

Teacher's Companion

Kai's Journey to Gold Mountain: An Angel Island Story

I. Story summary:

On Wong Kai Chong's twelfth birthday, he learns that he must leave his home in China and journey alone to Gold Mountain ñ America ñ to live with his father. The year is 1934, and the United States does not welcome Chinese immigrants. Upon arrival in San Francisco, Kai is detained on Angel Island. The crowded barracks, harsh interrogations, and constant threat of being returned to China are not what he expected to find in San Francisco. Will Kai ever be free to join his father in Gold Mountain?

II. Glossary of Chinese words used in the story:

Gum San	"Gold Mountain," the nickname many Chinese used for America since the days of the Gold Rush
Gam San Jong	travel agent who assisted Chinese traveling to America
luk yi	"men in green uniforms," the common term among Chinese immigrants for guards and immigration officials
mah jong	a Chinese game similar to dominoes
ni how ma	"hello"
ho sai gaii	"good fortune"

III. Discussion Questions:

Pre-reading Questions for building and activating background knowledge:

Teacher note: consult resources below for background information.

1. Have you or has anyone in your family moved to America from another country? Interview your family members to learn about their immigration experiences.
2. Have you ever had the experience of leaving home for a long time? What did it feel like to say goodbye?
3. Look closely at the cover of *Kai's Journey to Gold Mountain*. What can you learn about Kai from the look on his face? What might he be thinking and feeling?

4. Why did the US prohibit the Chinese from coming to this country?
5. What do you know about Ellis Island in New York City? As you read *Kai's Journey to Gold Mountain*, think about how the Chinese experience at Angel Island is similar and different from the immigrant experience at Ellis Island.
6. Why were the immigrants interrogated at Angel Island?
7. What major catastrophe happened in San Francisco which gave rise to Paper Sons and Paper Daughters?

During-reading and Post-reading Questions:

1. Who in Kai's family had been to Gum San before him? What were their jobs?
2. Why was Grandmother so angry when Kai's father told her he was going to take Kai to Gum San?
3. How many years had passed since Kai had seen his father? What item of his father's clothing did Kai remember? What else did Kai remember about his father?
4. What did Kai do in Hong Kong while he waited for the ship?
5. What signs did Kai notice along his journey and during his stay on Angel Island that told him that the Chinese were treated differently from other immigrants?
6. What were the papers Young was studying on the ship? Why did he throw them overboard as the ship sailed through the Golden Gate?
7. Describe the sequence of events on the first day after Kai landed on Angel Island.
8. How was the physical examination given by the white doctor different from physical exams in China?
9. Who were all the people in the interrogation room? What were their jobs?

IV. Activities to do after reading

Geography - Map Kai's Journey:

- a. Using the map provided (Appendix A), trace Kai's journey from his village in Toy San, China all the way to San Francisco. Label Toy San, Buck Gai, Hong Kong, Shanghai, Tokyo, Honolulu, and San Francisco, using the dots provided on the map.
- b. Optional: Students can use the scale to measure the distance Kai traveled. They can illustrate the map with symbols for the different ways Kai traveled, such as trains, boats, and ships.

Artistic Reflections:

- a. Divide a sheet of paper into four sections by folding. Choose four events from the story that you think are important, and illustrate one in each section of your paper. Write a caption for each picture, using a quotation from the text if you can.
Teacher note: This activity may focus students' listening if they do it while you read aloud or it can be done as a review after they have read the book.
- b. Draw a picture of the plum scene. Incorporate all the details from the text that you can.
- c. Draw a picture of the locked dormitory with poetry on the walls, using details from the text.

Written Reflections:

- a. Letter Home: Pretend you are Kai and write a letter home to your family (Mother, Grandmother, or Joy Yee). Think of at least three key moments of Kai's journey for him to describe to his family.
- b. Think about all that has happened to Kai since he left his home in China. Write a story or poem that Kai might have written after he landed in San Francisco.
- c. Literature Circle role sheets (based on reading comprehension strategies): Divide students into small groups, and assign each student in the group a role from the role sheets provided (Appendix B). Allow students time to meet in groups and share their reflections.

Questions for students to discuss in groups and/or respond to in writing:

Describe what the following people were thinking and feeling:

- a. Kai, when he says, "Here I come, Gold Mountain. Here I come America" on p. 3.
- b. Grandma, when she said, "The white Devils will claim him forever" on p. 6.
- c. Father, when he said, "Give him your blessing, Mother. I will not change my mind" on p. 6.

- d. Young, when he "could only force a smile" on p. 15.
- e. Kai, when he "sat very still contemplating Angel Island" on p. 27.
- f. Young, when he sat "cross-legged staring out the barred window" on p. 34.

Dramatic Reflections:

With a classmate, act out one of the following scenes: Leaving home, Kai packing his suitcase, the interrogation, the plum scene, or Kai meeting Father at the end.

Use the readers theatre selection (Appendix C) to rehearse and act out the interrogation scene, or create your own readers theatre script to rehearse and perform.

V. Resources

For background information and resources for teachers and students, go to:

Angel Island Association at www.angelisland.org

Angel Island Immigration Station Foundation at www.aiisf.com

Please email our webmaster if you have suggestions for any of these activities or if you have activities of your own to add!

APPENDIX A

MAPS

See separate map files.

APPENDIX B

Name _____

LITERATURE CIRCLE ROLE SHEETS

You must complete these assignments on a separate piece of paper either in cursive or on the computer. Each of your role sheets must include the following heading: Your name, the date, the name of your role, and the pages assigned. Please keep the directions for these roles in a safe place.

1. DISCUSSION DIRECTOR

One strategy good readers use is asking thoughtful questions. The job of the discussion director is to come up with several (at least five) questions about the assigned reading. Your group will be using your questions to frame the discussion. These should be "fat" questions that encourage thinking and not questions with one right answer.

What were you wondering about while you were reading? Did you have questions about what was happening? What a character did? Why the author used a certain style? Or what the whole thing meant? Was there a time when you were reading that you thought, "Huh? I wonder why this is here?" Try to notice what you are wondering while you read, (you could use post-its while you read to mark your questions).

Some possible starters: What if.....?, How did.....? What caused.....? How would you feel if.....? Why do you think.....? What would happen if.....? What might.....? Why is.....?

2. SUMMARIZER

Another strategy good readers use is determining what is important in a story. The summarizer will remind the group of the main events in the chapter before you begin your discussion.

Your assignment is to write a summary for each chapter you read. The summary should include the important events and be between five and seven sentences long. Sometimes it helps to write down the key events before you write your summary. Remember, you do not need to retell the entire chapter.

3. LITERARY LUMINARY

Another strategy good readers use is noticing how the author uses language to make the story come alive. The job of the Literary Luminary is to pay close attention to the writing style of the author and to be on the lookout for passages the group should read aloud and discuss. This can be an important part of the story, a descriptive part (show not tell), a

funny part, a scary part, a touching part, a surprising part, or a part that makes you think, "Aha!"

Your assignment is to find at least three of these passages in your reading. Mark them with a post-it as you are reading, and then go back and choose the three you want to share. Write down the page number and paragraph number and explain thoroughly why you made your choices. During the discussion you will be able to either read the passage aloud, or to call on someone else to read it.

4. CONNECTOR

Another strategy good readers use is to make connections. The job of the connector is to practice making connections as you read. There are many kinds of connections you could make:

connections between the text and your own life,
connections to another place in the same text, and
connections to something else you've read.

Your assignment is to find as many connections as you can (at least 3) in the assigned reading and to explain each one thoroughly.

5. PREDICTOR

Another strategy good readers use is to draw inferences from the text. When readers draw inferences, they make logical guesses based on the evidence presented in the text. In other words, they read between the lines.

Your job as the predictor is to practice drawing inferences as you read.

Your assignment is to make a prediction about something that you think is going to happen later in the text. Your prediction should be like an inference: based on evidence from the text. Explain your prediction in a paragraph. Describe what you predict and explain WHY you think so. Be sure to mention all the evidence in the text that leads you to make the prediction.

6. ILLUSTRATOR

Another strategy good readers use is to visualize the text as they read. Think of it like making a movie in your mind. Your job as the illustrator is to practice making movies in your mind as you read.

Your assignment is to choose one part of the reading that gives you a particularly sharp visual image. Reread that part of the text several times and absorb all the details. Then draw a picture of the scene.

Guidelines

1. **Paper:** Draw picture on plain white 8 1/2 x 11" paper.
2. **Color:** Use color, and fill the page. In other words, don't leave lots of blank paper.
3. **Detail:** Attend to the details in the text. Incorporate as many of them as you can in your picture. Don't include details that contradict anything in the text. You may invent details that weren't mentioned in the text as long as they seem appropriate, based on the text.
4. **Caption:** Either at the top of bottom of the page, neatly write a caption for your picture. This caption should be a quotation from the part of the text you are illustrating. After the quote, write the page number where the sentence appears in the book.

APPENDIX C

Readers Theater:

Kai's Journey to Gold Mountain - The Interrogation

- Translator: What is your name?
Kai: [Sits boldly upright in his chair, looking nervous.] Wong Kai Chong.
Translator: Are you known by any other names?
Kai: No.
Translator: When were you born, and how old are you?
Kai: I was born on February 26, 1922. I am twelve years old.
Translator: What are the names and ages of all of your family members?
Kai: My mother's name is Gum Gee Chin Wong. She was born on February 14, 1892. My father's name is Yuk Lin Wong. He was born on February 2, 1890. My sister's name is Joy Yee Wong. She was born on January 12, 1926.
Translator: For how long has your father been in America?
Kai: He came to America in 1911.
Translator: Where does he live?
Kai: He lives on Larkin Street in San Francisco.
Translator: What is his job?
Kai: He runs a restaurant called the Oriental Cafe.
[Relaxes in his chair and thinks to himself, "This isn't so hard!"]
Translator: What is the name of your village in China?
Kai: Toy San.
Translator: How many rooms were there in your house?
Kai: Four.
Translator: How many chairs were in your house in China?
Kai: [Looks puzzled and thinks carefully] Five.
Translator: What did the chairs look like? Were their backs round or square?
Kai: Square. [Clasps and unclasps his hands nervously.]
Translator: [Shoots accusing glance at Kai. Taps pen against desk.] Interesting. That's not what your father said.

Kai: [Takes deep breath and speaks with more confidence.] Sir, to the best of my knowledge, the chairs were square. I apologize for arguing, sir, but I lived in that house and sat on those chairs every day. My father lives here in America and only returns to China every four years. Who do you think knows the chairs better ñ him or me? [Swallows.] Believe me. They're square.

Translator: [Raises eyebrows and looks at interrogation officers. Slowly begins to smile.] Alright, young man. You are dismissed.