo developing an intense spiritual life built around getting this sort of dog until her prayers are finally answered. But when she has Pempa named, she is given a prophecy by an astrologer, who tells her that Pempa will bring adventure (which in her culture is tied with the notion of peril) and fortune. Chapter two, Adventure! The Beginning of the Prophecy, takes the reader briefly through the next several years of Momo's life as she becomes attached to Pempa and he becomes a daily feature of her life. However, one day, when some traders pass through her town, Pempa is stolen and Momo quickly runs off, convinced that she will be able to find him.

From here, chapter three, The Giant Staircase and the Forest, begins. Readers begin to see a review by the author of all the cultural distinctiveness of Tibet and the many landmarks associated with it. The book gradually transitions into Indian culture in Calcutta, describing landmarks and cultural elements all along the way. Chapter three shows Momo traveling all alone, bound and determined to find her Pempa, until she is captured by a family in whose home Momo stayed in chapter four, Captured by the Woman at Rhenok. She quickly escapes the next day and continues to make her way through the countryside in chapter five, The Ten Traders and Tsu Foo. All along the way, the people Momo meets discourage her from pursuing Pempa, telling her that it is too dangerous or hopeless. But all the while, Momo refuses to listen. She does meet one young girl named Tsu Foo, who is enslaved to her aunt and uncle but who helps her find the traders Momo believes were responsible for taking her dog. When she meets Big Dorje, one of the traders, he refuses to help her.

Chapter six, Protector of the Poor, Momo meets a British man, a very high ranking official and the only Englishman allowed in Tibet, the Lat Sahib. He is extremely gracious to her and gives her the money to travel to Calcutta to find her dog. He then charges Big Dorje with her care. Chapter six takes her on two train rides on her way to Calcutta and describes the cultural transitions in between. At the end of chapter six, Momo is pick-pocketed in the streets of Calcutta. In chapter seven, Lotus Blossom's Plan, she is still able to find her way to the shop where Pempa was sold. She finds out that she probably cannot get him back but she never gives up hope. Eventually the



shop owner, Wing Fong, is badgered enough by his daughter, Lotus Blossom, to send Momo on his own rickshaw to the Lady Paton's Palace to seek out her dog. In chapter eight, Fulfillment of the Prophecy: Good Fortune, Momo meets the Lady Paton and impresses her with her story so much that Lady Paton graciously returns Pempa to her, reprimands the thief and gives her father a wonderful new job. The story ends with the prophecy fulfilled.



Chapters 1-2, The Gift of a Red-Gold Lhasa Terrier, Adventure! The Beginning of the Prophecy

Chapters 1-2, The Gift of a Red-Gold Lhasa Terrier, Adventure! The Beginning of the Prophecy Summary

Chapter one opens in the mountains of Tibet in the home of a small Tibetan family. Momo, a little girl, has fallen in love with the idea of getting a red-gold Lhasa Terrier at the age of four, and the first chapter tells the story of how her wishing gradually amplified until at last she gets the dog she wants. She first saw the dog at the nearby monastery of Kargayu, where her family traveled several times a year. Her father, Nema, was too poor to fulfill Momo's wish, which continued without exception until she was eight. Momo's family along with the Tibetan Buddhist community of which she was part, is very religiously focused. They often perform ceremonies and pray regularly to God, the Enlightened One, the Buddha. Momo understands the Buddha as the one who taught love and kindness and helped the people to scare away the demons that plagued them.

Momo most harassed her mother for the dog, though, since her father Nema was often away. Nema tells Momo that if the Lord Buddha wishes, he will give her a dog. Her visits to the monastery throw Momo into a minor frenzy of prayer, turning a local prayer wheel to amplify her prayers. She prays the powerful prayer "Om Mani Padme Hum". She is determined to make the Buddha listen to her, praying with all her power in her eighth year. Eventually she gives a glass marble and a glass bottle to the Buddha shrine as a way of demanding that the Buddha hear her. The Buddhist priests notice her furious prayers and encourage her to focus on more heavenly wishes but she refuses. They tell her that her prayer will be granted anyway, though.

Momo is overwhelmed with joy. She believes getting her dog will only be a matter of time. Eventually, after the Indian monsoon, a mule caravan of tradesmen will come by her community. They often stop in Longram, her village, to rest. When they come, Momo and her mother meet with them, and they are glad to receive Momo, for they love children. Momo's mother tells them that all she wants in the world is a red-gold Lhasa Terrier. They are amused, and it turns out that they have a pure bred red-gold Lhasa Terrier puppy, born from a dog owned by the Grand Lama himself. They give Momo the puppy and charge her with its care. Momo praises the Holy One who heard her prayers. She then turns to the job of naming the puppy, a thought she had never had before. She asks an astrologer, Dawa, what the name should be, and he recommends the name Pempa, the day of the full moon and Saturday. He then prophesies that Pempa will bring Momo good fortune and adventure.



Chapter two begins by running through the next two years. Momo and her mother forget the prophecy while the years move on. Pempa grows quickly, fed on healthy, strong food, like yak milk. Pempa has a kind, gentle and polite personality. The adventure still comes, however, despite being forgotten. One day, after a terrible storm, five men come to her little house to recuperate from and weather the storm. After some smoke from their fireplace gets in her eyes, Momo loses track of Pempa and runs down into her village to find him. She asks some local community members where Pempa might be, and they tell her that one of the men from the mule train has stolen him. Pempa fought him, he says.

Momo is overwhelmed. A boy tells her that they were going to take him out of Tibet and into Calcutta in India. Momo becomes desperate to catch them no matter how long it takes. She prepares for a long trip and tells her mother she is going to look for him. Her mother has no idea that Momo is planning an extremely long and dangerous trip. Momo knows the way down the Great Trade Route, the only path to Calcutta, and eventually makes her way around the mountain, Jelep La, and enters the nearby region of Sikkim. She pauses periodically and prays to various goddesses. Eventually she reaches India, the "land of the turquoise", which represents power and wealth to her. The Tibetans find the turquoise a precious jewel. Momo realizes she would have to climb down the mountain into India and go to the hamlet of Kapup, where her father likely is on a trade mission. She knows, however, that if she tells her father or even meets with him, he would tell her it was too dangerous and to give up. That would not be what she wants to hear, for she would never lose Pempa. On the way, she passes various important landmarks, one of which is an area where a number of British troops died.

Eventually, Momo comes upon the village of Gnatong, where many violent men lived, fought and killed one another. The evil passions of angry Tibetans would be taken out here, so as not to defile Tibet. It was full of horror. Only the rough men of Bhutan would live there permanently. No mule trains stop there, but instead go to Kapup. Momo is now scared and wails for her mother and to Lord Buddha and minor goddesses like Tara. The author notes that she had theological beliefs inherited from both parents. Her mother believes God is close and present and that evil has no positive being but is overwhelmed by good. Her father believes that God is far away and that evil is a fact of daily life that must be fought. Momo's child theology sees both God and evil as present. She has joy, hope and fear. It is now nightfall and she is very scared. She moves on along the path but cannot see herself. She hears breathing, someone breathing deeply and close to her. Eventually it touches her and it is cold and damp. Momo screams but feels herself falling. She then goes unconscious.

Chapters 1-2, The Gift of a Red-Gold Lhasa Terrier, Adventure! The Beginning of the Prophecy Analysis

Chapters one and two tell two distinct stories that simultaneously introduce the main characters of the book and the main plotline. It also develops the early plotline. The main character of the book is a young girl named Momo. She lives in Tibet and is a very



devout Buddhist due to the religious upbringing of her family. The book details Buddhist religious practices in her area in some detail, particularly its contrasting monotheistic, non-theistic and polytheistic aspects. The main line of development consists in Momo developing a deep attachment to the idea of getting a red-gold Lhasa terrier. All of chapter one is focused on her desire for the dog and her attempts to convince the Buddha to give her one. Eventually, after much prayer and sacrifice, her family meets a train of muleteers. One of them gives her a dog and an astrologer tells her to name him Pempa. She does so. However, the astrologer, Dawa, also makes an important prophesy: that Pempa will bring good fortune to Momo and her family, but that he will also bring adventure, which involves risk.

Chapter two flash-forwards two years. Pempa has grown up and Momo and her mother have forgotten the prophet words. After a storm, some muleteers stop in town and one of them steals Pempa. When Momo discovers this, she is distraught and packs for a long trip. She is perhaps only eleven at this time and tells her mother that she is off to find Pempa, but her mother thinks this is merely a search around the village. She is unaware that Pempa has been stolen by potentially dangerous men. So Momo goes off on a long trek, all by herself. It is quite dangerous, but Momo displays great bravery. Along the trip, the author notes that many important landmarks she passes and their spiritual significance, places of both theological light and theological darkness. When night falls and Momo reached the dangerous village of Gnatong, she becomes scared, calls out prayers, and then falls and becomes unconscious. Something has grabbed her, a man or an animal or something else and she does not know what it is. Thus the main plot is set-up: Momo must find Pempa, her special dog that carries with him a powerful prophecy.



Chapters 3-4, The Giant Staircase and the Forest, Captured by the Woman at Rhenok

Chapters 3-4, The Giant Staircase and the Forest, Captured by the Woman at Rhenok Summary

Chapter three is a chapter of travel. Momo is finding her way down to Kalimpong, a city in India that is far away but where the mule train will stop. Momo hopes to get there in order to find the man who took Pempa and to recover Pempa so that the prophecy can be fulfilled. Momo wakes up in a field next to a buffalo. She had a bump on her head, but there had never been any danger. Momo then eats something from her pack and travels on. Throughout the day, she travels down the "giant staircase", a series of rocks and paths that lead down into India from the mountains. In the towns she stops in, she relies on the hospitality of strangers. However, many of the women she meets, the women providing her with food, suggest that she give up her search. They maintain that the mule train is too far ahead and that it is dangerous for little Momo to try and find them. But Momo refuses. Her obstinacy keeps her from even considering giving up.

Momo travels from town to town and meeting people there in chapter three. There are signs of cultural, ethnic and linguistic change as Momo passes into India. She finds the people fascinating, along with their styles of clothes and food. She travels to the village on Lingtu and learns that the mule train is headed for Kalimpong but will stop at a bazaar in Rongli. She then travels to Sedonchin and then to Lingtam, where the giant staircase ends. When she reaches Lingtam, there are dark-skinned Indians and woman in saris. Some boys make fun of her in the town and she prays to avoid being angry. But the boys seem to be busy following her. Apparently, Momo has done something wrong. She is being chased and she has no idea why. Eventually she bumps into a merchant while running, and the merchant captures her. She screams and tries to beat him off of her despite being appalled by violence due to her Buddhist faith. The crowd begin to crowd around her and they drag her up a hill.

Chapter four is full of disappointment. The people are angry with Momo because they think she stole a merchant's wages. But in fact it was a little thief named Tulsi. A boy who can communicate with her helps the crowd figure this out. The boy, it turns out, saw Pempa and knew that the mule train was taking the dog to Calcutta to sell to an English woman who had offered the mule rider 100 rupees (which was a large sum of money). The boy is named Little Dorje and the merchant Momo had run into is named Big Dorje. Little Dorje tells Momo to go home, that her search are hopeless, but she refuses. He then tells her to go see Big Dorje to see if he and some fellow traders would take her to Kalimpong. Momo crosses a bridge in the rain and finds a place to stay. She explains



her story and discusses her prophecy and was once again encouraged to go home. Afterward, Momo continues to travel, seeing a monkey family along the way.

Momo eventually finds Big Dorje and ten other traders. They carry her through the increasingly hot terrain (unusual for a Tibetan like Momo to experience). They stop to stay for another night and tell her to give up. They tell her that even if she gets to Kalimpong, she will never get to Calcutta because she does not have the money to take the train at Giellekhola to Calcutta. Momo is upset but determined to go forward, believing in the prophecy she received. However, the traders and the family they stay with know her father and decide to forcibly take her home, despite her wishes. She is very upset and tries to escape, but the merchants trap her for the night in a little town called Rhenok.

Chapters 3-4, The Giant Staircase and the Forest, Captured by the Woman at Rhenok Analysis

Chapters three and four slowly built towards the climax of the book. They are surprisingly slow moving. There are some important events along the way, such as Momo recovering from her late night scare and her being captured by the merchant who believed that she stole from him. She is lucky that she keeps meeting hospitable people, particularly Little Dorje, who helps her escape the clutches of the merchant, Big Dorje, and who tells her what is happening with Pempa and how he was fighting against the muleteers who had him. Momo is encouraged. Chapters three and four both show that Momo is completely determined. Perhaps the primary feature is that Momo is faced with constant discouragement from others. Everyone tells her to give up and turn home and while everyone still feeds her and helps her, they struggle to discourage her. Momo refuses to be discovered. Here religious faith keeps her going. She prays to the Buddha and minor gods often and pushes forward because she believes in the prophecy that was given to her.

In one way, one can read chapters three and four as mostly concerning character development. Momo is the main character and one sees her determination and courage, buoyed by her religious faith, carrying her on to find her dog against all hope. The impressive character trait of Momo's is not only her faith, but also her steadfast ability to avoid constant second-guessing of her decisions by others, especially at such a young age.



Chapters 5-6, The Ten Traders and Tsu Foo, Protector of the Poor

Chapters 5-6, The Ten Traders and Tsu Foo, Protector of the Poor Summary

Chapter six begins with fear. Momo is trapped in the house of Rhenok. She prays to be released from captivity there, but for several hours she is forced to work in the fields with the fat, old woman of the house, Dolma. When she asks when she will be released, Dolma laughs and says that she would be forced to work for her for a while since she had no other help. Momo becomes so angry that she hits Dolma with a pan and cuts off the rope that keeps her trapped. She then runs off. Dolma is too fat and out of shape to catch her.

After she runs off, Momo starts to make very quick progress on her way to Kalimpong. She sees many types of people along the way, along with many new plants and animals. When she reaches Kalimpong, she is shocked by all the people there and how packed they are all with one another. She sees people carrying large pots and baggage and is impressed that they can do the work that mules do in Tibet. She is happy to be in Kalimpong but rushes to find the traders. Her hope is that Big Dorje will be gracious and give her money for a ticket to board the train.

Eventually Momo finds the ten traders of which Big Dorje is a member, but she sneaks outside of the house to sleep so she can catch them in the morning. As she is moving around the side of the house, she accidentally trips a girl around her age named Tsu Foo, who is the servant of the house. Tsu Foo is kind to Momo and has her stay with her in her own very small lodging place. Since Tsu Foo must serve the traders in the morning, they will not leave without her and she can wake Momo up in time to catch them. Tsu Foo's story is very sad, as her parents had died the previous year and her mother's brother, Lop San, and his wife treated her cruelly by forcing her to work. In the morning, Momo follows the traders to the train station and is almost hit by a motor car along the way; Momo is shocked as she had only heard of motor cars before. When Momo finally reaches Big Dorje, she begs for money for a ticket and promises to work for Big Dorje to pay off the money. He scoffs at her and refuses. He rides away as the train rides away, right in front of Momo's eyes. She cries as the chapter ends.

Momo's spirits are perked up in chapter six. She is greeted by a tall British gentleman who shows her great mercy. He speaks to Momo about why she is crying, and Momo explains her divine prophecy and her quest to find Pempa. The British man tells her that her prayers have been answered since the Holy One acted through him. He then gave her enough money for a ticket from Kalimpong all the way to Calcutta (two stops), enough money to come all the way home and enough money to stay in a hostel along the way. He then orders Big Dorje to look out for her under his command and to make sure no harm comes to her. Big Dorje cowers before the Britishman.



Momo is overjoyed, but when she gets on the train Big Dorje, an old village woman and Momo have a conversation where Big Dorje explains to Momo that the British man is Lat Sahib, a Prince among the British and an advisor to Tibet. He spoke Tibetan to Momo and in fact is a close adviser of the government and the only Britishman allowed in Tibet. He knows the Dalai Lama personally. Dorje is overwhelmed that Lat Sahib has charged him with finding a dog when there are so many people suffering that are struggling. He is also frustrated that he has the responsibility of protecting Momo from danger. When they reach their first stop, Momo is overwhelmed by all the people. She sees Muslims and Sikh Muslims for the first time, along with many other types of people. She then gets her ticket to Calcutta and boards an incredibly crowded train with the ten traders. When the train stops, Dorje tells Momo to keep her eye on his hat and follow them through the crowds. But when a boy rips off Momo's red scarf to get the money she is carrying, she trips, falls and hits her head. When she looks up, Big Dorje is gone and she has no money.

Chapters 5-6, The Ten Traders and Tsu Foo, Protector of the Poor Analysis

Chapters five and six continue to show that good fortune and adventure both shine on little Momo. She wakes up in chapter five the slave of the fat, old Dolma but prays and quickly escapes. On her travels, she sees many wonderful things and is very hopeful, praying along the way. But towards the end of chapter six, she runs into Tsu Foo, who is basically a slave of her uncle and aunt to whom she was given after her parents died. Tsu Foo helps Momo follow the traders from her home. Momo is again greeted with mercy just before defeat, for Big Dorje shows her no mercy and will not help her get on the train to Calcutta.

And chapter six opens with a message of hope just after the apparent despair at the end of chapter five. A famous British diplomat to Tibet, Lat Sahib, has mercy on her and gives her the money she needs to get to Calcutta and back and he even gives her enough money to find somewhere to stay along the way. He then puts her in the charge of Big Dorje, a great irony. Momo carries no resentment. Lat Sahib assured her the Holy One was with her and an old village woman on the train did the same. Again both fortune and adventure/trouble find their way into a cyclical pattern in Momo's life. She has a wonderful train ride but when she gets to Calcutta she is pickpocketed and loses sight of Big Dorje in the enormous Calcutta crowds. At the close of chapter six, she is once again lost.



Chapters 7-8, Lotus Blossom's Plan, Fulfillment of the Prophecy, Good Fortune

Chapters 7-8, Lotus Blossom's Plan, Fulfillment of the Prophecy, Good Fortune Summary

In chapter seven, Momo is alone in the crowd. She cries "Thief!" but no one hears her or understands her, given that most of them speak Hindustan. It takes a while for the crowd to clear. Momo is furious, but when the crowd lets up, she finds her way to a Tibetan temple and two priests guide her to the Chinese trading shop of Wing Fong. When Momo reaches Wing Fong, she finds the ten traders there, and one speculates that the Holy One must assuredly be with her for her to have found the place. Momo then speaks with Wing Fong, who tells her that the man with her dog had gone home yesterday and that Momo's dog has been sold. Wing Fong had three children, an older daughter, Lotus Blossom, a younger daughter, White Jade, and a son, Gift of Heaven. They all met Momo and sympathize with her deeply. They badger Wing Fong to tell Momo who Pempa was sold to.

Reluctantly, Wing Fong tells them that Pempa was sold to an English lady, Paton Lady Memsahib, wife of the Military Secretary of the Governor of Bengal. She is a great source of business for Wing Fong and he does not want to jeopardize his good relationship with her. He also tells the children that the seller had gone back to Tibet. Momo cries and screams and Wing Fong's daughters cry with her. Wing Fong then reports that the last year that Lady Memsahib had visited the shop and made arrangements with a trader to try and find a Lhasa Terrier. She then offered him 100 rupees. The trade had occurred only a day before. He then tells Momo to give up, but Momo angrily refuses. Lotus Blossom then hatches a plan to use Wing Fong's rickshaw to send Momo directly to the Military Secretary's home. Momo happily gets in the rickshaw and then the driver is off.

Chapter eight opens with Momo in the rickshaw with Sita-ram, her driver. He quickly comes across the black car with Lady Paton in it, and Sita-ram exchanges harsh words with her driver. After the driver leaves, Sita-ram follows him until he and Momo reach the palace of Burra Lat Sahib. It is not easy to enter, however, as two small but sturdy Gurkha guards stop her. When she communicates her story to them, they tell her to go home because the Lady had spent a fortune for the dog. But Momo is still determined and darts between them, running to enter the palace. They catch her and one of the guards, Gopal, loses his patience with her. Had she entered, the butler, Abdul, his enemy, would have used it against him. Momo struggles and then gives up and weeps.

Abdul and Lady Paton appear. Lady Paton sees Momo but cannot understand her, despite recognizing her visible misery. She then asks Gopal what Momo is saying.



Gopal wants to lie so as not to upset the Lady, but he knows that "the English worshipped truth as their God" and that lying to the Lady would come back to harm him. The Lady is amazed to hear Momo's story and has Momo call for Pempa to see if he recognizes her. Pempa hears her from across the palace and shoots down to see Momo and leaps at her. They hug and the Lady is amazed. She insists that for the time being, Momo keep Pempa. The next day she and her husband would hear Momo's story for themselves.

The next day Momo and Gopal go to see Sir Hugh and Lady Paton. They are shocked by her courage. Momo tells her entire story through Gopal and proclaims that her path was guided by God. She tells them of Lat Sahib. It turns out that he is their friend, as they refer to him as "Christopher". Momo also communicates the theft of her money and begs the Sir and Lady to give her alms in accord with their religion. The Lady is happy to give her Pempa and Momo is overwhelmed. The Lady then has a letter sent to Christopher to watch over Momo and to rescue Tsu Foo and give her to the Lady's friend, Christy Memsahib, who would give her a good job. She then tells Momo that fortune has found her and that they will ensure that Christopher gives her father a much better job as a caretaker for a bungalow. Momo is so happy she prostrates herself in front of the Lady. The Lady also instructs her men to make sure that Nema Doorg, the thief, is hunted down and forced to use the silver she gave him to buy a Lhasa Terrier honestly and to tell him that the Lat Sahib will not forget his treachery. Should he do it again, he will be severely punished. The Lady then gives Momo enough money to return home and Gopal, Pempa and Momo leave the palace. Before she leaves Calcutta, Gopal shows her the river, "Mother Ganges" and explains its power to cleanse sin. Momo was in awe of its beauty. She then leaves for home happy that her prophecy has come true.

Chapters 7-8, Lotus Blossom's Plan, Fulfillment of the Prophecy, Good Fortune Analysis

Chapters seven and eight are the last two chapters of the book. Chapter seven continues to ratchet up the tension of the major plot line. Momo's money has been stolen and she has lost sight of Big Dorje and the traders. However, as usual, she does not give up and makes her way to a Buddhist Temple, where two priests send her to the shop of Wing Fong, a Chinese man who runs a shop that houses the ten traders. When she reaches there, Wing Fong tells her that Pempa has been sold to a powerful and rich Englishwoman whose husband is a high-ranking government official. She had paid quite a bit of money, so Wing Fong emphasized that Momo should give up. But Momo, yet again, became angry and refused to believe him. Things seemed hopeless, however, since it was not clear how she would approach the Lady Paton. There is only a sliver of hope, however, and it arises when Lotus Blossom, Wing Fong's daughter, convinces him to send Momo to the Palace where the Lady lives courtesy of his rickshaw and driver, Sita-ram.

Chapter eight ends the book. Sita-ram takes Momo to the steps of the Palace where two guards blocked Momo's path. She tells them her story but one of the guards, Gopal,



refuses to allow her to enter. After some argument, Momo makes enough of a scene to attract the attention of the Lady Paton, who asks about her story. The Lady is amazed and allows Momo to have Pempa. When Momo communicates her story to the Lady Paton and her husband, Sir Hugh, they bestow great fortune on Momo in accord with the prophecy, giving her father a new job, reprimanding Nema Doorg, the thief, and giving Momo the money she needed to get home. The book ends with its climax with an almost invisible denouement.

The main two elements of the book that culminate here are Momo's determination and her religious faith. Both have been vindicated and Pempa restored to her. She was successful.



Characters

Momo

Momo is the book's main character. She is a small Tibetan girl from the "hill country". Her father is a mail carrier and is often absent from home. Momo grows up a headstrong little girl with her eyes set on getting a red-gold Lhasa Terrier like the one the Buddhist priests had at her local Kargayu Temple. She is also devoutly religious and has unshakeable faith in the goodness and deliverance of Buddha, the Holy One and a number of other deities, such as Tara. Momo believes strongly in the prophecy she receives when Pempa is named. Pempa is supposed to bring adventure and fortune and Momo believes this without a single doubt, despite countless people telling her to give up on trying to find Pempa. Momo is often scared and frequently cries, but she is bound and determined to find Pempa no matter what happens.

Momo is so absorbed in finding Pempa that she remains unaware of her extraordinary struggle and of the enormous danger she puts herself in time after time. She is nearly enslaved, trampled by a crowd, she is robbed and nearly falls to her death, but neither she nor the author make terribly much of this. Momo quickly shakes off any challenge she faces. Momo is overwhelmed with joy when she finally receives Pempa, who she seems to have never doubted would one day return to her.

Pempa

Pempa is the object of desire in the book. Momo grows up literally obsessed with getting a red-gold Lhasa Terrier like those held by Buddhist priests. She is eventually lucky enough to happen upon a Lhasa Terrier puppy that is given to her by a muleteer and trader. She cannot decide on a name until it is suggested to her by an astrologer named Dawa. Pempa is named for the day on which Dawa makes her prophecy, Saturday. It is also the day of a full moon. Pempa is to bring with him fortune and adventure, and indeed, the book bears this out. Pempa is not a frequent explicit character in the book. When he is described, he is seen as having a cool, relaxed temperament but also as having a kind of quiet dignity. When he is stolen, the reader comes upon reports that Pempa has been a "devil" of a dog to his captors and appears to be fiercely loyal to Momo. Pempa never gives in or gets used to his captivity. In fact, he is even not fond of the Lady Paton, who is very kind to him.

Pempa and Momo are reunited in Calcutta in the Lady Paton's palace. When the Lady Paton meets Momo and hears her story, she has Momo call Pempa's name. Pempa responds immediately and meets Momo with great joy. From there on out, Momo and Pempa are inseparable once again and Pempa is at peace.



Momo's Mother and Father

Momo's mother and father are supportive of her desire for a dog but they also are poor and do not encourage her to get her hopes up. Momo abandons them when Pempa is stolen.

Tsu Foo

A young girl effectively enslaved to her uncle and aunt and who helps Momo find the ten traders. Momo later convinces Lady Paton to move Tsu Foo to her friend's home.

Big Dorje

One of the major ten traders who initially refuses to help Momo but is compelled to help her by the Lat Sahib.

Little Dorje

A boy trader who helps Momo find the ten traders.

Dolma

The old, fat woman who tries to enslave Momo.

The Lat Sahib

The high-ranking English diplomat to Tibet who showers Momo with fortune by providing for her train ticket to Calcutta and back and charging Big Dorje with her care.

Wing Fong

A Chinese trading shop owner whose shop is where Pempa was sold. He ends up helping Momo find Lady Paton's palace.

Lotus Blossom

Wing Fong's daughter who convinces him to lend Momo his rickshaw.

Sita-Ram

Wing Fong's rickshaw puller who helps Momo find the Lady Paton's palace.



Gopal

The Ghurkha guard who tries to bar Momo from entering the Lady Paton's palace but who ends up taking Momo back home after Lady Paton returns Pempa to her.

The Lady Paton

Wife of military secretary of the Governor of Bengal who often buys very expensive items. She bought Pempa without realizing that he was stolen and gladly returns him to Momo when she hears Momo's story.

Nema Doorg

The thief who stole Pempa from Momo.



Objects/Places

Tibetan Buddhism

The variant of Buddhism of which Momo is a devoted follower.

Lhasa Terriers

Dogs kept by Buddhist priests. Pempa is a red-gold Lhasa Terrier.

Prayer Wheels

Wheels in Buddhist temples that, when spun, amplify the power of prayers. Momo spun one furiously to get the Buddha to listen to her prayer for a dog.

Tibet

The small theocratic nation of which Momo is a citizen.

India

The nation where Momo had never visited until she went to find Pempa. She was impressed by its beauty and diversity.

Kalimpong

The major city closest to Momo's home and where she passes through on her way to Calcutta.

Calcutta

The enormous Indian city where Momo found Pempa.

Momo's Home

The little home where Momo and Pempa lived with Momo's parents.



The Kargayu Temple

The temple where Momo and her mother often went to pray.

The Lady Paton's Palace

The Palace where Lady Paton held Pempa.

Trains

Momo rode two trains from Kalimpong to Calcutta.

Prayers

Momo says an enormous number of prayers to the Buddha and minor deities throughout the book.



Themes

Buddhist Theology and Prophecy

Most readers will be immediately struck by Momo's religiosity. Many children's books avoid focusing on child piety in large part to avoid controversy and increase general readership and other times for ideological reasons. There are, of course, exceptions. Nonetheless, Momo's religious faith plays an enormous and constant role in the book. Why exactly? The tale of Momo and Pempa seems to be deeply rooted in Tibetan culture which at the time was quite religiously committed vis-à-vis many other societies. Momo was raised in a complex milieu within Tibetan Buddhism, which is itself a complex mixture. Arguably, Tibetan Buddhist has two major theological foci. The first is the particularly austere and "pure" form of Buddhism practiced in many Tibetan temples, one that avoids polytheism and instead focuses largely on spiritual discipline and has an atheistic focus. The other is a rich polytheistic theology populated by many gods who are constantly involved in daily affairs. Thus, Tibetan Buddhism displays a certain duality.

This duality is displayed throughout the book. On the one hand, Momo's prophecy comes from an astrologer while, and she petitions the Buddha for help as if he were a deity, whereas the more austere, traditional form of Buddhism regards the Buddha as a man, not a God. Momo frequently finds herself in prayer and maintains an unshakeable faith in her prophecy's truth and in the gods she believes protect her. She is mostly focused on the Buddha, the "Holy One", but will frequently pray to minor deities, like Tara and others. Whatever one thinks of the story, the theology is a central and inescapable feature of it.

Culture

Daughter of the Mountains contains many plot-related peaks and valleys, but it also contains long plateaus when the main storyline is not developed. Instead, the author focuses on describing local geography, landmarks, weather, ethnicity, styles of dress, food, languages, work practices, religions and population density. In other words, the author spends a lot of time developing a clear image of the various cultures that Momo passes through on her way to find Pempa. She arguably encounters four distinct cultures. First, there is her home culture in rural Tibet. Rural Tibetan men often engage in trading jobs that take them far from home for long periods of time. In other cases, they become Buddhist priests. Momo spends a lot of time at the Buddhist temple nearest to her home. The second culture comes as she moves down Tibet to relatively more populated areas where there is more trade and somewhat warmer climates. There are more people, for instance, but they all still speak Tibetan.

The largest culture she encounters, however, is the culture of Northern India. She walks through many geographic distinctive locations in India, such as the river Ganges. She



meets a number of Indians and observes their styles of dress. She sees the thick population of Calcutta and the many different cultures that intersect there, including Muslim culture and the Sikh Muslim culture as well. The final culture Momo encounters is the British. There are only three British people mentioned in the book. They are few and far between in Tibet and India, but they are extremely powerful and are presented as almost holy in their kindness, honesty, profound riches and gentle but firm rule.

Determination

The most important theme of *Daughter of the Mountains* is that of courage and determination. Momo is not even a teenager when she sets out to find Pempa. Before then, she was determined to get a red-gold Lhasa Terrier no matter what. From age four until she got Pempa, she prayed constantly for a dog and eventually furiously spun the prayer wheel at the Kargayu Temple until she was told that her prayers would be answered. When Pempa disappears, Momo wastes no time going after him. It does not even occur to her to give up. As time progresses, Momo realizes that she will have to travel long distances to find Pempa and that her chances were slim. But Momo never flinches. Instead, Momo fervently believes that the prophecy she received is true and that Buddha and other minor Tibetan Buddhist deities are with her. She prays for strength constantly even when things look bad for her.

This is not to say that Momo is never frightened or upset. This occurs frequently, in fact. But what is unique about Momo is that, despite her young age, she believes that she will always find a way out of whatever trouble she is in and that the gods will somehow get her through. It is ultimately Momo's determination that gets her to Calcutta and even to the door of the Lady Paton's Palace. It is also her determination that convinces Lady Paton to listen to her and to help her and her family.



Style

Point of View

The point of view of *Daughter of the Mountains* is third-personal. The book is written only from the perspective of an outside observer. However, one might describe *Daughter of the Mountains* as taking a third-personal perspective with first-personal elements. The author focuses exclusively on the thoughts of Momo and it is only inside of her that the reader can regularly peer. Readers rarely see the thoughts of others described, but descriptions of Momo's thought life are rich. The third-personal perspective often appears omniscient but is restricted mostly to what Momo experiences. It is what Momo hears and sees that the author describes. The reader is occasionally faced with reactions from those around her that she cannot understand, such as when Gopal is communicating to the Lady Paton in a way that Momo cannot understand. When Momo calls Pempa, for instance, the author describes Pempa's reaction though the reaction was not perceived by Momo.

It is important that the point of view be written in this way. The reader is often left as much in the dark about the challenges Momo faces as she is herself. This style of writing brings the reader into Momo's emotional life. It also makes it easier for the reader to understand Momo's great courage since the reader is in some sense along for the ride. It is also important that the author departs from Momo periodically to describe the cultures and climes that Momo experiences. It helps to set the setting of the book.

Setting

The setting of *Daughter in the Mountains* is a bit hard to pinpoint. Momo and her family live in a very small town in rural Tibet which is fairly close to the Kargayu Temple. This in turn is close to the real-world city of Kalimpong in Tibet. Apparently, Momo and her family live somewhere near Southwestern Tibet, which borders India. Momo lives in what one would typically imagine as Tibet, with high mountains, mule trains as a major source of employment, many Buddhist temples and people dressed in traditional Buddhist styles. Her family is fairly religious and religious symbols adorn many buildings throughout the book. The book appears to be set between the early 1920s and the early 1940s. World War II has yet to occur, but automobiles have been invented and are in use by the British in India. The British have also not relinquished control of India, which did not occur until after World War II.

The setting, however, changes quite a bit throughout the book as Momo is constantly on the move. Momo is often in the countryside on her way down to Kalimpong and at one point she is on a train from Kalimpong to Calcutta. Calcutta is another important setting and contains two smaller settings, Wing Fong's shop and Lady Paton's palace. There are some minor settings as well, such as the various homes where Momo stays the night on the way to Calcutta.



Language and Meaning

Daughter of the Mountains is a children's book and is written in relatively simple prose as a result. The book contains the fairly straightforward tone and pace that most children's literature does given that the book aims to tell a concrete story with an obvious and uncomplicated plot structure. The language reflects this tone and pace. The reader will notice that sentences are relatively short. The language also jumps between dialogue and the author's monologue quite a bit and these styles are somewhat distinct. The conversations are relatively short and do not involve extended passages of speech. The author's passages mostly describe Momo's travels and Momo's particular doings. However, the author will also use more sophisticated language in order to describe the various landscapes, geographical landmarks and cultures that Momo passes through.

A unique feature of the book is that it is full of prayers. Momo is often in a state of prayer to various Tibetan Buddhist deities, though there is no direct response from the deities acknowledged in the book. The clear meaning of these prayers is to overlay the sense of the supernatural in the text and to explain how bond up Momo's determination is with her piety. The language of the book is an important indicator not only of its aim of communicating the story of Momo but also of the author's aim of educating the reader about Momo's time and culture and the great diversity of cultures near where Momo lives.

Structure

The structure of the Daughter of the Mountains is simple and chronological. It has eight chapters that are not divided into parts. Each chapter slowly builds up the plot, though many chapters have minor sub-plots or challenges that Momo faces along the way to her finding Pempa. The first chapter explains who Momo is and how she came to have Pempa. Chapter two takes the reader a few years in the future after Momo has developed a bond with Pempa and loses him. The next six chapters show Momo in transit from her rural village in Tibet to Kalimpong and then to Calcutta, where her journey ends. Each chapter is a relatively self-contained portion of her travel that is usually built around some key event.

For instance, chapter seven is constructed around Momo's encounter with Wing Fong and his daughter, Lotus Blossom. Much of the chapter is dialogue which not only shows how Momo impacts people she has just met but explains what has happened to Pempa. It begins with the small plot challenge of Momo having been pickpocketed in the streets of Calcutta. But it also resolves the small plot line by explaining how Momo will get to Lady Paton's palace in the hopes of finding Pempa. By the end of the chapter, another small plot challenge is raised, specifically how Momo is going to approach this powerful Englishwoman of a high social status. Nearly all of the chapters have this structure save the final one in which the main plot is resolved.



Quotes

"Father, I want a dog."
Chap. 1, p. 15

"Om Mani Padme Hum!"
Chap. 1, p. 22

"See! A red-gold terrier from Lhasa!"
Chap. 1, p. 33

"Mother! They took Pempa away. I am going after him."
Chap. 2, p. 43

"Oh Tara, Mother of mercy, save me! You, who are the best of gods, do not abandon me! Protect me on all sides as by a thick tent! Save me, Tara, save me!"
Chap. 2, p. 56

"She felt herself falling, falling—then everything was black and blank, and she felt no more."
Chap. 2, p. 56

"Lah-se! It is a wondrous place, the land of India."
Chap. 3, p. 63

"O Blessed One, give me enlightenment. Remove far from me the dark sin of anger, and ever keep me close to Thee."
Chap. 3, p. 76

"Oh! Good Pempa, I'm glad you fight!"
Chap. 4, p. 82

"No. I must go after Pempa. That is the prophecy."
Chap. 4, p. 88

"Tomorrow morning early you start off with a strong man who will carry you back to your parents. And now sleep here."
Chap. 4, p. 101

"By the Lord's will, I will get Pempa back."
Chap. 5, p. 105

"Ah, but your faith is rewarded, little Momo. The Blessed One is even now going to put you on this train, acting through me, His unworthy agent."
Chap. 6, p. 127



"I am here, in India!"

Chap. 6, p. 138

"And—Mother Tara!—her hands were empty. The red scarf was gone."

Chap. 6, p. 148

"My honorable father will send you in a rickshaw. Yes you will, Father."

Chap. 7, p. 166

"No matter how often people told her Pempa had been sold, she still could not believe anything but that he was hers. As long as he lived Pempa belonged to her, and she would have him."

Chap. 8, p. 174

"Pem-pa! Pem-pa-a-a! O Pem-pa-a-a!"

Chap. 8, p. 179

"Yes, yes, of course she shall have her dog."

Chap. 8, p. 186

"Mangalam! All happiness!"

Chap. 8, p. 191



Topics for Discussion

Explain Momo's religious beliefs. What beliefs does she hold most strongly?

How does Momo's religious beliefs factor into the story?

Why is Pempa stolen?

Explain Momo's most enduring character trait and how it manifests itself in the story.

Why do people keep telling Momo to give up? Why does she keep resist them? What are her reasons?

Do you think Momo's determination arises more from her stubbornness or her courage and piety?

How are the English presented in the book? What do you think of their social status?