

## Study Guides to

# THE SERPENT'S CHILDREN MOUNTAIN LIGHT DRAGONWINGS DRAGON'S GATE

By Laurence Yep

### READING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

- Explore Point of View
- Compare and Contrast
- Identify Problems and Solutions
- Locate Events in Time and Place

### THEMES

- Chinese American History
- Courage and Survival
- Personal and Historical Change
- Human Relationships
- Dreams and Responsibility
- Prejudice and Alienation

Laurence Yep's Golden Mountain Chronicles take us through several generations of experience in China and the United States. The Chronicles will total nine books in all, from the historical *Dragonwings* and *Dragon's Gate* to the more contemporary *Sea Glass*, *Child of the Owl*, and *Thief of Hearts*, as well as two other upcoming titles. In the four books featured here, *The Serpent's Children*, *Mountain Light*, *Dragon's Gate*, and *Dragonwings*, the author explores the world through the eyes of young people going through extraordinary changes. A family of farmers struggles to survive in China's Kwangtung Province. Faced with war and famine, several characters dream of change—and some go to seek it in a faraway land, the place they call “Land of the Golden Mountain.” The first who survive the dangerous journey to America work as gold miners in California, where they find adventures, dangers, and challenges—but no mountain of gold. The next generation labors in brutal working conditions to lay tracks for the first transcontinental railroad—through a mountain of hard rock. And those who follow continue to build a community in San Francisco, where individuals also pursue their own private dreams, but still struggle against racism and ignorance. As historical fiction, these titles work on multiple levels. Turbulent historical backgrounds allow Yep to explore the significant social and political aspects of the Chinese American experience, yet the personal journeys of these remarkable characters make the lessons universal, and a history from which every reader can learn.

## THEMES

The themes below include questions to ask students as they read all four books.

**Chinese American History:** Each book explores a chapter in the intersection of Chinese and American history. What are the important historical events, trends, or transformations the books describe? How are different cultural values, ideas, beliefs, and traditions depicted? What happens when these ideas intersect? What are some of the experiences of Chinese immigrants and guest workers in the United States during the periods depicted?

**Courage and Survival:** What is courage? When do characters show courage? What are some of the hardest things they have to do in order to survive? Is courage always about physical survival? What do you think is the most courageous act depicted in each book?

**Personal and Historical Change:** Three of the books open with a trigram or hexagram from the Book of Changes (the *I Ching*). The *I Ching* is an ancient work of Chinese literature (parts written as early as the 11th century B.C.), whose underlying philosophy is that the universe is unified by the principle of change. It is made up of symbols such as the ones that open these books, in which different patterns of divided and undivided lines combine to symbolize different kinds of changes. Each title tells the story of an individual's transformation—and sometimes a change within the family or the society at large. How is change important in each book? What changes does each main character go through? How do those personal changes relate to the way the world was changing at the time?

**Human Relationships:** Relationships between family members and friends play central roles in all of the books. The unfolding historical events are experienced by the characters in terms of how they affect the people around them. What are some of the struggles the main characters face with family members? How are these resolved? How do characters in each book overcome prejudices to form friendships with people who are in some way not like them? Why do you think they risk so much for these relationships?

**Dreams and Responsibility:** “It was all very well for dreamers to have dreams but the rest of us got hurt too.” (*Dragon's Gate*, page 168) This is said about Uncle Foxfire in *Dragon's Gate*, but it might be applied to characters in the other books as well. Is it possible to find a balance between pursuing dreams and acting responsibly toward others? Do any of these characters find it? Do you think dreams are necessary?

**Prejudice and Alienation:** Many of the characters in these books experience instances of prejudice and alienation from both their loved ones and from society as a whole. What are the different reasons a character may feel alienated? What are the various ways of coping with alienation and prejudice?

## READING SKILLS AND STRATEGIES

**Explore Point of View:** All four books are written in the first person. Ask students to think about how this influences the way the stories are told. Have them note places where characters' different viewpoints make them see the same situation in different ways. Ask them to think about how the stories might be different if they were told from another character's point of view.

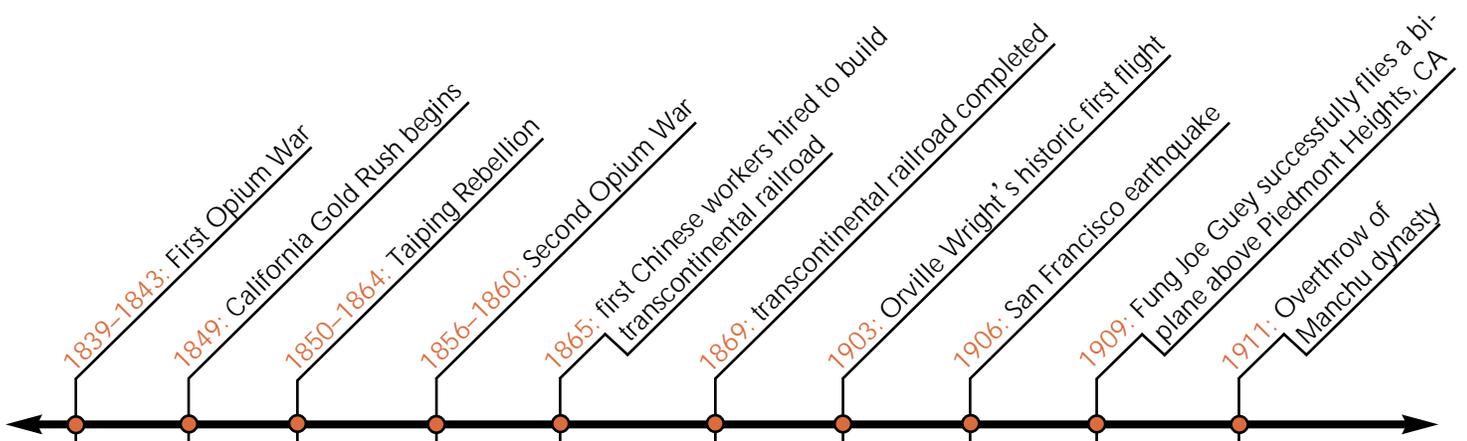
**Compare and Contrast:** Students can compare and contrast within and between books:

- ways different characters look at the world
- how different characters respond to challenges
- ways of life in different communities depicted in the books
- Chinese and American conventions described in the books, including government, social organization, and systems of measuring time

**Identify Problems and Solutions:** In each book characters face serious obstacles to achieving their goals. Often they even face serious obstacles to their survival. In life-threatening situations the characters don't have time to think but must simply react. Other times they do have time to reflect before making difficult decisions. As they read, have students note challenges or problems the characters face. Have them think about possible solutions, and then read on to see which solution the character chooses.

**Locate Events in Time and Place:** Display maps of China and the United States. Help students locate Guangdong Province (the new English spelling for Kwangtung Province) in Southern China, on the South China Sea, and California in the United States. On a globe have students note the route between these locations. In addition, help students to create a time line of historical events mentioned in the Chronicles. The time line below can be used as a guide. An author's afterword in each book also helps to place the stories in historical context.

## TIME LINE



## ACTIVITIES ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

### Social Studies

- The themes of alienation and persecution are perhaps the most dominant themes in these books. Have students do in-depth research on the Chinese American immigrant experience, and the prejudice they experienced. What were the reasons behind it? Is the situation any different today?
- Have students do additional research into the time periods in which the novels are set. Invite them to make presentations about some of the historical events in the United States and China that are important in these novels, such as the Gold Rush, the Opium Wars, the building of the transcontinental railroad, the persecution of the Strangers in China, the Taiping Rebellion, and the 1906 San Francisco earthquake.

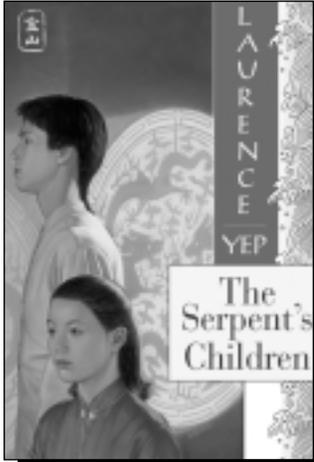
### Science

- Invite students to investigate the science of flight, as Windrider does in *Dragonwings*, or the science behind locomotion that fueled the building of the transcontinental railroad as described in *Dragon's Gate*. To extend this activity, you might have groups of students write letters to Uncle Foxfire, Otter, Windrider, or Moon Shadow explaining what they have learned about the relevant technology. Encourage students to include drawings or diagrams with their letters.

### Language Arts

- Laurence Yep is expert at creating character in a few strokes—of choosing a small detail that lets you know a great deal about a person. For example, “Of all the clan trudging down to the fields, only Mother would pause to watch the sunrise. And only Mother would make you feel that it was new.” (*Serpent's Children*, page 27) Ask students to look for other examples of how character and feelings are conveyed through details in these books. Then have them create characters and let others know something important about them through one or two carefully selected details.
- All of the books contain descriptions of things and places seen by a character for the very first time. Call attention to some descriptions of objects, such as in *Dragonwings*, a kite (page 4), an electric light (page 33), a piano (page 108–109). Then ask students to describe something they see every day as though they were seeing it for the very first time.
- The story in *Dragonwings* is based partly on a newspaper article discovered by the author. Ask students to look through various newspapers and create an original story based on something they find there.
- In *Dragonwings*, Moon Shadow writes a letter to Orville Wright. Have students write a letter to someone they admire, and share with the class any responses received.

## THE SERPENT'S CHILDREN: 1849



### ABOUT THE BOOK

Cassia fights for her family's survival in the Kwangtung Province of China. She is the practical one of her family. But then again, she has to be. Her father has dedicated his life to the dream of overthrowing the Manchu dynasty, while her brother, Foxfire, dreams of a faraway land that is said to have a mountain of gold. When her mother dies, Cassia makes a promise to hold the family together. But it's a hard promise to keep. The family struggles to grow enough rice to feed themselves, and they must do this in the face of drought, invasions, and local violence. Meanwhile the dreams of Foxfire and his father seem increasingly incompatible. A legend says that Cassia and her brother are descended from a serpent spirit—and though the village uses this to insult them, Cassia must use it to find the strength required to hold her family together.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### Opium Wars

As *The Serpent's Children* begins, the Middle Kingdom (China) has been invaded by the British. Although Cassia's father belongs to a Brotherhood dedicated to overthrowing the Manchu dynasty, the Brotherhood fights on the side of the Manchus because, "the demons are ten times worse." (page 12) There were two Opium Wars, the first, 1839–1843, and the second, 1856–1860. It is the first that forms the backdrop of this book's early chapters. Western powers wanted increased commercial rights in China, including the right to sell opium. When the Chinese government tried to stop opium imports, the British invaded. The British defeated the Chinese and imposed the Treaty of Nanking (Nanjing) in 1842, which among other things forced China to open ports to British trade, and ceded Hong Kong to Great Britain.

#### California Gold Rush

In 1848, gold was discovered in California. By the following year, people from all over the country and the world began arriving in California hoping to strike it rich. Since the gold rush coincided with difficult times in China, Chinese men began to undertake the dangerous voyage to the United States—and dangerous conditions on arrival—in order to search for gold, and send money back to their families.

### QUOTATIONS

*Have students explain what these quotes mean in context, and what they reveal about the character speaking. Then ask students what they think of the ideas expressed.*

"Farmers should be like their plants....They should always stay where their roots are." (Cassia, page 113)

"It's not the Manchu dynasty that's our real enemy. And it's not the demons and their opium. It's poverty." (Foxfire, pages 152–153)

"We're humans—not worms that crawl around on their bellies. Living isn't the important thing: it's how you live." (Cassia, page 168)

## SHARING THE BOOK

*Questions for Group Discussion*

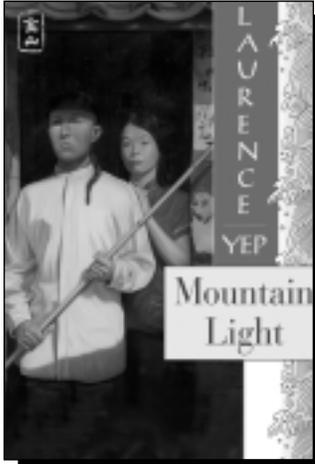
- 1 What does the story of the White Serpent mean to Cassia? How does the “serpent’s blood” show in her?
- 2 Explain the connection Cassia feels with the land she farms. Find examples of how she expresses this connection.
- 3 Why do Cassia’s aunt and uncle want to bind Cassia’s feet? What is their point of view about foot binding, and how does it contrast with Cassia’s?
- 4 How do Cassia’s views about her brother, Foxfire, change over the course of the novel? Locate some of the turning points where her opinion changes.
- 5 Why does Cassia feel responsible for holding the family together? Do you think she’s right to hold herself responsible?
- 6 Tell the story of “the Work.” What are the ideals of the revolutionaries? How does the movement change? How does Spider justify the actions of his group of bandits? What does Father think about Spider’s justification?
- 7 In what ways does Cassia’s mother remain a presence in the family’s life, in Cassia’s thoughts, and in the events of the story, even after she dies?
- 8 Compare and contrast: Father’s and Foxfire’s characters and ideas; Cassia’s and Foxfire’s ways of looking at the world; Spider’s and Father’s views on revolution and compromise.
- 9 What are some of the different expectations of girls and boys in Three Willows? How does this influence the different paths Foxfire and Cassia take?
- 10 What is Foxfire and Father’s conflict really about? In what ways do they hurt each other? Why?
- 11 Why is Father so unwilling to forgive Foxfire? What do you think makes him forgive Foxfire at the end?

### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

Cassia’s family desperately needs money, or they will starve. A clerk is interested in buying Mother’s story window, but Cassia thinks of it as the last remaining piece of her mother. (see page 141) Would you sell the story window in this circumstance?

When their son dies on the voyage to America, Cassia’s Aunt Piety and Uncle Windy beg her for help. If she doesn’t help they’ll be taken away as slaves to pay for their son’s debts. But Cassia doesn’t believe she has the resources to help them. (see pages 260–264) What do you think you would do in her situation?

## MOUNTAIN LIGHT: 1855



### ABOUT THE BOOK

Their clans—the Laus of Phoenix Village and the Youngs of Three Willows—have been feuding for centuries. But after fighting on the same side in an uprising against the Manchu dynasty, Squeaky Lau and Cassia Young find themselves increasingly drawn to each other. As they pursue this forbidden friendship, they face even greater challenges. The revolt against the Manchus has been violently suppressed, and local clans are taking out their wrath on an ethnic minority, the Strangers, who are rumored to have helped the Manchus. Both Cassia and Squeaky have close friends among the Strangers. But it will take great courage to stand against the community to protect their friends—courage Cassia, the Serpent’s child, never seems to lack, but Squeaky, the clown, never seems to show. As Squeaky comes to find courage within himself, he finds that he is undertaking something far braver than he ever imagined he would do: leaving his home and journeying to the Land of the Golden Mountain.

### BACKGROUND INFORMATION

#### The Manchu Dynasty

The Manchu, or Qing (Ch’ing), dynasty was the last dynasty in China. It was established by invaders from the area now known as Manchuria, and lasted almost 300 years, from 1644 to 1911. The dynasty itself was strong and prosperous, but many Chinese considered the invaders illegitimate rulers, and wished to restore the preceding dynasty to power. *Mountain Light* is set in 1855, around the time of two important revolts against the Manchus, both of which were crushed. One, the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864) devastated wide areas of China. It was to pay for this rebellion that the Manchus imposed the tax the gold miners are fighting over in the final chapters of *Mountain Light*. The other revolt, the Red Turban Uprising, occurred in Southern China, and is the revolt in which the characters in this book participate. Over 1 million people were killed during the Manchu suppression of this revolt.

#### Persecution of the Hakka

The Hakka (“Strangers”) are a migratory people thought to be originally from northern China. They settled in southern China in the 12th and 13th century, but retained their own customs and dialect rather than assimilate. The Hakka met persecution wherever they settled. In the 14th century, because of persecution, the Hakka migrated to Kwangtung Province. In the period in which *Mountain Light* takes place, the Strangers are blamed for allegedly aiding the Manchus against the local uprising. In the war that followed, it is estimated that half of the 300,000 Strangers were killed.

### QUOTATIONS

*Have students explain what these quotes mean in context, and what they reveal about the character speaking. Then ask what they think of the ideas expressed.*

“I think that the Light has to be more than a symbolic name. It’s the Light within each of us, and that Light is more important than our prejudices. We have to live the Light. We have to be it.” (The Gallant/Father, page 8)

“It was funny, but once you got started doing the right thing, it got easier to do.” (Squeaky, page 212)

“All my life I’ve been quiet and minded my own business so the stupid people would ignore me. Only I found out that they don’t. And doing nothing only lets the stupidity spread.” (Tiny, page 262)

## SHARING THE BOOK

Questions for Group Discussion

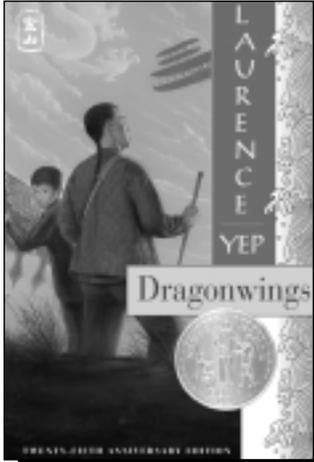
- 1 Squeaky views himself as a clown and a coward. How do his views about himself change over the course of the book? What happens to change him?
- 2 Cassia and Squeaky have different views on joking around. But even she has to admit there are times when clowning proves useful. When is humor helpful?
- 3 The character Dusty, who appeared in *The Serpent's Children*, makes a reappearance in this book. What kind of person is he? What values does he live by?
- 4 Because Squeaky makes no move to help Ducky, he blames himself for Ducky's murder. Do you think he's right to blame himself? Explain.
- 5 Why do you think so many people take out their anger on the Strangers? How does Uncle Itchy justify the village's behavior?
- 6 What do you think draws Cassia and Squeaky to each other? Do you think they are a good match? Why or why not?
- 7 How does Squeaky "live the light" on his voyage to America?
- 8 In what ways is San Francisco different from what Squeaky and Tiny were expecting?
- 9 What is Foxfire's secret for finding gold where no one else can?
- 10 Tiny doesn't speak much. Why? When he does speak, what does he say? How does he show courage?

### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

When Cassia's father is killed, the Captain asks her to remove his body because the boat is overloaded. Cassia wants to take her father's body home to give him a proper burial. In order to do what she wants, she must use her gun to threaten all the other passengers. Considering how important caring for one's departed ancestors is in Cassia's culture, what do you think you would do in her position? (pages 48–54)

The voyage to America is filled with all kinds of dangers, and many Chinese do not survive the journey. Reread the details of the voyage. (see chapter 17) What would your strategy be to survive?

# DRAGONWINGS: 1903



## ABOUT THE BOOK

In the opening years of the 20th century, eight-year-old Moon Shadow travels from China to San Francisco to join his father, Windrider, whom he has never met. Windrider works with other Chinese immigrants, running a laundry service in Chinatown. Like the others, Windrider works in order to send money back home to his family in China. But he also has dreams about building a flying machine and, like the Wright brothers, taking to the sky. Over the next few years, Moon Shadow comes to believe in Windrider's dream, as the two also learn about being father and son. But it takes a great earthquake, and its lesson that life can be here and gone in an instant, to prompt Windrider to take the final step, to endure mockery, poverty, and isolation in pursuit of flight.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### The Wright Brothers

Orville and Wilbur Wright were brothers who made mechanical toys as children, and as adults built a printing press, opened a bicycle repair shop, and became interested in flying. They built and tested gliders from 1901 to 1903, performing experiments with different kinds of wing surfaces. Then on December 17, 1903, Orville Wright made the first successful piloted flight in history. The flight lasted 12 seconds.

At about the same time that the Wright Brothers were perfecting their flying machine, a Chinese American named Fung Joe Guey built his own biplane and successfully piloted the machine for  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile, 15 feet above the neighborhood of Piedmont Heights in San Francisco. Yet there were only two short newspaper articles about his efforts. Laurence Yep became fascinated with this man's story, and the story told in *Dragonwings* is the result of that fascination.

### The 1906 San Francisco Earthquake

On April, 18, 1906, at 5:12 in the morning the earth began to shake. The great earthquake that followed shook San Francisco for about 60 seconds. That minute was enough to cause violent destruction around a 290-mile-long stretch of the San Andreas Fault. Over 3,000 deaths were caused directly or indirectly by this catastrophe. The city had to be completely rebuilt. Nearly 28,000 buildings were destroyed, as more than half the city's population of 400,000 was left homeless. Even today, the monetary damage is staggering: \$400,000,000 in 1906 dollars!

Perhaps the most important effect of the 1906 quake was that it spawned a revolution in earthquake research. Because of the tragedy, government funding was established, and scientists could begin to study the cause of earthquakes. Many of today's advances in the prediction of and protection from earthquakes stem from this initial research.

## QUOTATIONS

*Have students explain what these quotes mean in context, and what they reveal about the character speaking. Then ask what they think of the ideas expressed.*

Why shouldn't we get some pleasure in this life? Why later? Why not now?" (Black Dog, page 81)

"We see the same thing and yet find different truths." (Miss Whitlaw, page 147)

"I had found my mountain of gold, after all, and it had not been nuggets but people who had made it up." (Moon Shadow, page 210)

## SHARING THE BOOK

Questions for Group Discussion

- 1 “The Three virtues of the Stranger are to be silent, to be cunning, but above all to be invisible.” (page 23) Moon Shadow hears this quotation from the *Classic of Changes*, one of China’s oldest books, on his arrival in San Francisco. How does it apply to the way the members of the Company live? What do you think about the advice?
- 2 How do the Chinese concepts of “demons” and “dragons” differ from the American versions? Why are westerners called “demons” in this book?
- 3 Collect Uncle’s sayings about the Superior Man. What is the Superior Man? How does this idea affect the way Uncle lives?
- 4 Why do you think Black Dog is so angry? Why does he want Otter to say that life is ugly?
- 5 Uncle and Father disagree over many things, including whether to bring Moon Shadow’s mother to America. Explain both points of view on this issue. What do you think should be done? What do you think Mother’s point of view might be on this question?
- 6 What is the dragon spirit? How does Windrider embody this spirit?
- 7 White Deer explains Uncle’s disapproval of Windrider’s dream. “He thinks your father’s taken to flying the way that Lefty once was taken by gambling and the way that Black Dog is owned by his opium pipe.” (page 67) How has addiction affected Lefty and Black Dog? Do you think Windrider’s obsession with flight is similar? Why or why not?
- 8 Describe Miss Whitlaw. How are she and Robin different from other “demons”? What do you think of Miss Whitlaw’s methods of getting people to help others after the earthquake?
- 9 How does Mother respond to Father’s letter explaining his dream? How does she show courage?
- 10 Why does Father decide not to make another Dragonwings?
- 11 The story in *Dragonwings* is loosely based on the efforts of a Chinese American aviator who flew at around the same time as the Wright brothers. Why do you think his efforts were largely ignored at the time?

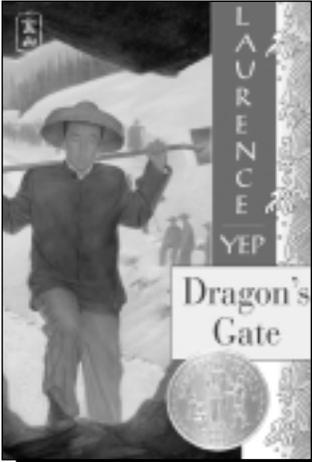
## WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

*As a young boy, Moon Shadow faces many situations that call for maturity and courage beyond his years:*

- At the age of eight, he is separated from his mother and sent to live in a strange land, halfway across the world, with the father he has never met. What do you think it would feel like to abandon everything familiar for the completely unknown?
- Moon Shadow experiences several life-and-death situations. For example, when he and his family endure the great earthquake, Moon Shadow observes, “the whole world had become unglued.” Have you ever been in an equally frightening situation? How do you think you would react?
- When Black Dog holds a knife to Moon Shadow’s throat and demands the money Father has been saving, Moon Shadow appears ready to sacrifice his own life for his father’s dream of *Dragonwings*. Do you think he is making the right choice? Do you think people should pursue dreams even when others label them foolish or impossible? Why or why not?

# DRAGON'S GATE: 1867

## ABOUT THE BOOK



In 1867 Otter receives his wish—to join his adoptive father and his hero, Uncle Foxfire, in California—the Land of the Golden Mountain. There they are laboring to build a tunnel through the mountains for the American transcontinental railroad, and also to learn about the technology they can use to free China from the Manchus. What Otter encounters in America, however, proves much different from what he expected. The Chinese workers are treated as slaves, driven to achieve the seemingly impossible task of chiseling a tunnel for the railroad through the hard rock of the Sierra Nevada. The weather is brutally cold, with a raging blizzard, and working conditions are deadly. But worst of all, Otter finds that his Uncle Foxfire, a legend at home, is just another worker on the mountain, mistreated and unable to fight back. An outcast among outcasts, Otter must fight to survive. When desperation forces him to undertake an extremely perilous mission, Otter finds a new understanding of the work he needs to do. At the same time he comes to understand his Uncle Foxfire—as a hero and as a man.

## BACKGROUND INFORMATION

### Transcontinental Railroad

The dream of building a transcontinental railroad—a railroad that would connect the east and west coasts of the United States—was put into action during the American Civil War. In 1863 the Central Pacific Railroad began laying tracks eastward from Sacramento, California. At the same time, the Union Pacific Railroad was laying tracks westward from Omaha, Nebraska. The two rail lines were to meet in the middle. However, workers on the Central Pacific had to dig tunnels and build bridges through the mountains. Construction was beset with problems and proceeded very slowly. In two years, fewer than 50 miles of track were laid, and the company remained short thousands of workers. It was suggested that Chinese workers be used to fill this gap, and in 1865 the first Chinese were hired for the dangerous task of blasting through the Sierras. The Chinese crews, working through brutal winters, were often used for the most dangerous jobs, and many lost their lives. In 1869 the first transcontinental railroad was completed. The tracks from east and west met at Promontory Point, Utah, and the last spike was driven in, to great celebration. Engraved on this golden spike were the words “May God continue the unity of this country as this Railroad unites the two great Oceans of the world.”

## QUOTATIONS

*Have students explain what these quotes mean in context, and what they reveal about the character speaking. Then ask what they think of the ideas expressed.*

“You can learn to change the world or go on being changed by it.” (Uncle Foxfire, page 35)

“Uncle Foxfire had been right about learning things from the Americans. He had just been wrong about the source and the scale.” (Otter, page 134)

“Once you start guesting you’ll be a guest all your life—whether here or back home.” (Packy, pages 238–239)

## SHARING THE BOOK

*Questions for Group Discussion*

- 1 How has life in Three Willows changed since the earlier books? How has it been affected by money sent back from abroad? How is Otter's life different from that of his classmates who don't have fathers in the United States?
- 2 What are some of the dangers faced by the Chinese workers on the crew Otter joins? Explain what Squeaky/Father means when he says, "It's war...Because the mountain can kill you in a dozen different ways before you can blink an eye. And victory is twenty centimeters a shift." (page 87)
- 3 What does Uncle Foxfire mean when he suggests that Americans are "better in theory than in practice?" (page 94)
- 4 Are Otter and his father right to blame Uncle Foxfire for the predicament they find themselves in on the mountain? How do Otter's thoughts about his uncle change over the course of the novel?
- 5 Otter is shocked by the environmental impact of the trains and tunnels carved right through the mountains: "...any people clever enough to come up with this machine should know that it was only a question of time before the land itself became angry at such treatment." (page 59) Do you think this reflects a superstition, or a recognition of something real? Explain.
- 6 How does Uncle Foxfire's "crew of misfits" change over the course of the book? What events pull the group together?
- 7 Who is Shrimp? What is his strategy for survival? How do the other Chinese workers feel about him?
- 8 Describe the relationship between Otter and Sean. Why does Otter see Sean in some way as "more my kind than any of the T'ang men on the tunnel." (page 210) What differences are their friendship unable to bridge?
- 9 What is Kilroy's relationship to the mountain? How do you think he would justify the way he treats the workers? What is your opinion of this? What role does alcohol addiction play in shaping his character?
- 10 Why don't the Chinese workers accept the argument that they outnumber the westerners on the mountain and should stand up against abuse? What happens when they do?

### WHAT WOULD YOU DO?

A boy who has lost his brother under an avalanche of snow begs the men to keep digging for survivors. Kilroy orders everyone back to work. Review the threat that Shrimp makes. (page 192)  
What do you think you would do in this boy's position?

Otter wins the right to leave the mountain. But he passes up his chance to leave in order to find Foxfire's bones. What decision do you think you would make in his position?

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Since publishing his first story at the age of eighteen, Laurence Yep has earned a reputation and a following as the country's top Asian American writer of children's books. His works run the gamut from picture books to novels, and from fantasy to historical fiction. He has tackled humor in middle-grade novels such as *The Imp that Ate My Homework*, and put his own spin on a classic tale with *The Dragon Prince*, a Chinese retelling of *Beauty and the Beast*. However, he is probably best known for his young adult novels, which so masterfully introduce readers both to life in China and to the Chinese experience in America, the "Land of the Golden Mountain." HarperCollins's Golden Mountain Chronicles will include nine of Yep's varied explorations of his heritage, from the historical and award-winning *Dragonwings* and *Dragon's Gate* to the contemporary *Child of the Owl* and *Thief of Hearts*. Two brand-new future titles in this series promise further unique insight into Asian American culture and thought.



PHOTO: JOANNE RYDER

Drawing from extensive research as well as the memories and emotions of his relatives, Yep writes about both China and America. His stories appeal to today's young adults because, he says, he is always pursuing the theme of alienation, a common feeling among all teenagers, whether native-born or not. Having grown up in a predominantly black neighborhood in San Francisco, Yep always felt like his community's "token Asian," and an outsider. It's a feeling he has never forgotten, and one that comes through in all the characters he creates—from the science fiction aliens in his first novel, *Sweetwater*, to the alienated and all-too-human aviator in *Dragonwings*.

As we celebrate the 25th anniversary of the publication of the acclaimed Newbery Honor book *Dragonwings*, readers of all ages are invited to discover (or rediscover) Laurence Yep's unique vision and perspective on history, as told through the eyes of some extraordinary young people.

## NOTES

## NOTES

# HarperCollins books by Laurence Yep

## *American Dragons:*

### *Twenty-Five Asian American Voices*

Pb: 0-06-440603-2 • \$5.95 (\$6.75)

### *The Case of the Firecrackers*

Tr: 0-06-024452-6 • \$14.89 (\$20.89)

Lb: 0-06-024449-6 • \$14.95 (\$19.95)

### *Case of the Goblin Pearls*

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