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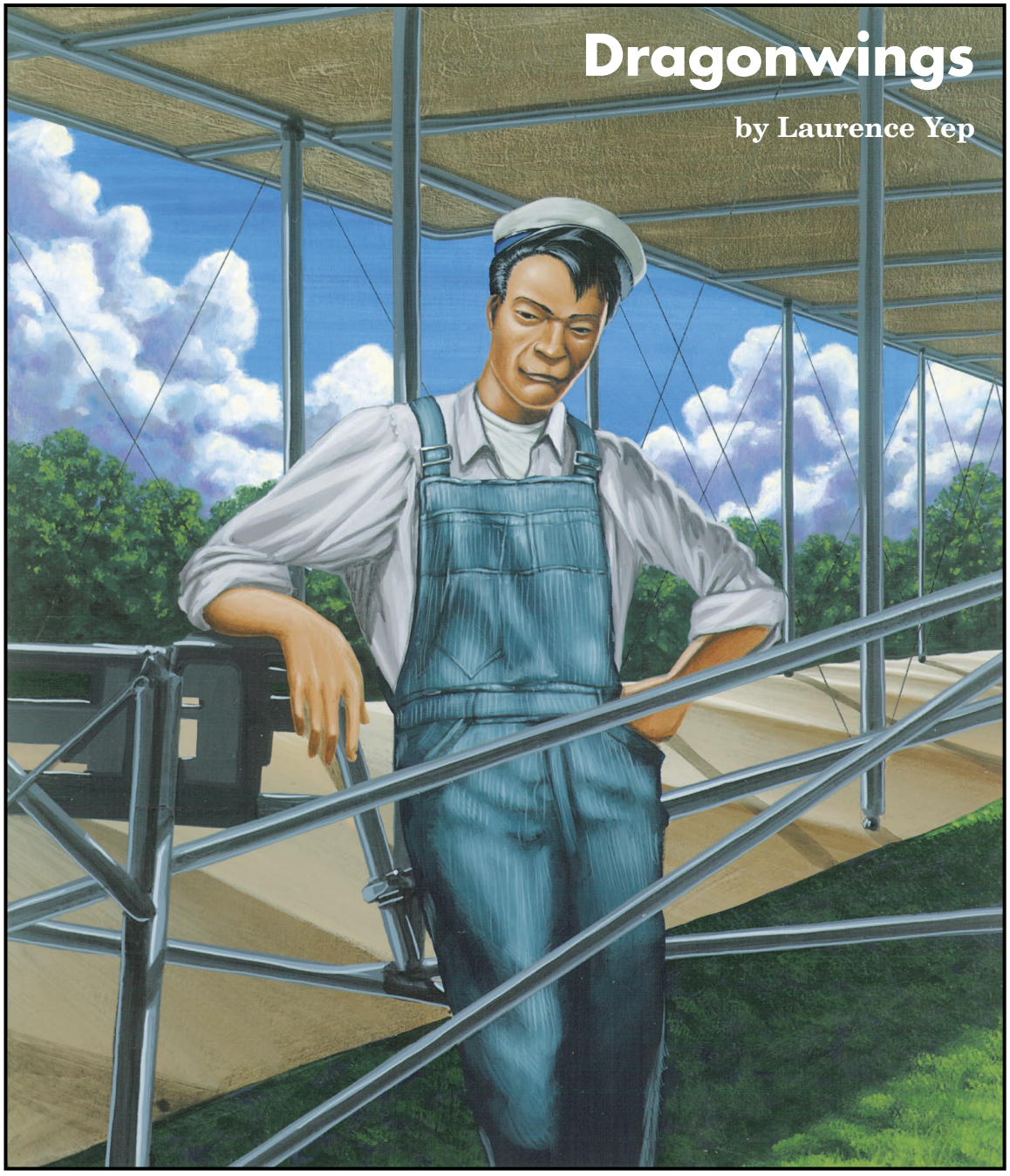

Perfection Learning

LATITUDES®

Resources to Integrate Language Arts & Social Studies

Dragonwings

by Laurence Yep

Reproducibles and Teacher Guide

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Library of Congress

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Acknowledgments

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From *The San Francisco Examiner,* September 23, 1909.

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INTRODUCTION

TEACHER INFORMATION

Welcome to *Latitudes*

Latitudes® is designed for teachers who would like to broaden the scope of their literature and history study. By providing fascinating primary source documents and background information, the ***Latitudes*** collection of reproducibles helps your students link a fiction or nonfiction book with its historical framework.

The series broadens students' understanding in other ways too. Each packet offers insights into the book as a piece of literature—including its creation, critical reception, and links to similar literature.

The ***Latitudes*** selections help readers draw on and seek out knowledge from a unique range of sources and perspectives. These sources encourage students to make personal connections to history and literature, integrating information with their own knowledge and background. This learning experience will take students far beyond the boundaries of a single text into the rich latitudes of literature and social studies.

Purposes of This Packet

The material in this ***Latitudes*** packet for *Dragonwings* has been carefully chosen for four main purposes.

1. to help students connect contemporary and historical events
2. to encourage students to investigate Chinese-American history and issues of prejudice and assimilation
3. to provide resources that help students apply a novel's theme to the contemporary world
4. to help students use the skills and content of both social studies and language arts to search for meaning in a novel

Contents of This Packet

The reproducibles in this packet have been organized into five sections.

- About the Novel
- Coming to America
- Land of the Golden Mountain
- Comparative Works
- Suggested Activities

About the Novel

The resources here introduce students to the contextual and historical dimensions of the novel. Selections include

- a plot synopsis
- a biography of the author
- the author's description of how and why he wrote *Dragonwings*
- critics' comments about *Dragonwings*
- a glossary of key words and ideas from the novel

Coming to America

These reproducibles help students understand what the first immigrants experienced as they left China to come to America. This section includes

- a timeline of Chinese-American history
- a map of early San Francisco
- a flier encouraging Chinese workers to come to America
- an account of a solo voyage in a sampan
- laws restricting Chinese immigration
- photos of the immigration process at Angel Island

Land of the Golden Mountain

These selections help students understand Yep's references to historical events and Chinese customs. The reproducibles offer

- an overview of Chinese feasts and festivals
- an explanation of why many Chinese opened laundries
- photos of Chinatown
- an eyewitness account of the Great Quake
- newspaper accounts of the flight which inspired *Dragonwings*
- correspondence from the Wrights

Comparative Works

These selections give students a literary dimension to their study. The reproducibles offer

- a political cartoon about anti-Chinese sentiments
- a myth about dragons
- reflections by contemporary Chinese Americans
- suggestions for further reading and viewing

Suggested Activities

Each reproducible in the packet is supported with suggestions for student-centered and open-ended student activities. You can choose from activities that develop reading, writing, thinking, speaking, and listening skills. Projects are suitable for independent, collaborative, or group study.

Use of the Material

The pieces in ***Latitudes*** can be incorporated into your curriculum in any order you wish. We encourage you to select those resources that are most meaningful and relevant to your students.

Story Synopsis

Moon Shadow is eight years old when he sails from China to join his father in San Francisco. His father, Windrider, works in a laundry run by the Company of the Peach Orchard Vow.

Each member of the Company welcomes Moon Shadow with a gift. Uncle Bright Star, the leader, provides sturdy boots. Lefty and White Deer offer clothes. And Windrider presents a magnificent kite he has made for his son.

But Black Dog thinks Moon Shadow needs one more thing—a knife to protect himself against the white "demons." Moon Shadow already knows that his grandfather was hanged during an outbreak of anti-Chinese violence. That evening, a mob attacks the store, breaking windows and shouting insults. The members of the Company do not provoke the crowd, which eventually moves on.

Moon Shadow forgets the violence when he enters his father's room. There he is frightened when he sees a telegraph and an electric light for the first time. Windrider explains that there is no need to fear these inventions. But Moon Shadow is not convinced.

So his father describes his meeting with the Dragon King. According to the Dragon King, Windrider was once a dragon healer who was turned into a mortal as punishment for a crime. To become a dragon again, Windrider must pass a series of tests set by the Dragon King.

Moon Shadow settles into his new life, working long hours in the laundry and attending a school for Chinese children. Eventually he is allowed to go with his father to deliver and pick up laundry. Uncle Bright Star is concerned about the boy's safety, but Windrider wants his son to learn more about San Francisco.

On one of their trips, Windrider helps a driver fix his horseless carriage. Mr. Alger is impressed when Windrider refuses payment. He offers Windrider a job as a handyman. Moon Shadow believes this was a test of the Dragon King.

Windrider then discovers that the Wright brothers flew. Uncle Bright Star does not believe the newspaper reports. But Windrider begins to dream of building his own airplane. He also dreams of bringing his wife to America, but he tells Moon Shadow that this goal will be even more difficult to realize.

The disagreement between Uncle Bright Star and Windrider is forgotten when Black Dog disappears. The men go to the opium dens to look for him. Moon Shadow insists on going with them to protect his father. When they find Black Dog, he is about to be killed by three members of a tong. Windrider's imitation of a police whistle scares them off, and Black Dog is rescued.

continued

Black Dog tries to sober up, but the hardships of life in America begin to depress him again. He tells Moon Shadow that opium is the only good thing in his life. Moon Shadow reminds him that their sacrifices in America help their families at home. Enraged, Black Dog beats Moon Shadow and steals the laundry payments the boy had collected.

Despite the other men's efforts to stop him, Windrider insists on going to fight Black Dog. Moon Shadow follows him. As the fight begins, a man hiding in the alley aims a gun at Windrider. Moon Shadow throws himself at the man. While Black Dog scuffles with Windrider, the man in the alley tosses Moon Shadow off. Windrider kills the man just as he is about to shoot Moon Shadow.

After the fight, Windrider believes he and Moon Shadow will be safer if they leave Chinatown. He goes to work as a handyman for Mr. Alger. He finds lodging with a "good demoness" named Miss Whitlaw. Moon Shadow is dazzled by the stereopticon, piano, and stained glass window he sees at her house.

In the evenings, he and Windrider read about the Wright brothers and build a model glider. As they prepare to fly it, Miss Whitlaw's niece, Robin, tags along. Slowly Moon Shadow begins to respond to Robin's friendliness. He teaches her about aeronautics, and she teaches him to read E. Nesbit books. And he tells both Robin and Miss Whitlaw about dragons.

Windrider continues to work on building an aeroplane, but he needs more facts and figures. Moon Shadow asks Miss Whitlaw to help him with a letter asking the Wrights for information. When they reply, Windrider is upset because Moon Shadow has revealed his dream. But he soon gets over his anger, and they begin to correspond with the Wrights.

While Moon Shadow is comfortable with the Whitlaws, he is afraid to go too far from the house. The neighbor boys taunt him and throw stones at him. But Robin tells Moon Shadow that the boys' leader is afraid of nose bleeds. After Moon Shadow punches the leader in the nose, the boys give him no further trouble.

However, the whole city faces trouble when the 1906 earthquake hits. The city is devastated. Miss Whitlaw organizes neighborhood rescue teams. Moon Shadow and his father help the Whitlaws, then return to Chinatown to assist the Company.

After the quake, Windrider and Moon Shadow move to Oakland. There Father finishes the plane, named Dragonwings. He launches the plane from a hill outside Oakland as Miss Whitlaw, Robin, and the Company cheer him on. The flight is a success. But then a broken propeller bolt causes a crash that breaks Windrider's leg and injures his ribs. Windrider now knows that he cannot have his two dreams, flight and family, at the same time. He chooses to be with his wife and Moon Shadow; he will not fly again.

Windrider's second dream becomes possible when Bright Star makes him a partner in the Company. He and Moon Shadow move into the Company's new building. They stay in touch with Miss Whitlaw, who now works as a housekeeper in Oakland. Black Dog is found murdered in an alley. But the Company endures. And Windrider, recovered from his injuries, sails to the Middle Kingdom to bring his wife to America.

About the Author

Laurence Yep

The first stories Laurence Yep sold were about space aliens. Only later did he realize that these fantasies about aliens reflected his real life. "I was the Chinese American raised in a black neighborhood, a child who had been too American to fit into Chinatown and too Chinese to fit in elsewhere. I was the clumsy son of the athletic family. . . . "

Yep began writing because of a challenge from his high school English teacher. Father Becker said that students could get an "A" in his course only if a national magazine accepted something they'd written. Yep's first story wasn't actually published until he was in college, but he got his "A."

Science was another of Yep's favorite subjects. He had a hard time deciding whether to study science or literature in college. He finally chose to major in journalism at Marquette. Eventually, he combined his two loves by writing science fiction.

"Writing a novel is a long process—like a long-distance runner running a marathon. I know that I cannot reach the finish line that day. Instead, I have to be patient, trying to complete a shorter stretch of writing—a chapter, for instance," Yep writes in his autobiography. "I can only have faith that I will reach the end; and that belief keeps me plugging away for months to years to finish a draft of a novel—and a novel usually takes several drafts."

Yep tries to write four to six hours a day. He might spend another two hours taking notes and reading. He is able to keep this schedule because of the routine chores he had to do at his family's small grocery store, La Conquista.

Working at La Conquista also taught him how to write about people. "I realized at an early age that what made people most interesting were their imperfections. . . . I know that a character can come to life in a sentence if I can give him or her a 'quirk'—whether it's the way they look or dress, some habitual gesture, or some favorite phrase—that makes them special."

"...that belief keeps me plugging away for months to years to finish a draft of a novel—and a novel usually takes several drafts."

When he grew up, Yep based some of his characters on people he knew in San Francisco's Chinatown. In his autobiography, *The Lost Garden,* Yep describes how his father made kites and protected his family from burglars. "My

continued

father, the kitemaker, became Windrider in *Dragonwings.* He had come to America at the age of ten but he did not like to talk much about the tough time he had had adjusting to life here. Writing *Dragonwings* was a way of stepping into his shoes."

Dragonwings, Yep's second novel, re-creates the San Francisco Chinatown of the early 1900s. It took Yep six years to do the research because the information he needed was "scattered through several libraries in several cities."

He got the idea for the novel when he read a 1909 article about a Chinese-American who flew an airplane he had built. He wrote the flight scene, which comes at the end of the novel, first. "When I first read about. . . Fung Joe Guey, I could see his airplane turning over the hilltop. So I put that scene down on paper. However, it took me four years to explain why he was on top of that hill—and why he had built the airplane in the first place."

Dragonwings received several awards. It was named a Newbery Medal Honor Book in 1976. Other honors include the Children's Book Award and recognition from the Jane Addams Peace Association, Friends of Children and Literature, and the *New York Times.* Yep has also received awards for *Child of the Owl, Sea Glass,* and *Dragon Steel.*

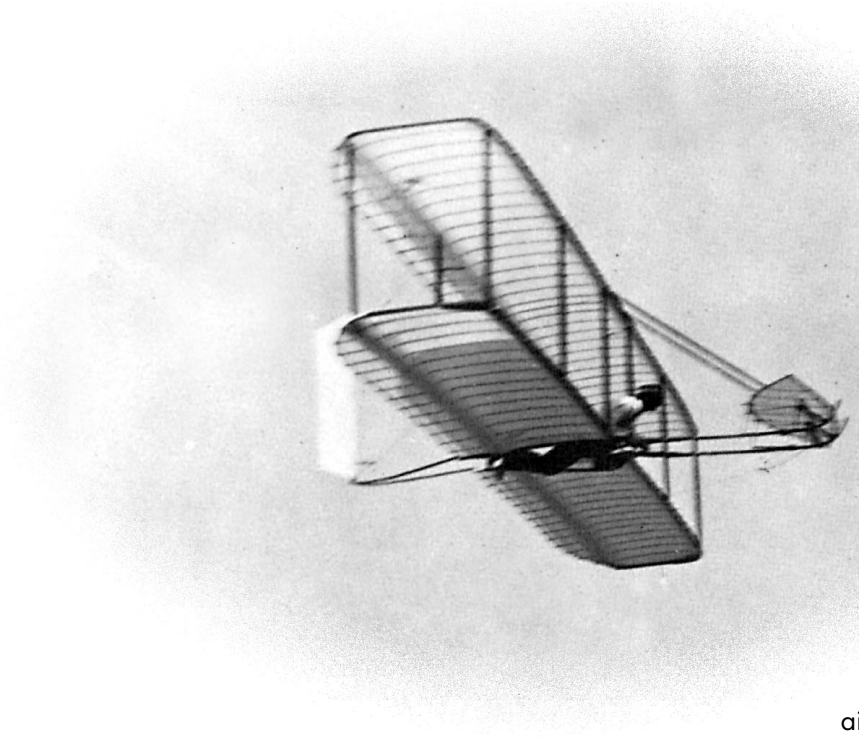
Yep was born June 14, 1948, in San Francisco. Besides writing, he has taught English and been a visiting lecturer in Asian-American studies. He continues to write novels about dragons. And he is still exploring what it means to be Chinese-American. His latest work, *American Dragons,* is a collection of stories about growing up Asian-American.

Books by Laurence Yep

Year	Book	Major Awards
1973	*Sweetwater*	
1975	*Dragonwings*	Newbery Honor Book, IRA Children's Honor Book Award, ALA Notable Children's Book, Carter G. Woodson Award, *New York Times* Outstanding Children's Book, Children's Choice Award
1977	*Child of the Owl*	Boston Globe-Horn Book Fiction Award, ALA Notable Children's Book
1982	*Dragon of the Lost Sea*	ALA Notable Children's Book, 100 Favorite Paperbacks (IRA)
1984	*The Serpent's Children*	
1985	*Dragon Steel*	
1989	*The Rainbow People*	ALA Notable Children's Book, *Horn Book* Fanfare Honor List
1991	*Tongues of Jade*	Notable Children's Trade Book in Social Studies
	Dragon Cauldron	
1992	*Dragon War*	
1993	*Dragon's Gate*	
	American Dragons	

Writing *Dragonwings*

Laurence Yep describes how he wrote his second novel in this excerpt from ***The Reading Teacher*** *(January 1977).*



Wilbur and Orville Wright built gliders to prove their theories of flight. Here Wilbur conducts a successful test of the1902 model. This glider was the first fully controllable aircraft. Its successful test flights encouraged the brothers to build a motorized airplane.

Before I can begin to talk about the story of *Dragonwings,* I have to explain my general situation six years before when I first began my general research. Trying to research Chinese-American history—that is, the history of men and women of Chinese ancestry who had been influenced by their experience of America—can be difficult; perhaps I can make some of the problems clearer by presenting an analogy.

Let us suppose a far distant future in which America has become poor and outdated and its men and women forced to migrate to other countries to find work. Further, let's suppose that many of these emigrants leave Mississippi to work in Iran. A very few of them settle there and raise children, and their children raise children. And then one of their descendants decides to write about his ancestors. . . in Mississippi three generations ago.

[Yep faced a similar problem when he wrote about his Chinese ancestors.] It took some six years of research in the libraries of different cities to find the bits and pieces that could be fitted into Chinese-American history. . . .

Even when I did find material on [my ancestors], I found that the Chinese-Americans had been a faceless crowd for most writers. . . . . I could give the Chinese population in each of California's counties for a fifty year period; but I could not have told you what any of those Chinese hoped for or feared. . . .

One of the few early Chinese-Americans in my notes to have a name was Fung Joe Guey who flew a biplane of his own construction over in Oakland in 1909. The scene of his flight seemed so

continued

vivid to me that it was easy to put it on paper, but trying to explain how he got to that field with his biplane was difficult because I could only find two newspaper articles, the September 23, 1909, issues of the San Francisco *Call* and the San Francisco *Examiner*.

Since I wanted to respect his historical integrity, I used his flight as the basis for my novel, *Dragonwings;* and to make my own fictional aviator, Windrider, seem real, I had to recreate the bachelor society itself. . . . that lonely group of men who spent most of their adult years apart from family and home. What were personal relationships like among men who would work for five to ten years or longer before they could visit their families back in China? To all intents and purposes, their families were lost to them. And since I had no guidelines for writing about these social relationships, I would have to project myself back into the past and see how I myself would react to others in that same situation.

And the relationship with which I would most easily empathize would be the most elemental relationship, the relationship between parent and child. . . . The novel would succeed in more fully recreating that world of the past if I could show how Moon Shadow, and his father, Windrider, loved and supported one another. . . .

. . . I wanted to base a large part of the father's motives upon Chinese dragon myths. . . . The dream of flight has dominated man's imagination from the earliest times. . . . But it was not until 1903 that the dream of powered, controlled flight was made possible by the Wright Brothers. Their flight was more than a technological triumph; it was an imaginative triumph as well.

Similarly in *Dragonwings,* Windrider's former life as a dragon symbolizes this same imaginative power in all of us. And so Windrider and his son, Moon Shadow, are engaged not only in the process of discovering America and each other, but also in a pilgrimage, or even a quest for a special moment when they can reaffirm the power of the imagination; that power in each of us to grasp with the mind and heart what we cannot immediately grasp with the hand.

Voices from the Novel

*As you read **Dragonwings,** use this page to record four or five passages that you find particularly interesting or meaningful.*

Critics' Comments

When books are published, critics read and review them. The following statements are comments that have been made by the critics of ***Dragonwings.***

"Moon Shadow comes from China to San Francisco in 1903 to join the father he has never met. An unusual historical novel, unique in its perspective of the Chinese in America and its portrayal of early-20th-century San Francisco, including the earthquake."

School Library Journal

"Adroitly combines several elements: the Chinese community and its ties to the old country, San Francisco's reaction to the earthquake, and the curiosity, persistence and daring of the boy's father." (Recommended)

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books

"Yep's images and perspectives are breathtakingly original."

Publishers Weekly

"If it were only a fantastic story of high adventure, Dragonwings would be a success, but as an exquisitely written poem of praise to the courage and industry of the Chinese-American people, it is a triumph." (Outstanding Children's Book of 1975)

The New York Times Book Review

"Except for two characters in *Dragonwings,* whites are uniformly portrayed as bigoted, violent, or otherwise despicable, and rarely as individual personalities. . . . A negative view of America pervades the entire novel. . . ."

Sandra Stotsky, Academic Questions

"A fine, sensitive novel written with grace."

ALA Booklist

Dragonwings **Honors**

1975	Notable Children's Trade Books in Social Studies (National Council for the Social Studies/Children's Book Council)
	Phoenix Award (Children's Literature Association)
1976	Newbery Honor Book (American Library Association)
	IRA Children's Book Award (International Reading Association)
	Notable Children's Books of 1971-1975 (American Library Association)
	Best of the Best Children's Books, 1966-1978 (School Library Journal)
	Carter G. Woodson Award (National Council for the Social Studies)
	Children's Choices (International Reading Association/Children's Book Council)

GLOSSARY

Understanding the following terms may be helpful as you read ***Dragonwings.***

aeronaut: person who operates an airplane

alien: resident of a place who is not a citizen of that place

Asian immigrant: person who enters the United States from China, Japan, India, Korea, the Philippines, Vietnam, Laos, or Cambodia

Celestials: term used to describe the first Chinese in America (from the *Celestial Empire,* a term for China)

the Company: organization formed by Chinese living in America to help one another

coolie: name used by whites to refer to Chinese workers

horseless: horseless carriage; a car

immigrant: person who comes from one country to live and settle in another

Jade Emperor: Chinese Lord of Heaven and Earth, said to rule over heaven and earth from his palace window

Land of the Golden Mountain or **Gold Mountain:** *Gam Saan;* what Chinese people called North America

Middle Kingdom: China

naturalization: process of becoming a citizen

People of the Tang: what Chinese people called themselves, after the Tang dynasty

queue: long braid worn by Chinese men

white demon or **demon:** Chinese term for a white person

A Time in HISTORY

This organizer shows dates relevant to Chinese-American history.

California State Library

A Chinese man working in California carries a child dressed in holiday clothes.

1790

Naturalization Law reserves American citizenship for whites (1790)

Gold is discovered at John Sutter's mill in California (1848)

1850

California becomes a state (1850)

Foreign Miners' License Law requires miners who were not citizens to pay $3 per month to the state (1852)

First Chinese newspaper in California published (1854)

Owners of ships required to pay $50 for each nonwhite passenger (1855)

Burlingame Treaty allows Chinese to travel freely to and from the United States (1868)

Transcontinental Railroad completed (1869)

1870

Federal Civil Rights Act cancels the foreign miners' tax (1870)

California prohibits Chinese from owning real estate (1872)

Workingmen's Party leads campaign against Chinese workers (1876)

Treaty of 1880 states that the United States cannot prohibit Chinese immigration (1880)

Chinese Exclusion Act bars any more Chinese laborers or their wives from entering the United States (1882)

California passes Act to Prevent the Further Immigration of Chinese or Mongolians (1885)

Scott Act prohibits Chinese laborers from reentering the United States (1888)

1900

Orville and Wilbur Wright make first successful airplane flight at Kitty Hawk, North Carolina (December 17, 1903)

Congress extends all Chinese exclusion laws indefinitely (1904)

San Francisco earthquake and fire (April 18, 1906)

National Origins Act stops Japanese immigration from Asia (1924)

Ban on Asian immigration lifted (1952)

1960

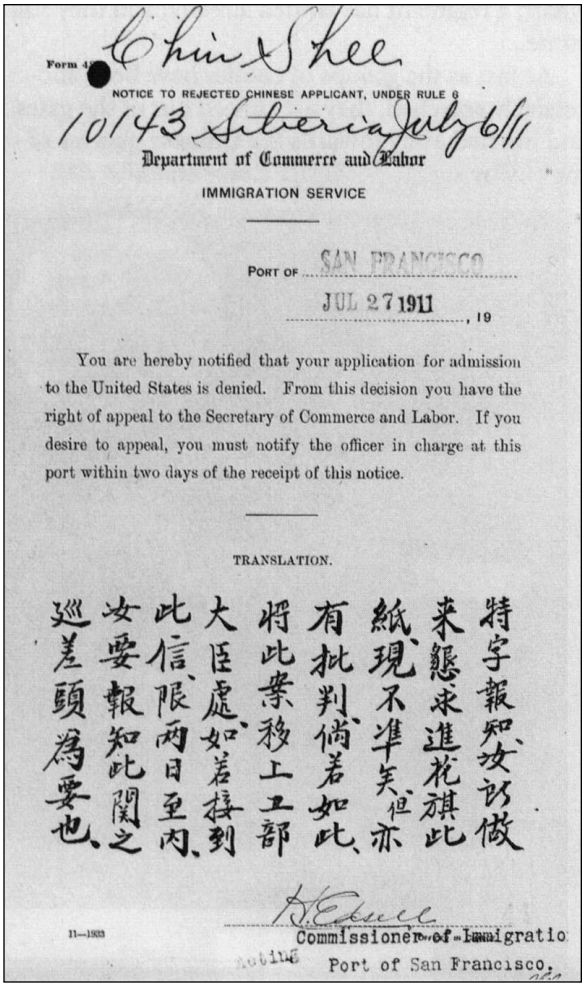
New Immigration Act allows 20,000 Asian immigrants to enter the United States each year; Congress abolishes quotas based on national origin (1965)

Patterns of Chinese Immigration

Four types of Chinese emigrants[1] left their country to live abroad. Skilled workers like traders and miners went to the Philippines, Thailand, and Borneo in the 1700s and 1800s. Contract laborers built railroads and worked in the Australian and American gold mines in the late 1800s, then returned to China when their contract was up. The *huai chi'iao,* or "overseas Chinese," lived abroad during the early 1900s but considered themselves Chinese in spirit. After 1950, the *hua-i,* or naturalized citizens, left China to settle permanently in another country; many moved to America, Canada, and Southeast Asia.

People of Chinese Ancestry Living in America[2]

1850	4,825
1860	34,933
1870	63,199
1880	105,465
1882	132,300
1890	107,488
1900	89,863
1910	71,531
1920	61,639
1930	74,954
1940	77,504
1950	117,629
1960	198,958
1970	435,062
1980	812,178
1990	1,645,000



Form 4 Chin Shee

NOTICE TO REJECTED CHINESE APPLICANT, UNDER RULE 8

10143 Siberia July 6/11

Department of Commerce and Labor

IMMIGRATION SERVICE

PORT OF SAN FRANCISCO

JUL 27 1911, 19

You are hereby notified that your application for admission to the United States is denied. From this decision you have the right of appeal to the Secretary of Commerce and Labor. If you desire to appeal, you must notify the officer in charge at this port within two days of the receipt of this notice.

TRANSLATION.

特字報知、女訴做
来懇求進花旗此
紙、現不準矣、但亦
有批判、倘若如此、
將此案移上工部
大臣處、如若接到
此信、限兩日至內、
女要報知此關之
巡差頭為要也、

11—1933

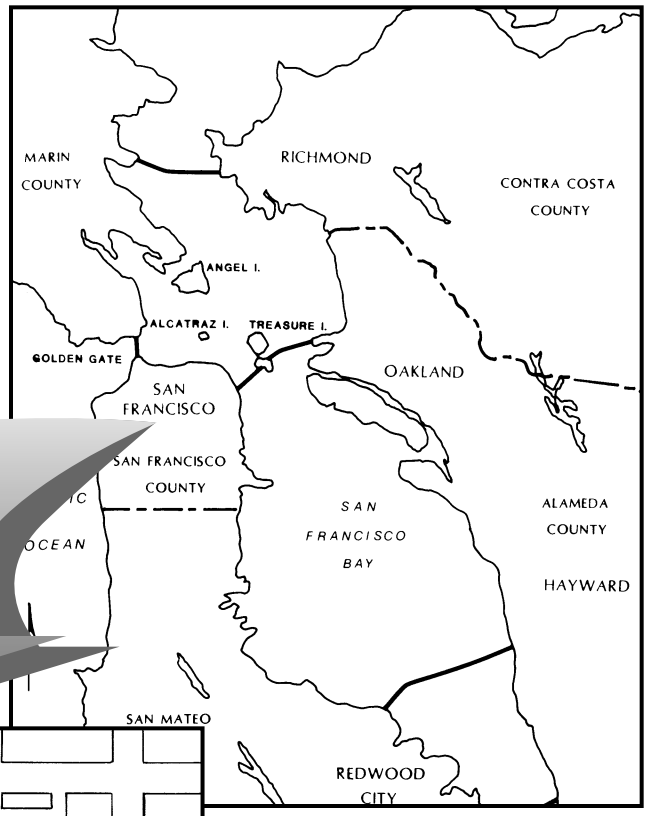
Commissioner of Immigratio
Port of San Francisco.

This document separated merchant Lee Youk from his wife, Chan Shee. Under the Chinese exclusion laws, workers were allowed to enter the United States, but their families were often denied permission to join them.

[1] *emigrants:* people who leave their home to live someplace else. *Immigrants* are people who come to another country to live.

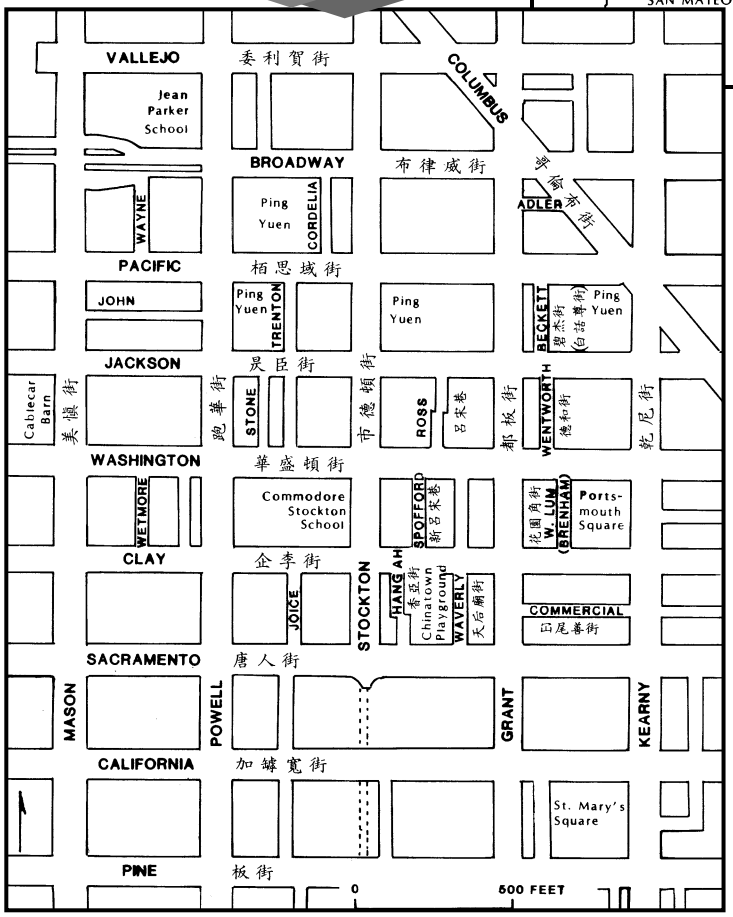
[2] Sources: Chinese Historical Society of America; Census Population, U.S. Department of Commerce

The Geographical Picture



The San Francisco area

San Francisco's Chinatown grew up near the wealthy district of Nob Hill. At the turn of the century, Chinese residents of San Francisco lived and worked mostly within a 10-block area. Those who ventured outside Chinatown's borders risked harassment and injury. Today's Chinatown retains some of the flavor of the old Tangrenbu.



San Francisco's Chinatown

GOING TO THE GOLDEN MOUNTAIN

National Archives

Chinese immigrants arrive at Angel Island Immigration Station in 1924.

Difficult economic conditions and political turmoil drove people out of China and overseas to places such as the silver mines of Peru, sugarcane plantations in Cuba, and the gold mines of the United States.

What led so many Chinese men to leave their homes and journey for weeks in crowded, filthy ships, only to land in a country where the "foreign demons" ruled?

One reason was political. For more than 200 years, the Manchu had ruled China. The Manchu, an ethnic group from the northern border of China, had conquered the country in 1644. Despite the fact that they were a minority, the Manchu controlled every aspect of Chinese life. The Emperor, his court, and most of the country's officials were Manchu. The Chinese were governed by a series of repressive laws. For example, all Chinese men had to wear the queue, a braided ponytail, as a sign of submission. Any man who cut off his queue was a traitor and sentenced to death. Manchus and Chinese were forbidden to marry. A Chinese citizen could not testify against a Manchu in a court of law. All of these laws led to dissatisfaction and unrest. However, despite several uprisings by peasant armies, the Manchu seemed to be in permanent control.

Another reason for the emigration[1] was financial. Chinese peasants were overworked and overtaxed. Most of them could only afford to eat meat once a week. In times of famine, hundreds of thousands of people starved. Many sold their daughters as slaves in order to buy food. As bad as things were in the countryside, they were worse in the cities. Beggars lined every street. Men worked as beasts of burden, pulling rich people in rickshas, or two-wheeled carriages. Death was so common that every city employed a squad of workers who went through the streets each day, piling bodies on a cart headed for the city dump.

Despite this, most Chinese couldn't leave China. The government banned all emigration and immigration for many years.

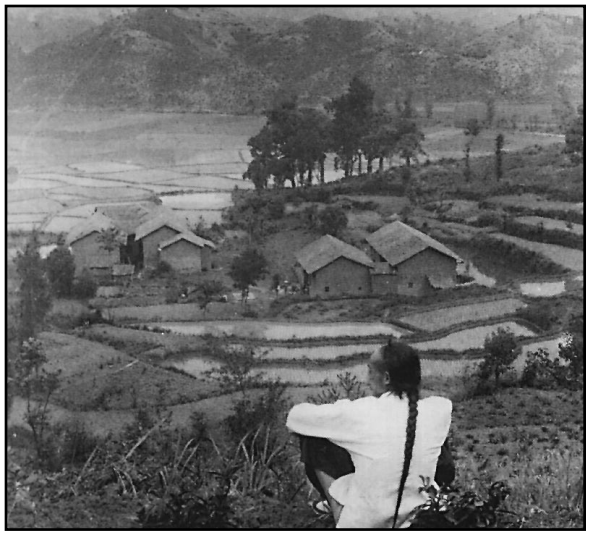
continued

[1] *emigration:* leaving home to live somewhere else

Foreign visitors were allowed into only one port, Canton. However, in the 1830s and '40s, the Manchu dynasty was in trouble. The early emperors had been energetic warriors and lawmakers. However, their descendants spent their days picking flowers, feeding goldfish, and ignoring the need for new laws. The country was ruled by thousands of bureaucrats, who spent most of their time taking bribes.

As a result, the Manchu government had no firm foreign policy. It was unprepared when Western nations such as Great Britain demanded the right to trade in China. Britain especially wanted access to the profitable opium market. Opium was produced in British India, and British traders wanted to sell it to Chinese customers. The Manchu government fought to keep opium out, but the British won. After the Opium War of 1840, five ports were opened to European trade. The British also took over the island of Hong Kong. More Chinese citizens met Westerners than ever before.

These foreign visitors told stories of a wonderful land across the seas, "the Land of the Golden Mountain." There was so much gold in the United States that people could pick it up by the handful. There were stories that fish jumped from American rivers fully cooked and ready to eat. Chinese farmers were told that the land came already plowed and that melons grew as large as sheep.



Library of Congress

Many immigrants lived in labor camps.

No wonder Chinese men longed to cross the seas to this wonderful land. However, they still faced many obstacles. In China, a son's first duty was to his parents. He was supposed to care for them as they grew old and honor their graves after death. Most important, he was supposed to have his own sons, to ensure that the family did not die out. Many Chinese parents opposed their sons going to a foreign land and risking death, not only for themselves but for the entire family. Wives also did not want their husbands to go. Chinese literature is filled with poems written by wives who became "Widows of the Gold Hills."

Despite this, thousands of men headed to America. They signed up with employers who agreed to pay their way in return for work. At the time, it was illegal for most Chinese to leave the country to live abroad. So the emigrants smuggled themselves to the British ports in Canton and Hong Kong. There they boarded ships that were nearly as crowded and uncomfortable as African slave ships. However, most men were willing to accept the hardships. They were on their way to make their fortunes.

Invitation to the Golden Mountain

This flier was handed out in Guangzhou to encourage Chinese workers to come to America. After 1848, such fliers were common in Chinese ports.

Americans are very rich people. They want the Chinaman to come and will make him welcome. There will be big pay, large houses, and food and clothing of the finest description. You can write your friends or send them money at any time and we will be responsible for the safe delivery. It is a nice country, without mandarins[2] or soldiers. All alike; big man no larger than little man. There are a great many Chinamen there now, and it will not be a strange country. China God is there, and the agents of this house. Never fear, and you will be lucky. Come to Hong Kong, or to the sign of this house in Canton and we will instruct you. Money is in great plenty and to spare in America. Such as wish to have wages and labor guaranteed can obtain the security by application at this office.

[2] *mandarin:* refers to a public official of the Chinese Empire

A Sailor from Kwangtung

Of the Chinese who crossed the seas to America, almost all came from Kwangtung Province, and almost all of those came from a handful of counties around Canton. Often these villagers were old hands at seamanship and sea voyages. Stan Steiner tells the story of one brave sailor in ***Fusang: The Chinese Who Built America.***

Library of Congress

This small fishing boat, or *junk,* sailed from China to California in 1924.

There was a man who crossed the Pacific Ocean in a rowboat.

He had become impatient waiting for passage on the foreign ships. And, it was likely, he did not trust the captains of these foreign ships, who treated the Chinese worse than they treated their cheapest cargo.

So he decided to cross the Pacific Ocean by himself.

One day he rowed his boat down the Estuary of Humen, from the harbor of Canton into the mouth of the Pearl River, and out to sea. The boat he had was a small sampan, a low, flat-bottomed wooden riverboat meant for trading in the harbor and not meant for sailing in the open sea. In the lightest waves the water would fill it, and it would easily capsize. . . .

The passage from China to America lay across seven thousand miles of the world's greatest sea, and even the largest and fastest of sailing ships often did not make it. . . .

No one knew how long he sailed upon the sea. If there was any log of the voyage of his nameless sampan, it has never been found. . . . His voyage will be forever shrouded in mystery.

Somehow it is more fitting that way. The image of a man in a small boat appearing in the morning fog one day off the coast of California coming out of nowhere like a ghost, seems appropriate to a legend of the sea.

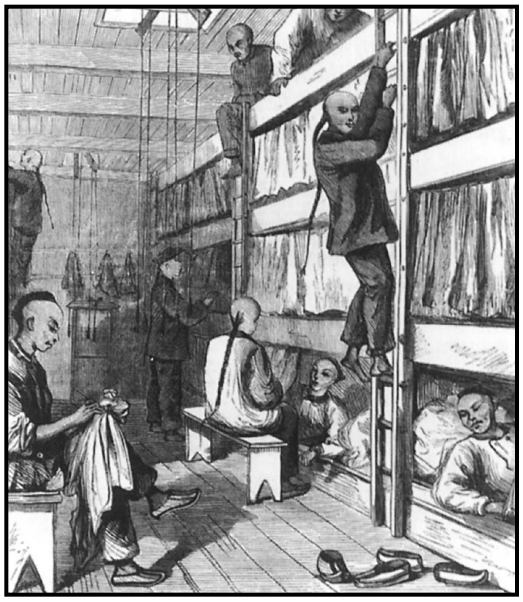
Even the course he sailed from Kwangtung to California is unknown. It is thought he may have crossed on the winds and tides of the Kuro Shiwo, the Black Stream, as did the ancient mariners. The crossing, if he came that way, would have taken him about six months—a long, but not impossible, journey. Many had done it before. And he would not be the last.

continued

There was once a photograph of the man in the boat in a dusty museum in San Francisco's Chinatown. In this photograph the man was seen sitting on a small wooden boat on a beach in California. He was smiling. . . . The man's name, it was said, was George Hew. Beneath the old photograph there was a typewritten caption that read:

GEORGE HEW SAILED FROM CHINA, IN 1852, IN THIS BOAT THAT HE IS SITTING ON. HE LANDED IN CALIFORNIA.

That was all it said.



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Chinese immigrants spent two months in cramped quarters aboard ship.

The old photograph is now missing from the museum. . . . And yet the old people who remember that story of the man in a small boat who sailed across the Pacific Ocean say it does not matter if all the records of his remarkable feat were to disappear. The legend of his voyage is its own truth. For the written memory of man is not the only memory written in the sea.

He was, after all, one of those men of Kwangtung. And a man of Kwangtung could do anything.

The Chinese were the first group to immigrate to the United States from Asia. Most of these first immigrants came from Guangdong (Kwangtung) Province on China's south coast.

Most of the first Chinese immigrants came from Guangdong Province.

Anti-Chinese Laws

Many state and federal laws were passed in the 19th century to limit the number of Chinese immigrants to the United States.

AN ACT TO PREVENT THE FURTHER IMMIGRATION OF CHINESE OR MONGOLIANS[1] TO THIS STATE (CALIFORNIA)

April 26, 1885

SECTION 1. On and after the first day of October, anno Domini, eighteen hundred and eighty-five, any person, or persons, of the Chinese or Mongolian races, shall not be permitted to enter this State, or land therein, at any port or part thereof, and it shall be unlawful for any man, or persons, whether captain or commander, or other person, in charge of, or interested in, or employed on board of, or passengers upon, any vessel or vessels of any nature or description whatsoever, to knowingly allow, or permit, any Chinese or Mongolian, on and after such time, to enter any of the ports of this State, to land therein, or at any place or places, within the border of this State, and any person or persons violating any of the provisions of this Act, shall be held and deemed guilty of a misdemeanor[2], and upon conviction thereof shall be subject to a fine in any sum not less than four hundred dollars, nor more than six hundred dollars, for each and every offense, or imprisonment in the County Jail of the County in which the said offense was committed, for a period of not less than three months, nor more than one year, or by both such fine and imprisonment.

SECTION 2. The landing of each and every Chinese or Mongolian person, or persons, shall be deemed and held as a distinct and separate offense, and punished accordingly.

[1] *Mongolians:* Mongolia was an area ruled by China at the time

[2] *misdemeanor:* act of breaking the law that is not as serious as a felony

continued

Thomas Nast

Thomas Nast satirized prejudice against the Chinese in this 1869 cartoon titled "Pacific Chivalry: Encouragement to Chinese Immigration."

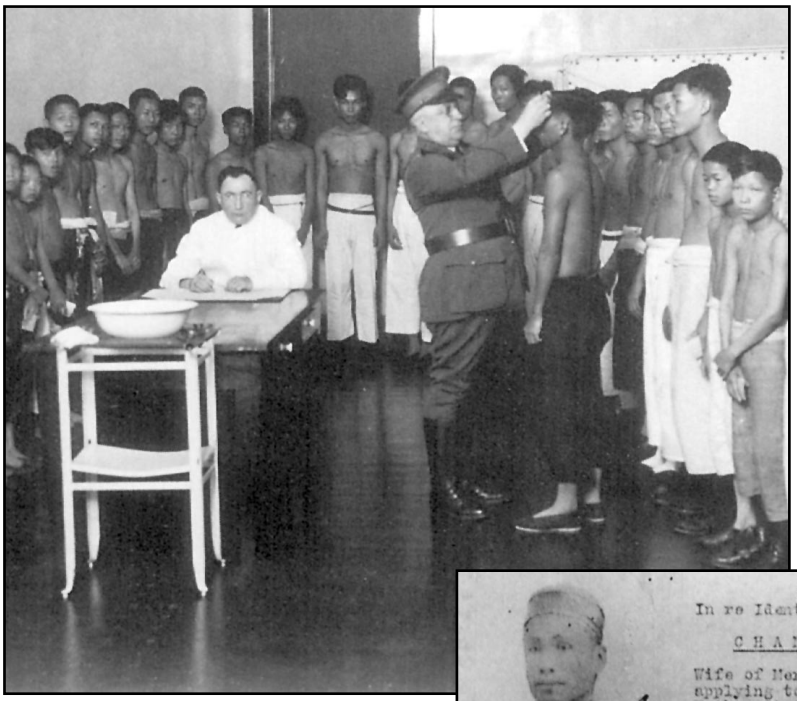
THE CONSTITUTION OF THE STATE OF CALIFORNIA
1879

SECTION 4. The presence of foreigners ineligible to become citizens of the United States is declared to be dangerous to the well being of the State, and the Legislature shall discourage their immigration by all means within its power. Asiatic coolieism[3] is a form of human slavery, and is forever prohibited in this State; and all contracts for coolie labor shall be void. All companies or corporations, whether formed in this country or any foreign country, for the importation of such labor, shall be subject to such penalties as the Legislature may prescribe. The Legislature shall delegate all necessary power to the incorporated cities and towns of this State for the removal of Chinese without the limits of such cities and towns, or for their location within prescribed portions of those limits; and it shall also provide the necessary legislation to prohibit the introduction into this State of Chinese after the adoption of this Constitution. This section shall be enforced by appropriate legislation.

[3] *coolieism:* system of labor based on short-term contracts with Chinese workers

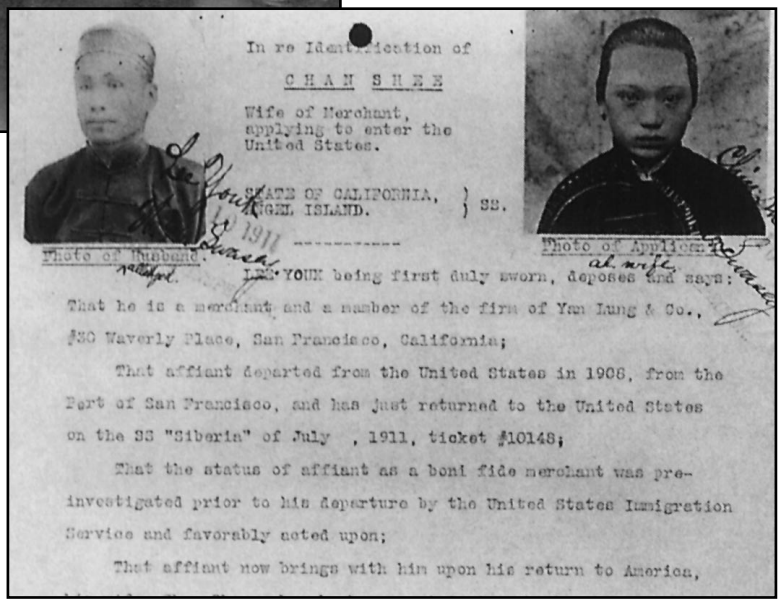
ANGEL ISLAND

The fires after the 1906 San Francisco earthquake destroyed many birth records. So many Chinese immigrants applied for citizenship, claiming they had been born in America. Families of citizens were allowed to immigrate, and many new citizens brought their families to America. The government became concerned about the increasing number of Asian immigrants. So from 1910–1940, everyone arriving from China had to go to a special immigration station, Angel Island, in San Francisco Bay.



National Archives

Every immigrant had to pass a physical examination given by immigration officials. Applicants also had to answer questions for several hours. Transcripts of these interviews could be up to 87 pages long.



In re Identification of

CHAN SHEE

Wife of Merchant, applying to enter the United States.

STATE OF CALIFORNIA, } ss.
ANGEL ISLAND. }

Photo of Husband

Photo of Applicant

LEE YOUK being first duly sworn, deposes and says:

That he is a merchant and a member of the firm of Yan Lung & Co., #30 Waverly Place, San Francisco, California;

That affiant departed from the United States in 1908, from the Port of San Francisco, and has just returned to the United States on the SS "Siberia" of July , 1911, ticket #10148;

That the status of affiant as a boni fide merchant was pre-investigated prior to his departure by the United States Immigration Service and favorably acted upon;

That affiant now brings with him upon his return to America,

National Archives

Lee Youk, a merchant, returned to China for his wife, Chan Shee. While he was allowed to return to America, Chan Shee was not allowed to enter the country.

continued

National Archives

People arriving from China waited in these buildings to find out if they would be allowed to enter the United States. If a person was allowed to stay, a guard would wish them *sai gaai* (good luck). If a person had to return to China, the guard would act as if he were crying.

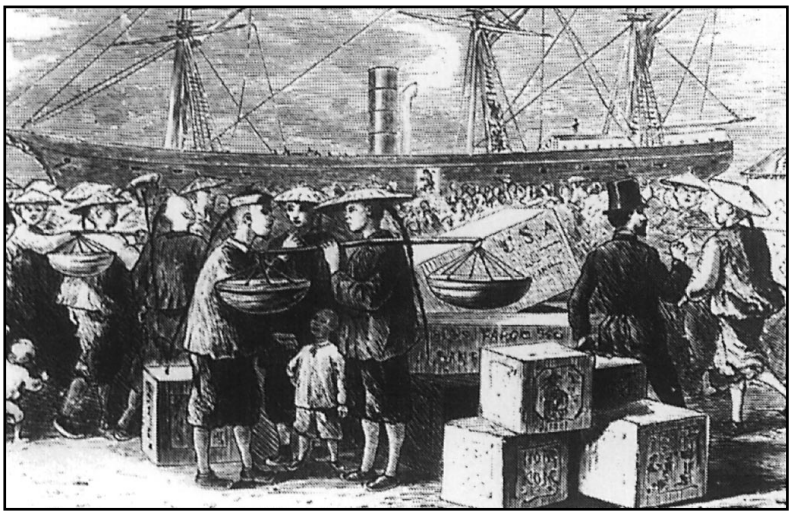
National Archives

A young Chinese answers questions about his village and family. Immigration officials used intensive questioning to detect "paper sons," young men who paid Chinese already living in America to claim them as sons.

VIEWPOINTS

About Chinese Immigrants

When the Chinese first came to America, they were welcomed as hard workers. However, white workers felt their jobs were threatened by Chinese laborers. So prejudice against the Chinese soon began to increase.



Library of Congress

The quietness and order, cheerfulness and temperance which is observable in their habits, is noticed by everyone. Search the city through and you will not find an idle Chinaman, and their cleanliness exceeds any other people we ever saw.

—Louis J. Stellman
San Francisco resident, 1850s

I have always found [the Chinese] truthful, honorable, and perfectly reliable in all their business engagements. I have never had a single one of them fail to live up to his contracts.

—Richard G. Sneath
manager, Merchants' Bank

The Chinese must go! They are stealing our jobs!

—Denis Kearney
leader of the Workingmen's Party, 1877

The early Chinese immigrant was noted for his industry, quietness, cheerfulness, and cleanliness and efficiency. He did what no one else could do, or what remained undone.

—Mary Roberts Coolidge
Chinese Immigration

[The Chinese] are a kindly-disposed, well-meaning race, and are respected and well treated by the upper classes, all over the Pacific coast. No Californian *gentleman or lady* ever abuses or oppresses a Chinaman, under any circumstances. . . . Only the scum of the population do it. . . .

—Mark Twain
Roughing It, 1871

A Chinaman is cold, cunning and distrustful; always ready to take advantage of those he has to deal with; extremely covetous and deceitful; quarrelsome, vindictive, but timid and dastardly. A Chinaman in office is a strange compound of insolence and meanness. All ranks and conditions have a total disregard for truth.

—Encyclopedia Britannica
7th edition (1842)

I do not believe they are going to remain here long enough to become good citizens, and I would not admit them to citizenship.

—Charles Crocker
superintendent of the Central Pacific Railroad

continued

Chinese Viewpoints About Whites

"Did you understand when Chinese call white people *bot guey,* 'white devils,' or *guey low,* 'foreign devils'?" an elderly resident [of New York's Chinatown] asked. "It's not meant to insult or dishonor. We say *low faan* so much, we refer to all whites as 'demons'—because we think it's the right term for them. Their noses are so huge and their eyes so blue. Chinese are unlike others—they think China is the center of the earth."

—Gwen Kinkead
Chinatown

Americans have an unofficial form of punishment known as "lynching" with which to treat blacks. Such a phenomenon is unimaginable among civilized countries.

—Liang Qichao
on a 1903 visit to the United States

American restaurants are all the same. They prepare food in only three ways: boiled in water, grilled, and deep-fried; apart from these there is no other variety. Then, on the table a lot of "condiments" are served so that customers can make things as sweet, salty, sour, or peppery as they like. All over the whole country food stands on the street sell the same hot dogs, hamburgers, sandwiches, french fries, and so on; wherever you go the taste is the same. Especially for someone who has just arrived in America, the sight of a hot dog dripping with red tomato sauce and yellow mustard is enough to take your appetite away.

—Cai Nengying
"A Housewife Staying in America Talks About Household Matters"

More than half the Chinese in this country would become citizens if allowed to do so, and would be patriotic Americans.

—Lee Chew
laundryman, 1882

When I first came (in 1880) Chinese treated worse than dog. Oh, it was terrible, terrible. At that time all Chinese have queue and dress same as in China. The hoodlums, roughnecks and young boys pull your queue, slap your face, throw all kind of old vegetables and rotten eggs at you.

—Andrew Kan
1924

Chinese Festivals

These are a few of the major festivals celebrated by Chinese people in China and America.

When Chinese workers came to the United States, they brought their festivals with them. Each province had its own special holidays to honor patron spirits or locally historic events, but these are the most common Chinese festivals and feasts.

Chinese New Year

The Chinese New Year is perhaps the most important holiday of the year. It is celebrated for seven to fourteen days. Just before New Year's housewives and servants clean the home. This housecleaning is known as *da-fo-tau-mui.* The Chinese believe that the gods hate disorder. Cleaning the house invites the gods to come and visit. In the kitchen, a picture of the household god is burned in the fireplace. He flies up the chimney to Heaven and reports to the gods about the family. Before the picture is burned, people smear the lips with honey, so the god's words will be sweet. A new picture is then hung, to spy on the household for another year.

On the first night of the festival, every family celebrates with a feast. Except for very young children, everyone stays up all night. This ensures that no one has bad dreams, a sign of misfortune. During the holiday, no one is allowed to quarrel or speak about anything sad. People feast and drink wine, and entertainers are hired to amuse everyone. Families who live far away often visit their ancestral homes.

Pure Brightness Festival *(Ch'ing Ming)*

The Pure Brightness Festival is the equaivalent of the American Memorial Day. Visiting the graves of the dead is a solemn duty in China. One of the reasons every Chinese couple wanted a son was to have someone to sweep their graves and leave offerings of food. Chinese daughters belonged to their husband's family after they were married, so they could not tend their parents' graves.

continued

Since Chinese living in America cannot always visit the family grave, they visit "spirit shrines" instead. At the shrine, the oldest member of the family sweeps the area with a broom made of willow twigs. Willow is believed to chase away evil spirits. The family then offers dishes of food and pours wine on the ground. The food is later eaten at home, thus it is "shared" by both the living and the dead.

Finally, families burn paper money, candles, and incense, items designed to help and comfort the spirits. During the ceremonies, firecrackers are set off nearby. The Chinese believe that this noise distracts evil spirits and keeps them from threatening the spirits of departed family members.

Spirits' Festival (*Shao-I* or "burning paper clothing")

This festival occurs on the fifteenth day of the seventh moon. Like *Ch'ing Ming,* it is also connected with the dead. The Chinese believe that on this day, the spirits of the dead can roam the world, visiting their relatives or whomever they wish. Families again burn incense and paper offerings, designed to show the dead that they have not been forgotten.

California State Library

Chinese immigrants care for family grave markers.

The Moon (or Mid-Autumn) Festival

The Moon Festival occurs on the fifteenth day of the eighth moon, when the moon is at its brightest. It is similar in many ways to the American Thanksgiving. People, especially farmers, thank the gods who give good harvests. The festival celebrates the harvest with special meals and cakes made in the shape of the full moon.

The *Ch'ung Yang* Festival

The Ch'ung Yang Festival celebrates a legendary journey made by a farmer and his family. A fortune-teller told the farmer that he and his family would be in danger on the ninth day of the ninth moon. The farmer and his family fled to the hills. When they returned, all their livestock had died.

Since that time, people have climbed the highest hills they could find and stayed there for the day. While waiting to go home, they fly beautiful, handmade kites. Today, the fear of an unknown danger is gone, and the festival is simply a day for families to enjoy the outdoors together.

Dragon Lore

Moon Shadow is shocked that his American landlady thinks dragons are evil. This article explains the differences between the Western dragons and the dragons who lived in China and other parts of Asia.

According to folklore, dragons lived in both Europe and Asia. However, Eastern dragons had very little in common with their Western cousins.

Western dragons were hated and feared. They spent most of their time setting fire to villages and eating young maidens. Great heroes such as St. George risked their lives to kill these wicked monsters.

On the other hand, Eastern dragons were respected, even worshipped. For example, the Empress of China had a special chapel, The Black Dragon Pool, where she offered prayers to the dragons each month. There was even an official dragon feeder at court, whose job it was to leave food out for the palace dragons. Dragons were especially fond of roasted swallows, buckets of milk and cream, and arsenic. Although arsenic is poisonous to humans, it just made dragons fat.

Unlike Western dragons, Chinese dragons were wise, and for the most part kind to humans. They also performed useful services. The Chinese believed that the world was ruled by dragons, just as the Emperor and his Court ruled the nation. There were dragons in charge of rainmaking, and dragons who controlled the winds. The Celestial Dragon King ruled the Heavens, and the King of Hidden Treasures guarded the land underground, with its supply of gold, silver, and jewels. Some dragons lived in rivers and lakes, and others controlled the ocean waves. A sailor going on a long voyage would write a letter to King of the Eastern Sea, asking for a calm ocean and safe passage. Ocean dragons lived in great palaces made from coral, pearls, and jade. Some people believed that shipwrecked sailors went to live in the halls of the sea dragons forever.

In addition to the great dragons, there were small dragons who lived

continued

in nearly every house. Some house dragons were as small as flies. People took great care not to accidentally step on one of these sacred creatures!

Many Asians also believed that their earthly rulers were descended from dragons. The Chinese seat of government was called the Dragon Throne. The Emperor wore robes brocaded with dragons and drank from cups engraved with dragons. Calling him "dragon-face" was a great compliment. The Japanese Emperor Hirohito even claimed that his ancestors were dragons. He traced his family tree back 125 generations to a dragon princess named Fruitful Jewel.

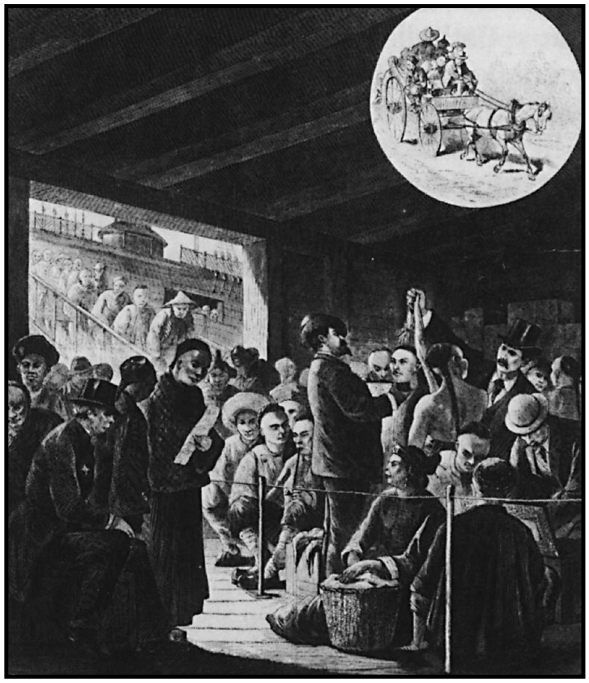
Even today, Asian dragons are respected. For example, when people build a house in China, many of them will still consult *feng shui* experts before they dig the foundations. These experts can tell where dragons are lying under the earth. They advise people on how to plan their buildings without disturbing the dragons' sleep.

Chinese doctors and astrologers still use dragons as well. For example, dragon blood is believed to cure blindness, and dragon whiskers keep flies and mosquitoes away. Doctors sold powdered dragon bones for many years until Western scientists discovered they were actually grinding up dinosaur bones!

Astrologers believe that children born in the Year of the Dragon are blessed with long, happy, wealthy lives. The Year of the Dragon happens every 12 years. Recent Years of the Dragon were 1964, 1976, and 1988.

THE COMPANY

Many Chinese who came to America at the turn of the century were contract laborers. They agreed to work on the railroad or in the mines for a certain number of years. When their contracts expired, they returned to China. Most of these workers knew little English and had little money. So they formed organizations that provided help and protection in a foreign land.



Harper's Weekly

Representatives of the Six Companies met Chinese workers as they arrived at the San Francisco customs house.

The first Chinese to come to America formed family or clan associations. An immigrant could rely on the clan's help in getting settled in his new country. The clan associations helped members who were short of money. They also arbitrated, or settled, disagreements. And they returned the bones of members who died in America to China. Today, the associations help Chinese Americans keep their traditions alive.

District associations helped people who came from certain areas or districts in China. In 1851, Chinese from Kwangtung Province formed the first district association, or company. Other district associations were formed by people who had lived in other parts of China. The district associations built halls or meeting places. They provided places for guests to stay. Members who became sick were taken care of. Those too ill to work were given money to return to China.

In 1880, six district associations formed a new group. The official name was Chung Wah Kung Saw, or Chinese Consolidated Benevolent Association (CCBA). However, most San Franciscans referred to the group as "The Six Companies." Eventually branches of the CCBA were formed wherever groups of Chinese Americans lived.

Chinese Americans who did not have a family district association formed one other type of group, tongs. These secret organizations protected their members and helped them find jobs. They also controlled criminal activities in Chinatown, such as illegal gambling and opium dens. Rival tongs sometimes fought with hatchets or knives, so their members were known as "hatchet men."

The Chinese Laundry

The first Chinese who came to America found few opportunities. So many of them opened laundries, as Ronald Takaki explains in ***Journey to Gold Mountain.***

Faced with hostility from white workers in the mines, factories, and fields, many Chinese decided to become self-employed. They opened stores, restaurants, and especially laundries. Chinese laundries were a common sight as early as the 1850s. . . .

The "Chinese laundryman" was an American phenomenon, not a transplant from China. "The Chinese laundryman does not learn his trade in China; there are no laundries in China," said Lee Chew, a laundry worker who came to America in the early 1860s. In China, laundry work was a "woman's occupation," and men did not "step into it for fear of losing their social standing."

Why did Chinese men in America enter this line of work? Unlike a store or a restaurant, a laundry could be opened with a small amount of money, perhaps $75 to $200. . . . Also, a Chinese laundryman did not need to speak much English to operate his business. . . .

In a laundry there were usually two workers, one doing the washing and a second the ironing. Work began about seven o'clock in the morning on Monday. "The man who irons does not start in till Tuesday," Lee Chew said, "as the clothes are not ready for him to begin until that time. So he has Sundays and Mondays as holidays. The man who does the washing finishes up on Friday night, and so he has Saturday and Sunday off. Each works only five days a week, but those are long days—from seven o'clock in the morning till midnight."

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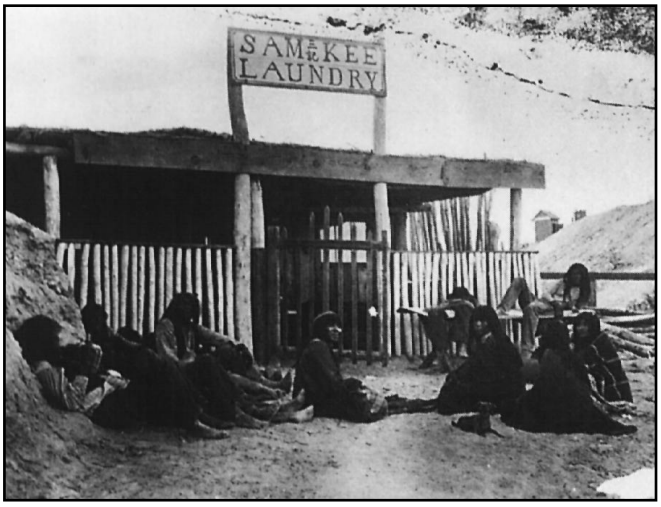
Library of Congress

Many Chinese found that opening a laundry was the quickest way to make money in America.



Library of Congress

Native Americans wait for their clothes to be washed outside this Chinese laundry in Arizona.

Chinese Laundry Song

One piece, two pieces, three pieces,
The clothes must be washed cleanly,
Four pieces, five pieces, six pieces,
The clothes must be ironed
smooth-ly. . . .
You say laundry is really cheap work,
and only the Chinamen are willing to
be so low. . . .
Really, I, too don't believe there is a
future in it,
Washing people's sweat with your own
blood and sweat.
Would you do that? Wouldn't you do
that?
Year after year, with a nostalgic drop of
tear;
Deep at night, by the flickering laundry
light.

Library of Congress

The Chinese laundryman became a familiar image in America.

CHINATOWN

Journalist Will Irwin described San Francisco's Chinatown before the earthquake as "a district six blocks long and two wide, [which] housed 30,000 Chinese when the quarter was full. The dwellings were old business blocks of the early days; but the Chinese had added to them, had rebuilt them, had run out their own balconies and entrances, and have given the quarter that feeling of huddled irregularity which makes all Chinese-built dwellings fall naturally into pictures. Not only this; they had burrowed to the depth of a story or two under the ground...."

***The City That Was*, 1906**

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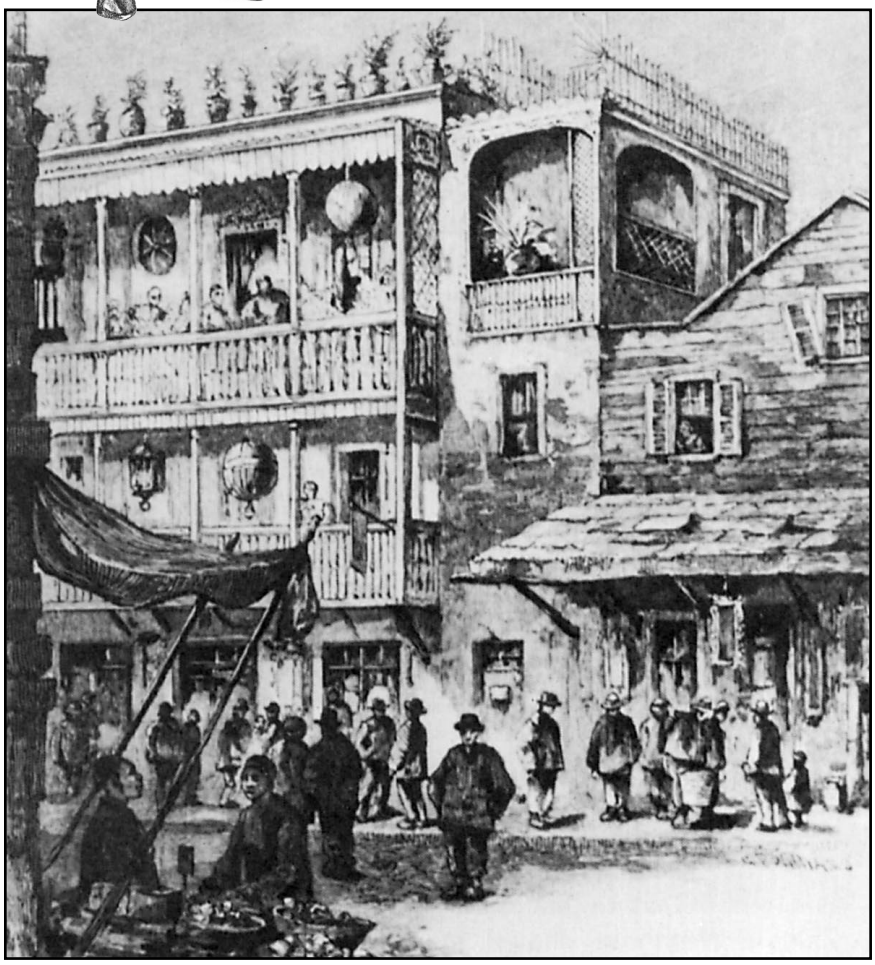


This 1883 *Harper's Weekly* illustration shows the corner of Jackson and DuPont Streets in San Francisco. The area was crowded with warehouses and general stores. Peddlers sold their wares in alleys and on corners.

LEFT: This 1882 sketch shows the Chinese neighborhood in Bakersfield, California. Chinese workers who left their neighborhoods were often attacked by prejudiced people trying to "keep them in their place."

BELOW: The first Chinese to come to America have been called a "bachelor society" because they had to leave their families behind. This photograph is by Arnold Genthe, whose pictures of Chinatown launched his career as a famous photographer.

National Parks Service

Amelia Ransome Neville found "Chinatown was endlessly fascinating. . . . It was an enchanting little city. . . . a scene transported from Peking. Windows of the bazaars were a blaze of color. Sweetmeat vendors were stationed along the curb, and over the gilded balconies of restaurants drifted the shrill music of the slave girls. Everywhere the scent of sandalwood mingled with that of the fish markets.

These friendly aliens, with their love of bright hues, their strange theatrical customs, the tong wars and 'hatchet men,' and all the mystery of life lived in subterranean levels, brought a flare of rich color to the pageant of the old city."

***The Fantastic City,* 1932**

The SAN FRANCISCO EARTHQUAKE

Library of Congress

After the earthquake, a city official named Abe Ruef said that it "is taken for granted from the first that the Chinese must not be allowed to return to the desirable area that Chinatown occupied." Ruef chaired a committee that tried to find a new location for the Chinese. However, many Chinese moved back into Chinatown before the committee could act. The quake decreased Chinatown's population from 15,000 to 10,000.

The San Francisco earthquake took place at 5:13 AM on April 18, 1906. The earth shook for one minute and fifteen seconds. At least 3,000 people died. More than 225,000 residents lost their homes during the earthquake and the fire that followed. Novelist Jack London wrote an eyewitness description for ***Colliers Weekly*** *magazine.*

San Francisco is gone! Nothing remains of it but memories and a fringe of dwelling houses on the outskirts. Its industrial section is wiped out. Its social and residential section is wiped out. The factories and warehouses, the great stores and newspaper buildings, the hotels and the palaces of the nabobs,[1] are all gone. Remains only the fringe of dwelling houses on the outskirts of what was once San Francisco.

Within an hour after the earthquake shock the smoke of San Francisco's burning was a lurid tower visible a hundred miles away. And for three days and nights this lurid tower swayed in the sky, reddening the sun, darkening the sky, and filling the land with smoke.

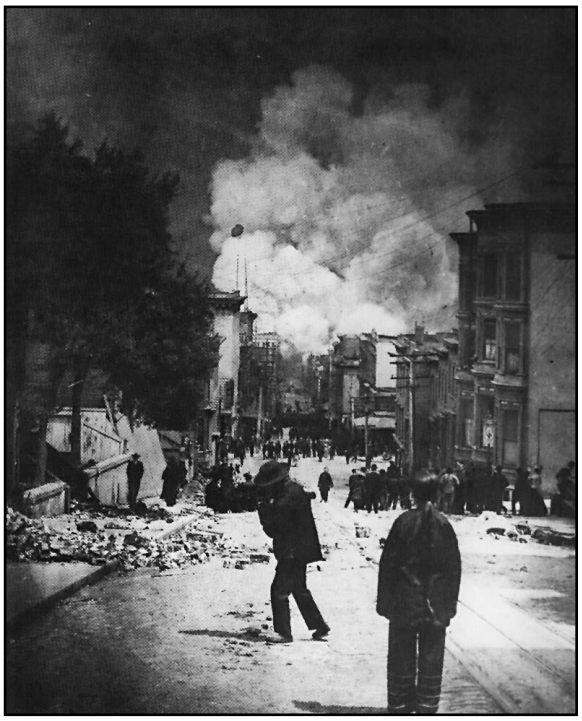
On Wednesday morning at a quarter past five came the earthquake. A minute later the flames were leaping upward. In a dozen different quarters south of Market Street, in the working-class ghetto, and in the factories, fires started. There was no opposing the flames. There was no organization, no communication. All the cunning adjustments of a twentieth-century city had been smashed by the earthquake. The streets were humped into ridges and

continued

[1] *nabobs:* wealthy or prominent people

depressions and piled with debris of fallen walls. The steel rails were twisted into perpendicular and horizontal angles. The telephone and telegraph systems were disrupted. And the great water mains had burst. All the shrewd contrivances and safeguards of man had been thrown out of gear by thirty seconds' twitching of the earth crust.

By Wednesday afternoon, inside of twelve hours, half the heart of the city was gone. At that time I watched the vast conflagration[2] from out on the bay. It was dead calm. Not a flicker of wind stirred. Yet from every side wind was pouring in upon the city. East, west, north, and south, strong winds were blowing upon the doomed city. The heated air rising made an enormous suck.[3] Thus did the fire of itself build its own colossal chimney through the atmosphere. Day and night this dead calm continued, and yet, near to the flames, the wind was often half a gale, so mighty was the suck.



After the great quake, fires raged throughout San Francisco. Chinatown suffered extensive damage. LOC

The edict which prevented chaos was the following proclamation by Mayor E. E. Schmitz:

'The Federal Troops, the members of the Regular Police Force, and all Special Police Officers have been authorized to KILL any and all persons found engaged in looting or in the commission of any other crime.

'I have directed all the Gas and Electric Lighting Companies not to turn on gas or electricity until I order them to do so; you may therefore expect the city to remain in darkness for an indefinite time.

'I request all citizens to remain at home from darkness until daylight of every night until order is restored.

'I warn all citizens of the danger of fire from damaged or destroyed chimneys, broken or leaking gas pipes or fixtures, or any like cause.'

Wednesday night saw the destruction of the very heart of the city. Dynamite was lavishly used, and many of San Francisco's proudest structures were crumbled by man himself into ruins, but there was no withstanding the onrush of the flames. Time and again successful stands were made by the fire fighters, and every time the flames flanked around on either side, or came up from the rear, and turned to defeat the hard-won victory. . . .

San Francisco, at the present time is like the crater of a volcano, around which are camped tens of thousands of refugees. . . . All the surrounding cities and towns are jammed with homeless ones, where they are being cared for by the relief committees. The refugees were carried free by the railroads to any point they wished to go, and it is estimated that over one hundred thousand people have left the peninsula on which San Francisco stood.

[2] *conflagration:* large, disastrous fire

[3] *suck:* vacuum

Fung Joe Guey: Celestial Aviator

*The flight in **Dragonwings** is based on an actual flight made by Fung Joe Guey. **The Call** and **The San Francisco Examiner** reported the September 22, 1909, event as front-page news in their September 23 editions.*

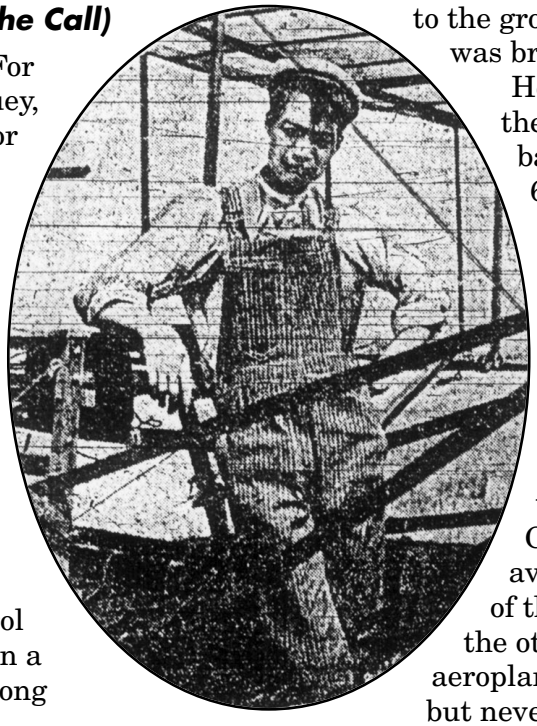
CHINESE FLIES IN AEROPLANE OF OWN BUILD

Celestial Aviator Circles About for 20 Minutes in New Type of Biplane

Accident to Propeller Plunges Machine to Earth After Successful Demonstration

(Special Dispatch to The Call)

OAKLAND, Sept. 22.—For 20 minutes Fung Joe Guey, a young Chinese inventor and aviator, circled through the air in the hills back of Piedmont yesterday afternoon in a biplane of his own manufacture, embodying his own ideas in aeroplane construction. He was able to demonstrate their advantages and to show that he had perfected a machine that could be kept under perfect control while in flight. He flew in a wide circle, despite a strong wind.



Fung Joe Guey

He met with an accident to the propeller that brought his flight to an end before he had tried high flying. The bolt holding the propeller to the shaft snapped after he had been in the air 20 minutes and the machine came to the ground. Fung Joe Guey was bruised in the fall.

He made his flight near the old Dingee residence, back of Piedmont, about 6 o'clock last night. Chung Doo Nam, a Chinese restaurant keeper of 367 Ninth street, who is one of his backers, assisted him in putting the aeroplane together and was with him at the time he rose. A young Chinese disciple of the aviator and a few farmers of the neighborhood were the other spectators. The aeroplane rose from the ground, but never reached a height of more than 10 or 12 feet, as Fung Joe Guey did not wish to venture higher until he had fully tested its dirigibility.[1] He followed the rise and fall of the hilly ground without trouble, the aeroplane responding well in this respect.

continued

[1] *dirigibility:* ease of steering

The aeroplane consists of two planes 35 feet long and 6 feet 3 inches broad, placed one above the other like other biplanes. It was driven yesterday by a six horsepower engine. The improvement that the inventor claims for his own consists of an extra plane between the large ones, stationed near the rudder of the machine. He says that this extra plane catches a current of air that the rudder can use.

Fung Joe Guey says he will fly again. He is to construct another aeroplane on the same lines as the old one, but stronger. It is to be built of steel tubing and silk and will be driven by a more powerful engine.

*This is how the **San Francisco Examiner** covered Fung Joe Guey's flight.*

CHINESE LEAVES WHITES BEHIND IN AVIATION

Oakland Genius Makes First Flight on Coast in Craft Driven by Home-Made Motor

TRIAL ENDS IN MISHAP

Fung Joe Guey Comes Down With Crash, but Unhurt; Will Make New Ship for Cantonese

It has remained for a Chinese aviator to make the first successful flight on the Pacific Coast of a heavier-than-air motor-driven aeroplane.

Fung Joe Guey of Oakland; who has achieved no little note as a mechanical genius, counter to all the traditions of his race, accomplished the flight on Tuesday evening, covering a half mile at a distance of fifteen feet from the ground. A break in the machinery interrupted the flight and Fung was thrown to the ground.

His course was laid far from any habitation on a great knoll near the W. J. Dingee homestead, now known as Piedmont Heights.

Only Chinese See Flight.

With no other spectators than his three Chinese helpers, Fung made his flight in the dim light of early evening. The big biplane, with its four starting wheels tucked beneath it like the talons of a bird, sailed slowly in an elliptical course around the crest of the hill nearly back to the starting point.

Fung was preparing to make another turn when a sudden stoppage of the propellor and a quick drop of the stern[2] of the craft threw the machine heavily to the earth. Fung was thrown out uninjured.

The screws holding the driving wheel on the propellor shaft had broken under the strain. The failure of the propellor had let the bi-plane drop astern foremost to the ground. The rear starting wheels were bent and twisted by the impact.

Will Show Canton Flier.

Believing that he had evolved a successful type of aeroplane, the Chinese early yesterday morning unshipped the motor, and, taking the machine apart, packed it back to his shop in Oakland. He declares that now he will proceed to build a stronger and more powerful craft with which he plans to show the Cantonese of his native China a real Celestial flyer.

The Chinese aviator has been working on his machine since last May in his little shop at 359 East Ninth street, Oakland. He had it hauled to the lonely spot in the

continued

[2] *stern:* right side

Piedmont hills last Thursday. With the aid of three other Chinese enthusiasts he reassembled the parts and prepared for flight.

Mishap on First Trial.

He declares he took the bi-plane over a three-quarter-mile flight last Friday night. Again he had a mishap in landing. The air-cooled motor became overheated and stopped before he had time to adjust the planes for descent. One of the starting wheels was broken in the drop to the ground.

Another wheel was sent for. Fung and his men lived in a little 6x6 tent at the side of the machine. In the still nights on the hilltop, two of them stood guard to see that no wayfarer or marauding cow should harm their craft.

Copies After Wrights.

His aeroplane has practically no new features. It is similar to the Wright bi-plane.

Some mystery attaches to the financial backing that has enabled Fung and Chung Doo Nam, Tom Yiu Ning and Wong Gay, his helpers, to spend their time in experimenting with aviation. With Oriental guilelessness[3] they explain that they merely have saved up their money and are studying mechanics. Fung dismisses the question by saying that his father back in the province of Canton is wealthy.

Plans Better Machine.

He is making plans now for a new bi-plane on the same model as his present one, but constructed of steel tubing and Chinese silk, to be driven by a fifty-horse power motor.

In connection with his wireless plant, Fung made known the interesting fact that two others of his countrymen, one on Sixteenth street in Oakland and one in Berkeley, also have wireless outfits. The three hold daily converse together. Fung also makes telephones, presumably on the Bell model. In a nearby restaurant one of his telephones is in daily use.

California State Library

Lum Fook Yuen was an early Chinese aviator.

[3] *guilelessness:* innocence; sincerity

The Wrights

The Wright brothers first became interested in flight when their father gave them a small toy which flew. Their interest was renewed by Otto Lilienthal's experiments with gliders. Finally, their observations of how birds glided and soared revealed the secret of flight.

Orville and Wilbur Wright

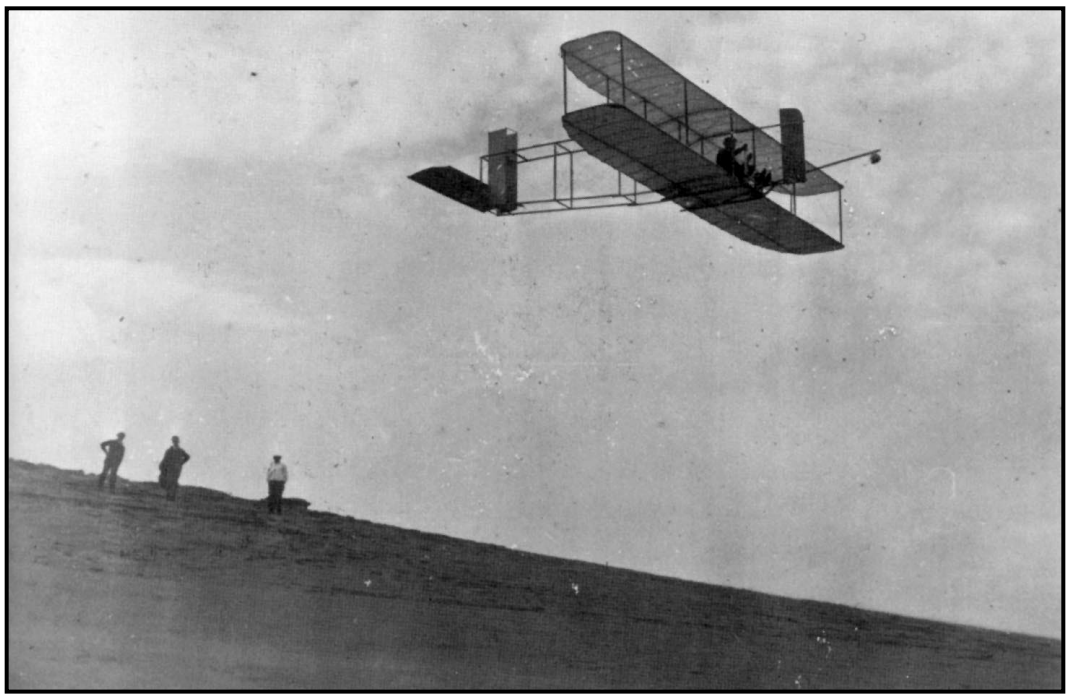
Our most acute sensations are during the first minutes of flight, while we are soaring into the air and gaining the level at which we wish to sail. Then for the next five minutes our concentration is fixed on the levers to see that everything is working all right. But after that the management of the Flyer becomes almost automatic.

When you know, after the first few minutes, that the whole mechanism is working perfectly, the sensation is so keenly delightful as to be almost beyond description. . . . More than anything else the sensation is one of perfect peace, mingled with an excitement that strains every nerve to the utmost. . . .

—**Wilbur Wright**
New York Herald, November 25, 1906

The ground under you is at first a perfect blur, but as you rise the objects become clearer. At a height of one hundred feet you feel hardly any motion at all, except for the wind which strikes your face. If you did not take the precaution to fasten your hat before starting, you have probably lost it by this time.

The operator moves a lever: the right wing rises, and the machine swings about to the left. You make a very short turn, yet you do not feel the sensation of being thrown from your seat, so often experienced in automobile and railway travel. You find yourself facing toward the point from which you started. The objects on the ground now seem to be moving at



Library of Congress

Orville Wright flies a biplane that the brothers built in 1911. This glider set a world record for unpowered flight by staying aloft for 9 minutes, 45 seconds.

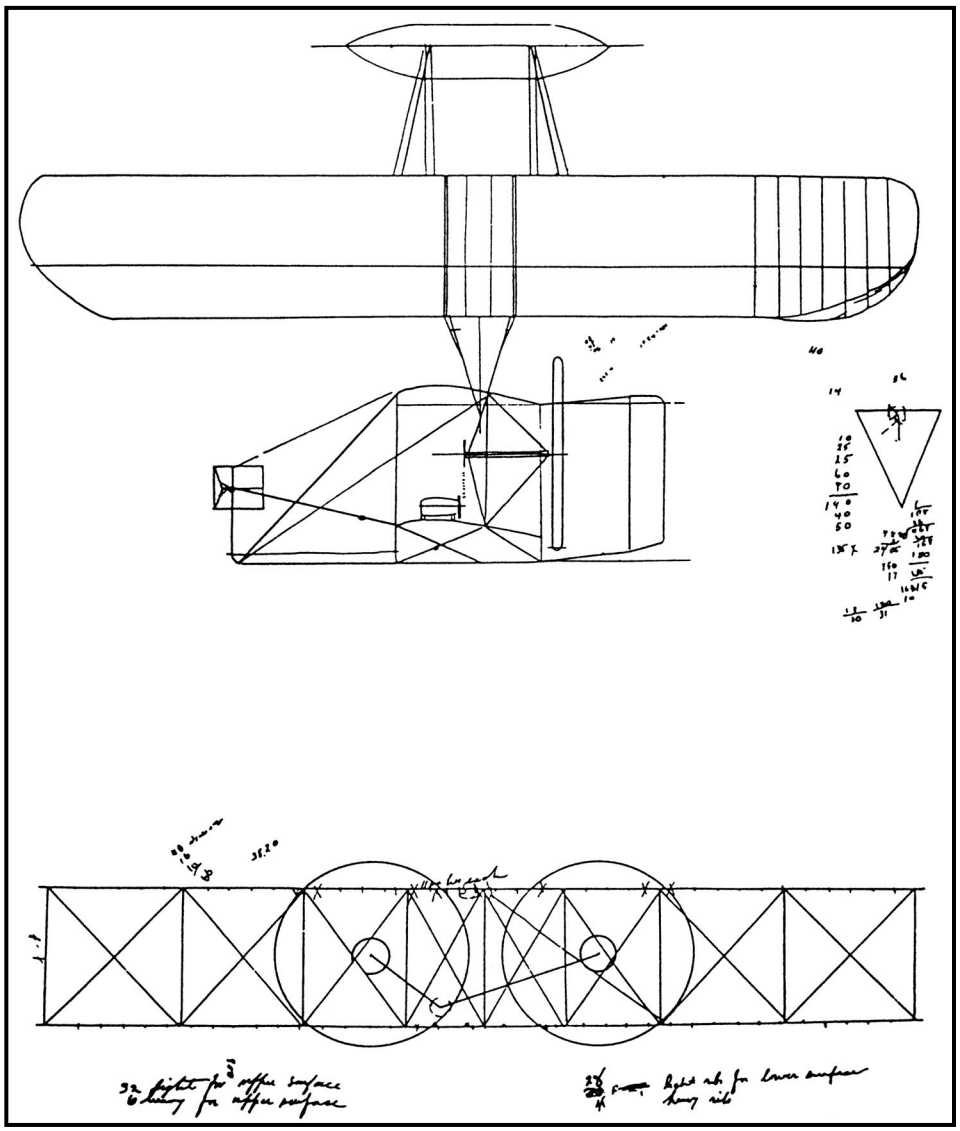
continued

much higher speed, though you perceive no change in the pressure of the wind on your face. You know then that you are traveling with the wind.

When you near the starting point, the operator stops the motor while still high in the air. The machine coasts down at an oblique angle to the ground, and after sliding fifty or a hundred feet comes to rest. Although the machine often lands when traveling at a speed of a mile a minute, you feel no shock whatever, and cannot, in fact, tell the exact moment at which it first touched the ground.

The motor close beside you kept up an almost deafening roar during the whole flight, yet in your excitement you did not notice it until it stopped!

—Orville Wright
The Century, September 1908



Smithsonian

Orville Wright sketched the plane in which he made the first powered flight in 1903.

Artist's View

Library of Congress

Many people resisted the idea of full equality for Chinese-Americans.

Liu Ye and the Dragon King

Myths about dragons are common in Chinese folklore. This story is one of the most famous myths.

ONCE, many, many years ago, there lived a young scholar named Liu Ye. Like many scholars, he hoped to pass the Imperial exams and become a public official. But unfortunately, when exam time came, he failed.

Liu Ye was heartbroken. "Now I will never bring honor to my family," he said to himself sadly. He left the capital and headed home with a heavy heart.

After he'd walked for miles, Liu Ye sat down to rest under a willow tree. Suddenly, he heard the sound of goats bleating and butting heads. He looked around the tree, and there was the most beautiful girl he had ever seen, dressed in rags and caring for the goats. He noticed at once that she'd been crying.

Liu Ye walked up to her and bowed. "Forgive me," he said, "but I can see you're unhappy. Is there anything I can do to help?"

The girl sighed. "Yes, I am very unhappy," she replied. "I am the daughter of the Dragon King. A year ago, I was married to a dragon prince of the river Ching. He treats me very badly. He's even turned me into a human girl and makes me herd goats. Ah, me."

"Wouldn't your father the king help you?"

"Of course he would, but I'm not allowed to write him." Suddenly her face brightened. "Would you take a message to my father, kind young man?"

Liu Ye swallowed hard. He couldn't imagine talking to the king of the dragons. But the girl was so unhappy that he agreed to help her. She gave him a jade pendant and said, "Go to Tung T'ing Lake. When you get there, hang this pendant from a branch of the pine tree on the shore. Someone will come and escort you to my father."

Liu Ye promised he would do as she said, and he set off for the lake. It took many days to walk to it, but at last he reached its banks. He stood on tiptoe next to the tree and hung the pendant from a convenient branch.

Suddenly, the lake began to foam wildly. From out of the middle rose a shining form covered in emerald scales. It was a member of the Dragon King's court.

"What do you wish, mortal?" the dragon asked. His voice was like thunder.

Liu Ye's knees were shaking, but he stood tall. "I bring a message from the daughter of the Dragon King." He plucked the pendant from the tree and held it out.

"Come," the dragon said, and Liu Ye fell into a deep sleep.

When he awoke, Liu Ye knew at once that he was in the palace of the Dragon King. The walls were built of pearl and coral, and the floor was inlaid with priceless jade. The halls were lined with splendid dragons, and the most splendid of all was the Dragon King. He sat on a throne made of jade, and he looked at Liu Ye kindly.

"You are a brave mortal," he said. "You come from my daughter? How is she?"

continued

So Liu Ye told the Dragon King all about how badly his daughter was being treated. The king groaned and wept, and so did all his court. Then suddenly, the walls of the palace shook. There was a terrible roar, and a blaze of scarlet flashed past the window. The scarlet form was dragging a golden chain and a marble pillar behind it. The Dragon King shook his head.

"I'm afraid my daughter's husband is in trouble now," he said. "That was my brother, Ch'ien T'ang."

"I'm. . . I'm not familiar with all the members of your Majesty's honorable family," Liu Ye quavered. "What is so frightening about Ch'ien T'ang?"

"Oh, he has a terrible temper," the Dragon King explained. "Every time he gets angry, he roars through the lake and causes a tidal wave. He's drowned thousands of you mortals. I finally had to chain him up in a special room here in the palace, just to keep him from accidentally killing you all. But now it looks as though he's broken loose."

At that moment, there was another roar and flash of scarlet. Soon, the Dragon King's brother appeared in the hall, carrying his niece on his back. The Dragon King waved his scepter, and she was transformed into a beautiful golden dragon with sapphire eyes.

"Well, brother," said the king, "I see you rescued my child."

Ch'ien T'ang looked ashamed. "Yes, I rescued her," he said. "And I ate her cruel and greedy husband. But unfortunately, I was so angry that I destroyed the Prince's palace, which as you know lies under the Ching River. I'm afraid the river is out of its banks. There are a lot of drowned peasants, and many homes were destroyed. I'm sorry; I didn't mean to harm them."

The Dragon King looked at his brother and stroked his chin. "I believe you're learning the difference between punishing the guilty and destroying the innocent, my brother. Go above and help those mortals rebuild their homes, and I won't chain you up anymore. Now then," he turned to Liu Ye. "I must reward you for helping my family. How would you like to marry my daughter and become a dragon with us?"

Liu Ye's mouth fell open. "But. . . but. . . Sire, I didn't even pass my exams!"

The Dragon King roared with laughter. "I think we can arrange a tutor, if you wish to continue your studies."

Liu Ye protested that he was not worthy of dragonhood, but finally he allowed himself to be persuaded. After all, whether girl or dragon, the princess was *very* beautiful.

CONTEMPORARY CHINESE-AMERICAN VOICES

Growing up Chinese-American sometimes means living with one foot in each culture. Here are some quotes about the Chinese-American experience.

We try to keep the same traditions at home today as we did in China. On Chinese New Year and holidays, we light incense and bow to our ancestors. . . . Being in Chinatown is like being back in the village in China. Everyday I am with Chinese people. I speak the language, and the food is the same, so it's not like being away at all. It's not unless I go into the country that I really feel I am in America.

—Chin Cai Ping
immigrant in 1984

We don't have any religion that my parents maintain. At least not in the typical American Anglo idea of religion and a God. Everything seems to be more along the Chinese tradition. I feel there are a lot of superstitious traditions that are carried over from generation to generation. For instance, my parents have always told me, you can't wash your hair on a holiday. Maybe it's because you wash it after a funeral—evidently to cleanse yourself of the death. So, if you wash your hair on a holiday or a birthday, it symbolizes mourning, and you can't mourn on a holiday.

—Tony Hom
Chinese-American born in America

The third generation, my generation, grew up in households in which little or no Chinese was spoken and Chinese myths and legends were looked upon largely as a source of embarrassment. But now let me try to explain what it's like to grow up within a group that has tried collectively to forget the past and ignore any differences between themselves and others. I found that I was truly like Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man—without form, without shape. It was as if all the features on my face had been erased and I was simply a blank mirror reflecting other people's hopes and fears.

—Laurence Yep
The Reading Teacher

Voices from Other Works

These excerpts are from works that have conflicts and values similar to those in ***Dragonwings.***

[Edith] was reading the headlines. With disbelief on her face, she motioned me over.

" 'Death Toll in San Francisco Reaches Three Hundred,' " she quoted. *"Three hundred?* Daisy, there were half that many in just one of those boarding houses that sank." Her voice was angry as she read further. "And why is there no mention of Chinatown? Several *thousand* lived in Chinatown. Some may have made it to Oakland, but we only saw a few Chinese in the parks. What does this newspaper mean, only three hundred dead?"

—Earthquake at Dawn
by Kristiana Gregory

When the sixth-grade teacher ushered me in, the other kids inspected me, but not unlike I myself would study a new arrival. . . . That afternoon, [the reading teacher] asked me if I 'd care to try a page out loud. . . . When I finished, a pretty blond girl in front of me said, quite innocently, "Gee, I didn't know you could speak English."

. . . I smiled and sat down, suddenly aware of what being of Japanese ancestry was going to be like. I wouldn't be faced with physical attack, or with overt shows of hatred. Rather, I would be seen as someone foreign, or as someone other than American, or perhaps not be seen at all.

—Farewell to Manzanar
by Jeanne Wakatsuki Houston

By the time we had been in this country for three months, our family was definitely making progress toward becoming Americanized. I remember my parents' first PTA meeting. Father wore a neat suit and tie, and Mother put on her first pair of high heels. She stumbled only once. They met my homeroom teacher and beamed as she told them that I would make honor roll soon at the rate I was going. Of course Chinese etiquette forced Father to say that I was a very stupid girl and Mother to protest that the teacher was showing favoritism toward me. But I could tell they were both very proud.

—"The All-American Slurp"
by Lensey Namioka

"Imagine talking with some Chinese." [Jane] shuddered.

"I've met a Chinese boy who works for the railroad," Winnie said. "He seems nice enough."

"That's hard to believe, Winnie. I mean, they're so strange."

"How do you know if you've never talked with one?"

—The Iron Dragon Never Sleeps
by Stephen Krensky

America stresses competition, individualism, independence, and technology. An Asian culture, on the other hand, stresses cooperation, community, interdependence, and tradition. The cultures pull in opposite directions, and it is the soul of the Asian American that provides the rope for that tug of war.

—American Dragons
by Laurence Yep

Suggested Reading and Viewing List

If you enjoyed reading ***Dragonwings,*** *you may want to explore other works about discrimination and the Asian-American experience. The following list offers some suggestions for further reading and viewing.*

Novels

Child of the Owl by Laurence Yep. A 12-year-old girl who knows little about her Chinese heritage is sent to live with her grandmother in San Francisco's Chinatown. HarperCollins, 1977. [RL 6 IL 6-12]

Earthquake at Dawn by Kristiana Gregory. The story of the catastrophic San Francisco earthquake of 1906 is captured in this dramatic portrayal of the adventures of a talented young photographer, Edith Irvine, and her 15-year-old assistant, Daisy Valentine. Based on an actual 30-page letter written by Mary Exa Atkins Campbell, with photographs by the real Edith Irvine. Harcourt, Brace & Co., 1992. [RL 6 IL 5-10]

Homesick: My Own Story by Jean Fritz. This is the author's own story of growing up in China, of her fierce longing for her homeland, America; also of the turmoil she witnessed in a period when foreigners were unpopular in China. Dell, 1982. [RL 4.8 IL 5-9]

In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson by Bette Bao Lord. In 1947 a Chinese child comes to Brooklyn, where she makes friends and discovers baseball and the Brooklyn Dodgers. Harper & Row, 1984. [RL 5 IL 4-7]

The Iron Dragon Never Sleeps by Stephen Krensky. Ten-year-old Winnie Tucker's father is helping build the transcontinental railroad. Through her encounters with Chinese immigrant workers, she learns of their poor working conditions and must decide which side is the "right" one. Delacorte, 1994. [RL 5 IL 4-7]

More Than Meets the Eye by Jeanne Betancourt. When Liz falls for a Chinese student, she soon realizes that prejudice can have many forms and that her friends and parents may be just as prejudiced as the others. Ballantine, 1990. [RL 6 IL 6-12]

Star Fisher by Laurence Yep. When a Chinese-American family moves to West Virginia to open a laundry and start new lives, they find that not everyone in town is ready to welcome them. With courage and a sense of humor, they show they are there to stay. Penguin, 1991. [RL 5 IL 5-9]

West Coast Chinese Boy by Sing Lim. Through the decades of this century, Vancouver has had the second-largest Chinese community in North America. Artist Sing Lim creates a unique record of what it was like to be a child there in the early 1920s. Tundra Books, 1979. [RL 5 IL 4-8]

Woman Warrior by Maxine Hong Kingston. An outstanding autobiography about growing up female and Chinese-American in California. J. Curley, 1978. [RL 9 IL 9+]

Yang the Youngest and His Terrible Ear by Lensey Namioka. The story of a Chinese-American family and their struggle to fit in. Dell, 1992. [RL 4 IL 4-7]

continued

Nonfiction

China: The Culture by Bobbie Kalman. A celebration of the cultural achievements of China's 4000-year-old civilization. The origins of many of New China's celebrations are traced back to China's past. Includes index and glossary. Crabtree Publishing, 1994. [RL 4 IL 3-9]

The Chinese American Family Album by Dorothy and Thomas Hoobler. This wonderful collection contains more than 150 rare photographs, firsthand accounts, profiles of famous Chinese-Americans, and more. Oxford University Press, 1994. [RL 6 IL 6+]

The Chinese Americans by William Daley. A nicely illustrated text that outlines the history, culture, and customs of this group. Chelsea House, 1987. [RL 6 IL 6-9]

Coming to America: Immigrants from the Far East by Linda Perrin. Diaries, letters, photographs, and interviews create living stories of immigrants from China, Japan, the Philippines and Vietnam. Delacorte Press, 1980. [RL 8 IL 7-10]

Famous Asian Americans by Janet Nomura Morey and Wendy Dunn. The lives of 14 notable Asian Americans—their childhoods, education, goals, setbacks, and career triumphs—are chronicled through personal interviews and photographs. Includes such notable figures as author Maxine Hong Kingston, U.S. Senator Daniel Inouye, actor Dustin Nguyen, and late *Challenger* astronaut Ellison S. Onizuka. Cobblehill, 1992. [RL 6 IL 6-12]

Fly! A Brief History of Flight Illustrated by Barry Moser. A focused history of aviation, beginning with the first ascent of a hot air balloon and traveling over 14 other seminal events, ending with the space shuttles and space stations of the present. HarperCollins, 1993. [RL 4 IL 4-9]

New Kids in Town: Oral Histories of Immigrant Teens by Janet Bode. Eleven teenage immigrants tell their compelling stories in their own words. This book will promote a greater understanding and appreciation for the rich ethnic and cultural diversity upon which our country is based. Scholastic, 1991. [RL 7 IL 7+]

Strangers from a Different Shore by Ronald T. Takaki. Eloquent narrative history, personal recollections, and oral testimonies relate the diverse 150-year history of Asian-Americans. Little, Brown, and Company, 1989. [RL 7 IL 7+]

Short Works

"The All-American Slurp" by Lensey Namioka. In *America Street: A Multicultural Anthology of Stories* edited by Anne Mazer. A funny story about a young Chinese-American girl's experiences when she and her family learn to eat American-style.

American Dragons: Twenty-Five Asian American Voices by Laurence Yep. Stories, poems, and dramatic pieces that capture crises and questions of Asian American teenagers.

The Chinaman Pacific & Frisco R.R., Co. by Frank Chin. This collection of eight short stories explores Chinese-American history and contemporary experiences: a Chinatown where kids dream of being Susie Wong or Charlie Chan's Number One Son; a movie theater where old men meet to learn English by watching cartoons.

Growing Up Asian American edited by Maria Hong. An anthology of essays and stories that deal with coming of age in America. Explores issues of identity, language, generational differences, assimilation, and heritage.

continued

The Open Boat: Poems from Asian America edited by Garrett Hongo. Contemporary Asian-American poetry from rising writers who address their heritage, their identity, and their culture.

The Rainbow People retold by Laurence Yep. A collection of 20 folktales originally told by Chinese-American immigrants as part of a 1930s WPA project.

Sweet and Sour by Carol Kendall and Yaowen Li. A collection of 24 tales from various periods of Chinese history displaying the wit, cleverness, and down-to-earth wisdom of the Chinese people.

Tales from Gold Mountain: Stories of the Chinese in the New World by Paul Yee. A collection of eight stories reflecting the gritty optimism of the Chinese who overcame prejudice and adversity to build a unique place for themselves in North America.

Tell Me Again How the White Heron Rises and Flies Across the Nacreous River at Twilight Toward the Distant Islands edited by Hayden Carruth. A collection of some of the finest Chinese poetry.

Viewing

Dim Sum: A Little Bit of Heart. A Chinese-American mother and daughter live together in San Fransisco's Chinatown. They must each deal with the conflict between traditional Chinese culture and the modern American way of life. In Chinese with English subtitles. PBS Video, 1985. (VHS, 88 min., color)

Eat a Bowl of Tea. Light comedy-drama about a multigenerational Chinese family. They must learn to adapt to life in America when the women in the family are finally allowed to immigrate after World War II. PBS Video, 1989. (VHS, 102 min., color)

Remembrance. Shot in Philadelphia's Chinatown, this film documents the life of an elderly Chinese-American gentleman who migrated to the United States as a young man in search of a higher living standard and, like so many others, died single and poor. It also explores the filmmaker's own Chinese heritage, his personal feelings as an immigrant, and changes in the nature of Asian immigration to the United States. Anti-Defamation League, 1993. (VHS, 22 min., color)

To Be Me: Tony Quon. Ten-year-old Tony Quon and his family are recent immigrants from China. Watching Tony at school, at play, and with his family in their home in Los Angeles' Chinatown, we hear him talk about his first year here, a difficult period of adjustment as he learned a new language and made new friends. Anti-Defamation League, 1993. (16mm film, 10 min., color)

Suggested Activities

Using Latitudes in Your Classroom

The following discussion topics and activities are suggestions for incorporating pieces from ***Latitudes*** *into your curriculum. Most suggestions can be adapted for independent, small group, or whole class activities. In addition, the list includes activities that can be done before, during, and after reading the novel. The variety of choices allows you to modify and use those activities that will make* ***Dragonwings*** *meaningful to your students.*

About the Author

1. Yep calls *Dragonwings* a "historical fantasy." Explore with students what that term means.
2. Yep compares writing to running a marathon. Invite students to create their own metaphors for writing.
3. Invite students to comment on how they feel about the characters Yep has created in *Dragonwings.* What interesting "quirks" do they find?
4. Students may enjoy reading Yep's account of his science class in Chapter 8 of his autobiography, *The Lost Garden.* He describes several explosions and a novel way of keeping control of a class.
5. Yep usually writes to music. He wrote *Dragonwings* listening to music by Ralph Vaughn Williams on his headphones. You might ask students to write to music by Williams (such as *Fantasia on Greensleeves)* or Copland's *Clarinet Concerto,* which Yep listened to while writing *Sweetwater.*

Writing *Dragonwings*

1. Before students read this selection, invite them to share what they know about their own family histories. Discuss difficulties they might have if they tried to research the history of their family.
2. Share a primary source on state or local history with students. Encourage them to write a story as Yep did, by projecting themselves back into the past.
3. Invite students to react to Yep's comment that "the dream of flight has dominated man's imagination from the earliest times." They might choose a word related to "flight" or "dream," then write a *diamond poem*. The first line is a noun that has an antonym (students might use "earth-bound" and "soaring"). The second line contains two adjectives describing the noun. The third line has three verbs that end in *-ing.* The fourth line has two words related to the noun and two words related to its antonym. The fifth line has three *-ing* verbs related to the noun's antonym. The sixth line has two adjectives about the antonym. The poem ends with the antonym.
4. As students read the novel, encourage them to look for examples of the power of the imagination.

continued

Voices from the Novel

1. Have students use this page to record four or more passages that they find meaningful. Challenge students to write a short paragraph about why these passages spoke to them.
2. In groups, students might share the passages they selected.
3. Students might make and display posters that incorporate their favorite quotations from the novel.

Critics' Comments

1. Suggest that students compare and contrast the critics' comments. They could look for points of major agreement or disagreement among the reviewers.
2. Invite students to write their own critical statements about *Dragonwings.* Remind them to support their opinions with evidence from the book. Then around the room, post unsigned comments written on large sheets of paper. The class can discuss the different reactions.
3. *Dragonwings* has been criticized as an example of "reverse stereotyping." In describing such stereotyping, Albert Shanker says, "White Americans are always and only shown as the greedy, mean and racist rulers of a rotten society. Ugly caricatures like these allow no room for individuals who do not conform to the stereotype or for the ongoing struggle to get rid of prejudice and injustice." Shanker's comments appeared in *The New Republic,* March 7, 1994, page 17. After students have read the novel, invite them to decide whether *Dragonwings* is truly an example of reverse stereotyping.

A Time in History/Patterns of Chinese Immigration

1. As students read, invite them to chart dates, events, and historical figures mentioned in the book on their "A Time in History" timeline.
2. Encourage students to use information on the timeline to explain increases and decreases in the numbers of people of Chinese ancestry living in America.
3. Encourage students to find out why people come to America today. They might look up statistics about immigration or interview immigrants.

The Geographical Picture

1. Explore with students why the Chinese settled primarily in one neighborhood. Encourage them to use information from *Dragonwings* as they discuss the question.
2. Students might explore why so many Chinese came to San Francisco.
3. Encourage students to make a map showing areas where Chinese immigrants settled across the nation.

continued

Going to the Golden Mountain/A Sailor from Kwangtung

1. As students read these selections, ask them to list the reasons many Chinese came to America. Then ask them to compare their list to Windrider's reasons for going to the Golden Mountain.
2. Ask students whether the "Invitation to the Golden Mountain" is an accurate description of how the Chinese would be treated in America. Suggest that students write their own fliers.
3. Invite students to compare the man who made the solo voyage from China with Windrider, another "man from Kwangtung."
4. Encourage students to trace the route early immigrants would have taken from Kwangtung to San Francisco.

Anti-Chinese Laws/Angel Island

1. You might ask students to see which of the "Viewpoints" on pages 28–29 are reflected in the laws.
2. Explore with students why more restrictions were placed on Asian immigrants than European immigrants.
3. After students read about Angel Island, they might reread Yep's account of Moon Shadow's interrogation in Chapter 1. You could then discuss how knowing more about Angel Island affects their understanding and appreciation of this passage.

Viewpoints About Chinese Immigrants

1. Students might place these views about Chinese-Americans along a continuum, with the most prejudiced views at one end and the most tolerant views at the other.
2. Suggest that students choose one statement and write an essay that either supports or disputes that person's viewpoint.
3. Suggest that students write a Viewpoints statement from Moon Shadow's perspective. They might consider his fear of "demons" (Chapter 2), his grandfather's death (Chapter 4), and his discovery that the people of Oakland are his true mountain of gold (Chapter 11).

Chinese Festivals

1. Ask students to use information from this piece and the novel to infer what cultural values are important to people who follow Chinese traditions.
2. Encourage students to share what they know about festivals from their cultural tradition.
3. Students might decorate the room appropriately for one of the festivals in the selection.

Dragon Lore/Liu Ye and the Dragon King

1. Ask students to use the information about dragons in these selections and in Chapter 7 to explain Moon Shadow's remark that dragons are "dragonee."

continued

2. Explore with students whether Moon Shadow's beliefs about dragons can be called true. You might remind them that in Chapter 7, both Moon Shadow and Miss Whitlaw talk about the mythic or symbolic truth in dragon stories.
3. Invite students to speculate about why dragons are so important in the novel. You might share with them Yep's comment that "Windrider's former life as a dragon symbolizes [the] imaginative power in all of us." (See "Writing *Dragonwings,*" pages 12–13.)
4. Encourage students to share their reactions to other books about dragons. They might explore books about Chinese myths or contemporary fantasies about dragons such as Patricia Wrede's *Dealing with Dragons.*

The Company

1. Before students read this selection, ask them to imagine what it would be like to move to a country where they did not speak the language and were not familiar with the food or social customs. Invite them to brainstorm problems they might encounter and suggest ways of coping with them.
2. Explore with students why the Company was so important to Moon Shadow and Windrider. Ask them to consider the advantages and disadvantages of being a member of the Company.
3. Students might compare the Company to other benevolent societies or national associations today.

The Chinese Laundry

1. People often assume that running a laundry is a traditional Chinese occupation. Invite students to make a list of other assumptions about people of Chinese (or Asian) ancestry. Then encourage them to find information to prove or disprove these assumptions.
2. Invite students to compare this description of a Chinese laundry with Yep's description in Chapter 4 of *Dragonwings.*

The San Francisco Earthquake

1. Remind students that this account was written before television. So London had to use words to help readers picture what was happening in San Francisco. Help students identify how London creates a "word picture" of the disaster.
2. Students might convert London's account into a television news broadcast. They could use a script format, with the narration in one column and a description of what viewers would see in another. They might also use a storyboard format.
3. Discuss with students how residents of their community would cope with a natural disaster.
4. Encourage students to read other works by Jack London, such as *The Call of the Wild.*

continued

Fung Joe Guey: Celestial Aviator

1. Before students read these accounts, ask them to look for examples of prejudiced language in these newspaper articles. Then encourage them to rewrite one of the prejudiced passages in a nonbiased way.
2. After students have read the accounts, ask them to complete a chart showing similarities and differences between Fung Joe Guey and Windrider. Invite them to speculate about why Yep chose to alter some details of Fung's story.
3. Encourage students to bring in accounts of modern-day inventors. Discuss whether the changes these inventions might bring to our lives could be as important as the changes caused by the airplane.

The Wrights

1. You might teach this selection with "Writing *Dragonwings*," (page 12) in which Yep comments that "the dream of flight has dominated man's imagination from the earliest times."
2. Discuss with students the various decisions that Windrider makes about flying. Suggest that they make a chart showing each decision, Windrider's reasons for making it, and whether or not it was a good decision.
3. Students might make a timeline of important events in aviation history.

Artist's View

1. Invite students to state what the cartoon means in their own words.
2. Encourage students to bring several editorial cartoons to class. Ask students to identify the cartoons that are easiest to understand. Then develop with students a list of hints for interpreting editorial cartoons. Students might then test the effectiveness of their hints by trying to interpret cartoons they haven't seen before.
3. Students might create their own editorial cartoons about Chinese-Americans or immigration.

Contemporary Chinese-American Voices/Voices from Other Works

1. Laurence Yep describes himself as "a child who had been too American to fit into Chinatown and too Chinese to fit in elsewhere." Ask students to look for other conflicts between American and Asian cultures in these excerpts.
2. Encourage students to select and write about the connections they see between *Dragonwings* and the quoted books.
3. Suggest that students read one of the quoted books and share their reactions to it with the class.

Suggested Activities

Student Projects

The suggestions below will help you extend your learning about Chinese-Americans and immigration. The categories give choices for reading, writing, speaking, and visual activities. You are also encouraged to design your own project.

The Historian's Study

1. Find out more about Chinese history. You might explore topics like the
   - T'ang dynasty
   - Boxer Rebellion
   - Manchu conquest
   - Opium Wars
2. Make and illustrate a collection of sayings showing what it means to be a "superior" person. You might find texts like the *Confucian Analects* helpful.
3. Find out more about Chinese immigration to the United States. You might look for information on Angel Island or current statistics on immigration.
4. Make a display about Orville and Wilbur Wright. You might include some of the letters they wrote to people who were interested in building planes. You might also show the different kinds of kites and planes they built.
5. The Wrights' early experiments failed because the data tables they used contained errors in their calculations. Research how the Wrights developed the correct data.
6. Uncle Bright Star called Theodore Roosevelt a "mad socialist." Find out what other people thought about Theodore Roosevelt during his lifetime. Collect their opinions in a poster or report, then give your own opinion about Roosevelt.
7. Research one of the inventions mentioned in *Dragonwings*, such as automobiles, the radio, or the cable car. Look for information about how it was invented and how it affected people's lives.
8. Find out about the Transcontinental Railroad and how the Chinese helped build it.
9. Explore what life was like for the Chinese who worked in the mines.
10. Find out more about violence against the first Chinese who came to America. One example you might read about is the 1885 massacre in Rock Springs, Wyoming.

The Artist's Studio

1. Imagine that you have been chosen to illustrate a new publication of *Dragonwings.* Select two or three scenes from the book and produce illustrations for them.
2. Make an illustrated timeline that shows inventions of the early 1900s.

continued

3. Display examples of traditional Chinese arts, such as calligraphy or scroll painting. Include an explanation of the art form with each example.
4. Design a kite such as Windrider might have made.
5. Make a watercolor or sketch in the Chinese style. You might show a street scene without the background, like Chou-ch'en, a Ming dynasty artist. Or you might draw an animal in a simple landscape, like a squirrel jumping onto a peach branch.
6. Draw a scene of San Francisco as it might have appeared at the time of the novel.
7. Create a dragon like the one in Miss Whitlaw's stained glass window, described in Chapter 6. You might use construction paper for the frame and translucent paper for the dragon.
8. Moon Shadow says a true dragon is "dragonee." Make a "dragonee" dragon.
9. In Chapter 7, Moon Shadow makes a scale model of a glider. Draw a diagram or make a model to scale.
10. Choose one of the main themes or ideas in the book. Then make a poster or collage that explains this theme. You might wish to feature quotes from the book as well as images.

The Writer's Workshop

1. Windrider says that a man should be able to change his name as he changes (see Chapter 3). Tell a story about a person who changes names.
2. Write a letter Moon Shadow might have sent to his mother.
3. In Chapter 3, Windrider tells a story of his meeting with the Dragon King. Write a dialogue between a human and an imaginary creature.
4. In 1904, when the Wright brothers first flew, some of the most daring predictions about the future of aviation were that planes might deliver the mail and be used in war. Make some predictions about the future of current technology, such as the space shuttle or the information highway.
5. Write directions for using an abacus like Uncle Bright Star's.
6. When Robin says she "wasn't born yesterday," she uses an idiom, or expression, that Moon Shadow finds hard to understand. Make a dictionary of idiomatic expressions used in your part of the country.
7. Tell a story based on the constellations, as Windrider does in Chapter 8.
8. Create a guide to nonbiased language about Chinese-Americans and other minorities. List words that might be offensive, such as "Chink," and then suggest nonoffensive alternatives.
9. Describe something that's happened to you as Hand Clap would, or retell a tall tale in your own words.
10. The characters in this story learn a great deal about how to get along with another culture. Using the characters in this novel and your own experience, write tips on getting along with people from other cultures.

continued

11. Yep said that he "had to develop a Chinese sense of reality" to write *Dragonwings.* For example, "Milk and cheese had to become exotic to me." So he chose to write from the viewpoint of an eight-year-old child. Write a description from the viewpoint of someone who has never seen what you're describing before.

The Speaker's Platform

1. Read and retell a Chinese myth or legend.
2. Create a news broadcast about the San Francisco earthquake of 1906.
3. Imagine that *Dragonwings* is going to be made into a movie. Select a scene from the book and write a script for it. Then present your scene, using class members as actors.
4. Present an overview of Chinese-American history. You might have a narrator introduce the stories of several characters at different times in history. Or you might create a documentary, using video or multimedia technology.
5. Present a dramatic interpretation of Walter de la Mare's "The Highwayman."
6. Choose a scene from the novel and present it as Readers Theatre.
7. Moderate a panel about what it's like to be an Asian-American today.
8. Create a skit about coping with prejudice.
9. Conduct a debate about whether *Dragonwings* is a prejudiced book. You might follow this format: The "affirmative" side has two minutes to present arguments in favor of the statement. Then the "negative" side has two minutes to present arguments against the statement. Each side then has six minutes to present evidence supporting its position. Finally, each side presents a two-minute summary.
10. Role-play a dilemma faced by the characters in *Dragonwings*. (A *dilemma* is a difficult problem in which all the possible solutions have both advantages and disadvantages.) For example, Windrider must decide whether to bring his wife to America. Select a dilemma from the book to role-play with several of your classmates. Or choose a modern-day problem that is similar to one in the book. You might portray several solutions to the dilemma or have your audience choose one solution for you to act out.

Sample selections from
***Dragonwings* LATITUDES**

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Story Synopsis
About the Author
Writing *Dragonwings*
Critics' Comments

Coming to America

A Time in History
The Geographical Picture
Going to the Golden Mountain
A Sailor from Kwangtung
Anti-Chinese Laws
Angel Island

Land of the Golden Mountain

Viewpoints About Chinese Immigrants
Dragon Lore
The Company
The Chinese Laundry
Chinatown
The San Francisco Earthquake
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