Notable Trade Book Lesson Plan

Good Fortune: My Journey to Gold Mountain

by Li Keng Wong

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This lesson utilizes Good Fortune: My Journey to Gold Mountain, a well-written autobiography that tells of one family's story of immigration to the US through Angel Island in the 1930s. This lesson can be used in a secondary school classroom to discuss controversial issues related to immigration quotas and discrimination. The book demonstrates the great desire of immigrants to survive and provokes thoughts and feelings that move adolescents to reflection in speaking and writing.

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<td>Book Summary</td>
<td>Li Keng, a little girl from China, and her family receive a letter from Gold Mountain that describes an exciting and fruitful life in California. The story follows the girl and her family on a risky journey to explore life on the new continent. To reach California, the family travels through Hong Kong and across the Pacific Ocean, and then they are detained on Angel Island. After interrogation by immigration officials, the family goes on to overcome endless hardships and poverty. In order to survive, they keep hoping for a better tomorrow. Eventually, the family becomes successful in adjusting to their new life, and their struggles are rewarded with United States citizenship.</td>
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<td>NCSS Standards</td>
<td>Standard Topics</td>
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Materials

1. Copies of *Good Fortune: My Journey to Gold Mountain* by Li Keng
2. Poster board, construction paper, and markers
3. Access to the Internet or current sources of data on world population

Objectives

Students will be responsible for the following:

- Engage prior knowledge of factors that make people migrate
- Explore and discuss experiences of migrants
- Read for information, reflect on plot, and write an essay
- Create a timeline using graphic organizers
- Discuss factors that shape immigration law
- Debate issues of social justice

Procedures

Exploration/Introduction

1. Ask students: Why do people decide to relocate permanently?

2. Ask students to list all possible factors that influence a decision to relocate: politico-cultural, economic, and environmental. Let students share their responses.

3. Ask students: When people leave their homes in order to relocate permanently, what obstacles do they have to overcome? Compare experiences of relocation within a country to experiences of relocation internationally.

*Assessment:* Check for reasonable answers and ask students to debrief in writing.

Development

1. Share the book *Good Fortune: My Journey to Gold Mountain* by Li Keng Wong. Ask students to identify and record the major events experienced by the family.

2. Invite students to trace the route of Li Keng’s family journey on a map.

3. Divide students into groups of 3 or 4 and ask them to create a timeline of the family’s journey in the format of a graphic organizer.

4. Have groups present their graphic organizers and their rationale for their selection of events. Accompany students’ presentations with the following questions:
**Development (Continued)**

- Why did the Chinese refer to the United States as “Gold Mountain”? 
- Despite the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882, how did the Chinese people manage to enter the US? 
- What was the purpose of Angel Island? 
- Why did immigrants keep coming to the US during the Great Depression? 
- At the end of the book, what could be a possible reason explaining why Li Keng’s family started doing better?

**Assessment:** Check for comprehension and provide feedback on students’ posters and their collaborative efforts in the work on posters.

**Expansion**

Ask students to **select one of the following assignments** and complete it independently:

1. Compare and contrast living conditions of Li Keng’s family in the US and in China. Write a short essay explaining why the family wanted to immigrate and stay despite of the experienced hardships.

2. Create 10 immigration laws and write a persuasive essay explaining the purpose of the laws.

3. Interview someone of a different race or ethnicity about his or her immigration experience and write a report.

4. Using sources from a local library, create a graph showing the number of Chinese immigrants per decade starting in 1850. In writing, elaborate on the reasons for the rise or decline in numbers.

**Assessment**

As students submit their essays, check for the following –

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<th>No</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
<th>Yes</th>
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<tr>
<td>Understands the factors that influence international migration</td>
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<td>Expresses ideas of justice to cultural groups and understands the relation of social justice to democracy</td>
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<tr>
<td>Essay contains original ideas produced by analytical thinking</td>
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<td>Arguments are supported by facts</td>
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<td>Essay is logical, sequential, and free of grammatical errors</td>
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Suggested Extension Activities

1. Invite students to view a video from the list of additional references and compare the experience of the family described in the book with personal accounts of other immigrant families from China and from other countries.

2. Ask students to examine primary sources from the list of additional references and discuss how immigration procedures and immigration laws have changed over time.

3. Compare and contrast the experiences of immigrants on Angel Island in the West with those on Ellis Island in the East and discuss how immigration law was implemented in different regions of the country.

4. Americans are often referred to as a nation of newcomers (Buff, 2008). Meanwhile, other developed countries in the world also attract many immigrants. Ask students to explore immigration laws and procedures in Germany, Canada, and the United Kingdom and then discuss possible reasons for similarities and differences.

Additional References and Weblinks


### About the Authors

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