

**SHORT READS
FOR PEOPLE
WITH NO
TIME**



**LIKE
MAGIC
BY CINDY PON**



**DON'T SPEAK
BY MALINDA
LO**

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This month we are reading two short stories that appeared in
Viewfinders: 10 Y.A. Novelists Spin Fiction From Vintage Photos
by The New York Times.

READ "LIKE MAGIC"

"Why this photo: I was delighted to see this image of Chinese brush artists in New York City's Chinatown. I've been a student of Chinese brush painting for almost two decades, and this creative expression has really become intrinsic to my own identity. It's very rarely I get an opportunity to write about something so important to me in fiction. I'm so grateful I was able to in this piece. –C.P."

"Cindy Pon is a writer and a longtime student of Chinese brush painting. She is the author of "Want," "Serpentine" and "Silver Phoenix." She grew up in Los Angeles."

Learn more about [Cindy Pon](#)

READ "DON'T SPEAK"

"Why this photo: This photograph from Tokyo Disneyland stood out to me immediately because it was quirky and startling. It invites the viewer to ask questions: Why does that pig look angry? Who is inside the pig's costume? How do they feel? I had to know the answers. – M.L."

"Malinda Lo is the author of "Ash," which is now available in a special 10th-anniversary edition; "A Line in the Dark"; and other novels. She grew up in Colorado."

Learn more about [Malinda Lo](#)

WRITE IT DOWN

QUESTIONS

LIKE MAGIC

1. Consider the title of this short story and Cindy Pon's wonderful descriptions of Shen laoshi painting. What is the link between them?
2. Why do you think Hongyue heads to Columbus Park instead of home after her Chinese brush painting class?
3. Do you think Hongyue will ever tell anyone about what happened with her painting? Do you think she would tell Shen laoshi?
4. What does it mean that Hongyue begins to work on a new painting without hesitation as opposed to her previous practice of moving slowly and carefully?
5. Consider this statement from Shen laoshi: "Our aim is to elicit emotion through our art. To touch this" — he tapped two fingertips against his chest — "that is the way we connect and speak to the viewer." Do you believe all artists feel this way? Why or why not?
6. Did the bird really come to life or was it just something Hongyue imagined? Why do you think the author wrote the end this way?

WRITE IT DOWN

QUESTIONS

DON'T SPEAK

1. Why do you think Practical Pig has angry eyebrows?
2. What are your first impressions of Jenny? What are your first impressions of Veronica?
3. Do you think you would feel like "a cog in the machine that was Tokyo Disneyland" if you were in Jenny's position?
4. What is it about the costume and repetition of Jenny's job that makes her feel as if she is in an alternate dimension or in a black hole? Think of specific examples.
5. Rather than do jazz hands with the other pigs, why do you think Jenny decides to raise her fist in the air instead? Do you think she was influenced by Veronica?
6. Jenny first considered Disneyland as a "welcome break from the demoralizing struggle of learning Japanese", but soon finds the work is nothing like she expected. How do you think this realization added to her already challenging experience in Tokyo?

WRITE IT DOWN

PROMPTS / ACTIVITIES

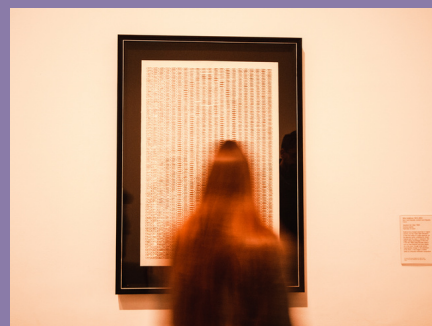
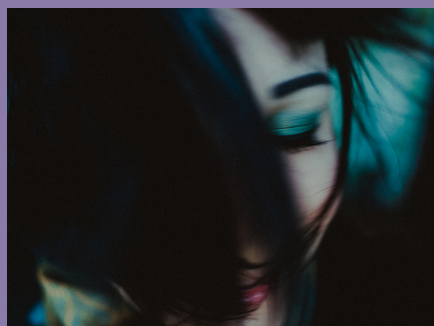
Writing Prompt

As mentioned previously, Cindy Pon is a Chinese brush artist. Check out Cindy Pon's work [here](#). **Write** a short story or a poem inspired by one of her works.

Self Portrait

Look at this [self-portrait by Andy Warhol](#). Why do you think Warhol included four images? What do think Warhol wanted to say about himself in these images?

Take a self-portrait. Consider the setting, layout, effects / filters, and pose. Will you use photo editing software or not? How does this image represent you?



Ask a parent, grandparent, or family member to see a picture from their past. Ask them about it. What happened that day? What year was it? What was happening in the world when the photo was taken?

MORE READS

**CINDY PON, MALINDA LO,
AND OTHER AUTHORS**

SERPENTINE

BY CINDY PON

ASH

BY MALINDA LO

WANT

BY CINDY PON

A LINE IN THE DARK

BY MALINDA LO

THIS TIME WILL BE DIFFERENT

BY SUGIURA, MISA

INTERMENT

BY AHMED, SAMIRA

PATRON SAINTS OF NOTHING

BY RIBAY, RANDY

FRANKLY IN LOVE

BY YOON, DAVID

THE ASTONISHING COLOR OF AFTER

BY PAN, EMILY X.R.

LEGEND

BY LU, MARIE

WARCROSS

BY LU, MARIE

AN EMBER IN THE ASHES

TAHIR, SABAA

HAVE COMMENTS OR

WANT TO SUGGEST

A SHORT STORY?

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