

GRACE LIN: FAMILY, FOOD, AND FOLKLORE

Grades 3 & 4

VISITING AUTHOR / ILLUSTRATOR
2015

Sponsored by the ICCSD Foundation and Hills Bank



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The following materials were created to prepare ICCSD third and fourth grade students for an author/illustrator visit during Community Reading Month. Teacher librarians and classroom teachers are encouraged to use these materials to assist in building background knowledge about the author before her visit in November 2015.

This unit includes the following:

1. Biographical information about the author/illustrator with a bibliography
2. A matrix of five books written and illustrated by Grace Lin with annotations, curricular ties, and themes
3. An introductory lesson for the author visit and a guide for each of the five titles with suggestions for background building, discussion questions, and activities

GRACE LIN: FAMILY, FOOD, AND FOLKLORE

VISITING AUTHOR / ILLUSTRATOR 2015

Grace Lin was born on May 17, 1974, and grew up in a two-story white house in New Hartford, New York. Her father was a doctor, and her mother was a botanist (a plant scientist) before having children and becoming a stay-at-home mom. Grace is the second of three daughters; born between her older sister Lissy and her younger sister Ki-Ki. Grace's parents immigrated to America from Taiwan, and her family was one of the only Asian-American families in their community. Before she started school, Grace's family and friends called her Pacy, so she was surprised when her kindergarten teacher called her Grace, a name her parents had chosen so that she would also have a more American-sounding name. Her sisters also had "American" names: Lissy was Beatrice and Ki-Ki was Alice. Grace soon became accustomed to both of her identities, which was fitting since she often felt as though she belonged to two cultures.

As a child Grace loved to read and draw. She loved the illustrations of Richard Scarry, and she traced the drawings from his books repeatedly.

Two of the many professions Grace considered pursuing once she grew up were Olympic figure skating and children's book illustrating. When it became obvious that ice skating wasn't her talent, drawings she had made of herself ice skating showed that she definitely had talent in her other area of interest – illustrating!

In junior high, Grace was in a writing club and worked on the school newspaper.

After high school, Grace attended college at the Rhode Island School of Design, where she studied to be an illustrator. After graduating from college in 1996, Grace worked in a children's bookstore in Cambridge, Massachusetts, which helped her to learn more about how authors' books get published. She also worked for a party company, designing personalized items such as paper plates, t-shirts, and coffee mugs.

Eventually she was able to sell one of her paintings, called "The Ugly Vegetables," to a book company. When the editor asked her if she had a story to go with it, she said yes, even though she didn't - yet. She hurried home, wrote a story to go with her painting, and that story became Grace's first book, *The Ugly Vegetables*, published in 1999.

In 2001 Grace married an architect named Robert Mercer, whom she had met while working at the bookstore. Coincidentally, they had gone to college together and had some of the same friends, but hadn't met each other until he asked for her help with finding a book at the store. Unfortunately, Robert was diagnosed with a type of cancer called Ewing's sarcoma later in 2001. Hoping to raise money for research that would

cure his disease, Grace and Robert wrote a book together in 2004 called *Robert's Snow: For Cancer's Cure*. They also created a fundraiser featuring over 150 wooden snowflakes painted by children's illustrators that were used for an auction. Then they put together a book featuring the painted snowflakes, called *Robert's Snowflakes*, which also raised money for research. Sadly, despite raising a large amount of money, and working hard to fight the disease, Robert died in 2007.

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon was the book Grace had been working on while Robert was sick; she finished writing it after he died. It is a version of a traditional Chinese fairy tale, but it also became her own story of grief over Robert's death.

Grace eventually remarried, and she now lives with her husband Alex and their 3-year-old daughter in Somerville, Massachusetts, which is just outside Boston.

Grace enjoys visiting schools, but can't possibly make it to every school that would like her to speak. Additionally, many schools are not even able to invite Grace and other authors to their schools because it costs a lot of money. Grace wanted to help, so in 2009 she created the Small Graces Project, which raised money by auctioning one of her paintings each month. The money raised by the project that year helped to fund author visit programs for low-income schools.

Grace is happy that she can write books that are considered multicultural, because as a girl she was "hungry for books with an Asian-American character." She says, "Now I write and illustrate books that I wish I could have had when I was younger."

Some of the things Grace enjoys in her spare time are spending time with family and friends, riding her bike, baking and eating cupcakes, reading, and shopping online. Some of her favorite foods are cupcakes, candy, ice cream, dim sum, and dumplings. (If you don't know what dim sum and dumplings are, you can find out by reading her books!)

You can learn even more about Grace Lin and her books by visiting her website, www.gracelin.com and her blog, www.gracelinblog.com.

Picture Books Written and Illustrated by Grace Lin:

- THE UGLY VEGETABLES.** Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge Publishing, 1999.
- DIM SUM FOR EVERYONE!** New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2001.
- KITE FLYING.** New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2002.
- OKIE-DOKIE, ARTICHOKE!** New York: Viking, 2003.
- OLVINA FLIES.** New York: Henry Holt, 2003.
- ROBERT'S SNOW.** New York: Penguin, 2004.
- JINGLE BELLS.** New York: Little, Brown, 2004.
- FORTUNE COOKIE FORTUNES.** New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2004.
- DECK THE HALLS.** New York: Little, Brown, 2004.
- THE TWELVE DAYS OF CHRISTMAS.** New York: Little, Brown, 2004.
- MERRY CHRISTMAS! LET'S ALL SING!** (3 board books; with sing-along CD). New York: Little, Brown, 2005.
- OUR SEASONS.** Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge Publishing, 2006.
- OLVINA SWIMS.** New York: Henry Holt, 2007.
- THE RED THREAD: AN ADOPTION FAIRY TALE.** Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman, 2007.
- LISSY'S FRIENDS.** New York: Viking, 2007.
- BRINGING IN THE NEW YEAR.** New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2008.
- THANKING THE MOON: CELEBRATING THE MID-AUTUMN MOON FESTIVAL.** New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010.

Book compiled by Grace Lin and her husband Robert Mercer:

- ROBERT'S SNOWFLAKES: ARTISTS' SNOWFLAKES FOR CANCER CURE.** New York: Viking, 2005.

Picture Books Illustrated by Grace Lin:

- Gill, Shelley and Deborah Tobola. **THE BIG BUCK ADVENTURE.** Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge Publishing, 1999.
- Thong, Roseanne. **ROUND IS A MOONCAKE: A BOOK OF SHAPES.** San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2000.
- Yee, Paul. **THE JADE NECKLACE.** New York: Crocodile Books, 2001.
- Thong, Roseanne. **RED IS A DRAGON: A BOOK OF COLORS.** San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2001.
- Rau, Dana Meachen. **MY FAVORITE FOODS.** Minneapolis, MN: Compass Point Books, 2001.
- Park, Frances and Ginger Park. **WHERE ON EARTH IS MY BAGEL?** New York: Lee & Low, 2001.
- Meister, Cari. **A NEW ROOF.** New York: Children's Press, 2002.

Cameron, C.C. **ONE FOR ME, ONE FOR YOU**. Brookfield, CT: Roaring Brook Press, 2003.

Tucker, Kathy. **THE SEVEN CHINESE SISTERS**. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman, 2003.

Thong, Roseanne. **ONE IS A DRUMMER: A BOOK OF NUMBERS**. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle Books, 2004.

Wang, Xiaohong. **ONE YEAR IN BEIJING**. ChinaSprout, 2006.

Early Readers by Grace Lin:

LING AND TING: NOT EXACTLY THE SAME! New York: Little, Brown 2010.

Theodor Geisel Honor 2011

LING AND TING SHARE A BIRTHDAY! New York: Little, Brown 2013.

LING AND TING: TWICE AS SILLY. New York: Little, Brown 2014.

LING AND TING TOGETHER IN ALL WEATHER. New York: Little, Brown, 2015.

Novels by Grace Lin:

THE YEAR OF THE DOG. New York: Little, Brown, 2006.

THE YEAR OF THE RAT. New York: Little, Brown, 2007.

WHERE THE MOUNTAIN MEETS THE MOON. New York: Little, Brown, 2009.

Newbery Honor 2010

DUMPLING DAYS. New York: Little, Brown, 2012.

STARRY RIVER OF THE SKY. New York: Little, Brown, 2012.

Sources of Biographical Information:

Blais, Madeleine. "A Touch of Grace." *School Library Journal* (2009). Web. 07 July 2015.

<<http://www.slj.com/2009/10/reviews/a-touch-of-grace/>>.

"Grace Lin: Home." *Grace Lin: Home*. N.p., n.d. Web. 07 July 2015. <<http://gracelin.com/index.php>>.

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"Grace Lin on the Today Show." *YouTube*. YouTube, n.d. Web. 16 July 2015.

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"Google." *Google*. N.p., n.d. Web. 07 July 2015. <<https://www.google.com/webhp?sourceid=chrome-instant&ion=1&espv=2&ie=UTF-8#q=grace%20lin>>.

"Lin, Grace." *Something About the Author*. Volume 198. Detroit: Gale Research, 2009. Print.

"Seven Impossible Things Before Breakfast." » *Blog Archive* » *To Where the Mountain Meets the Moon with Grace Lin*. N.p., 22 July 2009. Web. 07 July 2015. <<http://blaine.org/sevenimpossiblethings/?p=1739>>.

"SOUP'S ON: Grace Lin in the Kitchen Interview!" *Jama Rattigan's Alphabet Soup* -. N.p., 30 Apr. 2008. Web. 07 July 2015. <<http://jamarattigan.livejournal.com/106681.html>>.

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"A Video Interview with Grace Lin." *Reading Rockets*. N.p., n.d. Web. 07 July 2015. <<http://www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews/lin>>.

Wikipedia. Wikimedia Foundation, n.d. Web. 07 July 2015. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grace_Lin>.

Grace Lin: Family, Food, and Folklore

TITLE	TOPICS/ CURRICULAR TIES	TYPE OF LITERATURE	ANNOTATION	THEME
<i>The Year of the Dog</i>	Family Self-identity Chinese New Year Friendship	Realistic Fiction	It is the Chinese Year of the Dog, which is a year for finding yourself and celebrating friends and family. During this year, Pacy discovers herself as a Chinese-American, a Taiwanese-American, and an American.	Discovering who you are takes time, but it is important to know who you are and to have goals for who you want to become.
<i>The Year of the Rat</i>	Family Self-Identity School Chinese Celebrations Friendship	Realistic Fiction	In the Chinese Year of the Rat, Pacy faces many challenges: her best friend moves away, and a new boy comes to her school, she must find the courage to forge ahead with her dream of becoming a writer and illustrator, and she must learn to find the beauty in change.	Change can make us uncomfortable but helps us grow.
<i>Dumpling Days</i>	Family heritage Taiwan Travel Food Self-identity	Realistic Fiction	Pacy's family travels to Taiwan, so Pacy experiences many new things. Some are enjoyable, some are scary, and some are just different. All of them help Pacy understand herself, her family history, and her heritage.	It is easy to resist things that are new and unfamiliar, but experiencing new things allows us to see ourselves in a whole new way.
<i>Where the Mountain Meets the Moon</i>	Family Folklore Quests	Fantasy	Minli, an adventurous girl from a poor village, buys a magical goldfish, and then joins a dragon on a quest to find the Old Man of the Moon in hopes of bringing life to Fruitless Mountain.	Spending time with those you love is more valuable than money.
<i>Starry River of the Sky</i>	Family Folklore Forgiveness	Fantasy	A young runaway, Rendi, finds himself working as a chore boy at an Inn in a small village. The moon has disappeared from the sky, causing many conflicts. Soon a mysterious guest arrives, who tells tales at meal times. Through these tales, Rendi discovers how to put things right once again, both in the village and in his own life.	For all to be right in the world, one needs family, loyalty, and forgiveness.

Getting to Know Grace Lin

Introduction:

Guess which of the following statements about author/illustrator Grace Lin is true:

- a) She calls her husband Sasquatch and her daughter Rain Dragon.
- b) Her best childhood friend is now the editor of her books.
- c) She didn't know her name was Grace until she went to kindergarten.
- d) She helped raise thousands of dollars for cancer research.
- e) ALL of these statements are true.

E is the correct answer; all of the statements are true. We will learn more about these statements as we prepare for Grace Lin's visit.

Now guess which of these statements is true:

Grace Lin identifies herself as _____

- a) Asian-American
- b) Chinese-American
- c) Taiwanese-American
- d) American
- e) All of the above

E is the correct answer again: Grace's parents immigrated to America from Taiwan, which is part of Asia; much of Chinese culture is shared by the Taiwanese people; and Grace was born and raised in America.

Objective:

Students will become familiar with the life and work of author/illustrator Grace Lin.

Activity 1: Biography

Read the biography of Grace Lin that is found on pages 3-4 of this Curriculum Guide. Use maps to locate Taiwan, New York, and Massachusetts.

Activity 2: Grace Lin's Books

Use the bibliography listed on pages 5-6 of this Curriculum Guide and the library to familiarize students with books written and illustrated by Grace Lin.

Activity 3: Exploring Grace Lin's Website

Direct students to some highlights from www.gracelin.com:

- *About – Studio Tour – Old Studio*: Click on the red dots to see what items Grace keeps in her studio.
- *About – Family*: Read about the members of Grace's family. Take a guess at what her daughter's actual name is based on the nicknames given.
- *About – Fun Facts*: See what life would be like if Grace had chosen a different career.
- *About – FAQs*: Find out why Grace paints swirls and what inspired her to use them in her illustrations.
- Click on the title of one of Grace Lin's chapter books (novels) for an in-depth look at the book. Each of the stories has an *Overview* page and many have *Behind the Story* and *Activities* links.

Activity 4: Visit her Blog

Grace Lin maintains a blog in which she writes about both her professional and personal life: www.gracelinblog.com.

Challenge students to find the following:

- Cute pictures of Grace's daughter, whom she calls Rain Dragon
- Pictures from recent school visits. Notice some of the artwork students have created to prepare for her visits. Begin thinking about how you will want to prepare for Grace Lin's visit to your school.
- *Fortune Cookie Friday* links; each one includes a Chinese proverb to ponder.
- Also look for *On My Desk Mondays*, *Book Talk Tuesdays*, and *Chinese School Sundays*.

Assessment: 3-2-1 Exit Slip

First, write three things you learned about Grace Lin.

Next, identify two things you still want to know about Grace Lin.

Finally, write the title of one of her books that looks interesting to you.

The Year of the Dog by Grace Lin

Type of literature: Realistic Fiction

Characters:

Pacy/Grace Lin – a girl from a Taiwanese-American family

Melody Ling – Pacy’s best friend

Lissy – Pacy’s older sister

Ki-Ki – Pacy’s younger sister

Dr. and Mrs. Lin – Pacy’s parents, who immigrated to America as adults

Setting: New Hartford, New York

Plot: It is the Chinese Year of the Dog, which is traditionally a year for finding yourself and celebrating friends and family. During this year, Pacy/Grace makes her first Asian-American friend – a new student named Melody. Through a science fair, a writing contest, a school play, Taiwanese-American Camp, and family get-togethers, Pacy/Grace discovers herself as a Chinese-American, a Taiwanese-American, and an American. This is the first of three semi-autobiographical stories about Pacy (Grace) Lin and her family.

Point of view: First Person

Theme: Discovering who you are takes time, but it is important to know who you are and to have goals for who you want to become.

Pre-Reading and Background:

- This book begins with a celebration of the Chinese New Year. For a quick summary of some Chinese New Year traditions, view the video found at <http://safeshare.tv/w/DHYuOuzCE>. Define new vocabulary:
 - prosperity (successful with money)
 - longevity (a long life)
- There are 12 animals in the Chinese Zodiac. This is one legend of how the animals were selected:
<http://www.topmarks.co.uk/ChineseNewYear/ZodiacStory.aspx>
- What nationalities are represented in your classroom? Are there students who feel a strong tie to their cultural heritage? Do any students celebrate traditions

associated with their own or other cultures (St. Patrick's Day, Cinco de Mayo, Chinese New Year, etc.)?

Discussion: [RL.3.1, 3.6; RL.4.1]

- On page 39, Pacy talks about a favorite song her family listened to in the car. You can hear this song at <http://safeshare.tv/w/PyPggwiXhG>. Do you have a favorite song or nursery rhyme from when you were young? What did you like so much about it? What do you think people might like about Pacy's favorite song? What did Pacy's dad mean when he said he wanted to put the recording of this song in a hole?
- On page 70, Grace's classmate tells her she could never play Dorothy in the Wizard of Oz because she's Chinese. What do you think about that? What would be wrong with a Chinese Dorothy? Or, why is it OK to have a Chinese Dorothy?
- Many of the Chinese New Year traditions have to do with bringing good luck. What are some other things people think are lucky or unlucky? Do you have anything you own that you think is lucky? Why do you think so?
- Pacy spends this whole book trying to decide what she'll be when she grows up. What do you think you'll be? Why? Ask your parents or teachers what they thought they'd be when they grew up. Are you surprised?

Activities: [W.3.7; W.4.7]

- Although each Chinese Zodiac animal is associated with a certain year, it corresponds to the Chinese Lunar Year, not the calendar year of January 1 through December 31. Use the search tool on this website to determine your own zodiac sign: <http://www.topmarks.co.uk/ChineseNewYear/Zodiac>
- Next, use this website to read kid-friendly descriptions of each Chinese Zodiac animal. <http://kids.nationalgeographic.com/explore/chinese-horoscopes/> Does the description of your animal fit you? Why/why not? Practice writing the Chinese character for your animal.
- Use the step-by-step model on page 2 to draw a dog. Now see if you can make a simple drawing of your zodiac animal. Break your drawing down into steps and see if a friend can copy your drawing.
- Pacy says there are no stories in her library about Chinese-American characters. Use your school library catalog to search for books about China, Chinese people, or Chinese-American characters. Check one out and read it.
- Use these free downloads to make a Chinese Zodiac Sudoku puzzle or try your hand at writing "Happy New Year" in Chinese: <http://www.topmarks.co.uk/ChineseNewYear/Printables.aspx>
- Visit Grace Lin's website, www.gracelin.com, and her publisher's website, www.gracelinbooks.com for more information about Grace and her books.

The Year of the Rat by Grace Lin

Type of literature: Realistic Fiction

Characters:

Pacy/Grace Lin—a girl from a Taiwanese-American family

Melody Ling—Pacy’s best friend

Lissy and Ki-Ki – Pacy’s sisters

Dr. and Mrs. Lin – Pacy’s parents, who immigrated to America as adults

Setting: New Hartford, New York

Plot: This is the second semi-autobiographical story about Pacy (Grace) Lin and her family. According to the Chinese zodiac, the Year of the Rat symbolizes new beginnings and changes. For Pacy, this includes an unwelcome change – her best friend, Melody, moves to California, and a new boy moves into Melody’s house. Pacy worries if other changes will come her way, and if her dream of becoming an author and illustrator will be lost. Meanwhile, she attends school, where she is one of the only Asian-American students; and she celebrates birthdays, a wedding, and holidays -- both American and Chinese -- with her family.

Point of view: First person

Theme: Change can make us uncomfortable but helps us grow.

Pre-Reading and Background:

- If a new year began today, what are some of the things you would want to accomplish in the year ahead? Pacy’s parents make the distinction between resolutions and wishes; identify which kinds you listed.
- As a girl Grace Lin found very few books that contained Asian characters. She and her friend liked the “Cheerleaders” series because it had an Asian character, even though the books weren’t particularly good. Have you ever chosen a book because one of the characters reminded you of yourself? How might this affect a person’s enjoyment of reading?
- Discuss the term “fresh off the boat” as it applies to immigrants. How did it originate? Is the term usually used in a positive or negative way?

Discussion: [RL3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4; RL4.1, 4.2, 4.3, 4.4]

- The Chinese expression “cold door” refers to a choice that leads to a difficult life. Pursuing a career in the arts, such as being an author or illustrator, is considered one of them. Do you think this is true? Give examples to support your answer.
- The story in which Pacy’s mother eats cat food actually happened to Grace Lin’s aunt. Discuss how this kind of mistake could happen, and what it would be like to shop for food when you don’t know the language. What could you have done if you had witnessed this event at your school?
- At Pacy’s birthday party the other girls told Pacy that she could only be paired romantically with Dun-Wei because he was the only Asian-American boy in their grade. How did this prejudice affect Grace? Did the girls realize they were being mean? (Interesting fact: Grace Lin has been married twice; both times to non-Asian men.)
- Chapters 20- 23 describe Cousin Clifford’s wedding. Compare Taiwanese wedding customs to those followed in America. Which customs of each culture do you like best?
- Melody and Grace remained good friends after Melody moved away. Why do you think their friendship remained so strong, even to adulthood? (Melody, whose real name is Alvina, is now Grace’s book editor.) List some ways that the girls kept in contact with each other. How did their regular communication affect their ability to remain friends so many years later?

Activities: [RL3.6; W3.4, 3.7, 3.8; W4.4, 4.7, 4.8]

- The book that Grace accidentally mailed to Melody was *Harriet the Spy* by Louise Fitzhugh. Check this book out from the library and read it for yourself.
- Grace’s family celebrated the Moon Festival in October, which she compared to Thanksgiving. Do some research to learn more about this Asian holiday. Compare and contrast it with Thanksgiving in America.
- Make a list of traditions surrounding the Chinese New Year, such as sweeping out bad luck and throwing away chipped chopsticks. Do some research to learn more about how the holiday is observed. Share your findings with other students at your school. Plan your own Chinese New Year celebration.
- Pretend that one of your school friends has moved away. Write a letter to him/her.
- Visit Grace Lin’s website, www.gracelin.com, and her publisher’s website, www.gracelinbooks.com, for more information, discussion questions, and downloadable activities.

Dumpling Days by Grace Lin

Type of literature: Realistic Fiction

Characters:

Pacy/Grace Lin – a girl from a Taiwanese-American family
Lissy – Pacy’s older sister
Ki-Ki – Pacy’s younger sister
Pacy’s mom, dad, grandparents, many aunts and uncles
Audrey Chiang – girl in Pacy’s painting class

Setting: Taiwan (Taipei & Taichung)

Plot: This is the third semi-autobiographical story about Pacy (Grace) Lin and her family. Pacy’s grandma is turning 60, which is a very big occasion in the culture of Taiwan, so Pacy’s family is traveling to Taiwan. Pacy experiences many things for the first time. Some are enjoyable (like dumplings), some are a little scary (like strangers who don’t speak English), and some are just different (like toilets!). All of them help Pacy understand herself, her family history, and her heritage.

Point of view: First Person

Theme: It is easy to resist things that are new and unfamiliar, but experiencing new things allows us to see ourselves in a whole new way.

Pre-Reading and Background:

- Use [Google Maps](#) to find Taiwan. Locate Taipei and Taichung.
- Who in your class has family that lives in another country? Who has traveled to another country? What country(ies)? What transportation did they use? Was there a special occasion or just vacation?
- On page 20, Pacy talks about the pedestrian walk light. Watch this short video clip: <http://safeshare.tv/w/RPaOYuoDEe>
- Pacy’s family visits Taiwan during Ghost Month. Read about Ghost Month here: <http://www.china-family-adventure.com/chinese-ghost-festival.html> (scroll down past Tomb Sweeping celebration)
- On page 43, Pacy learns about name chops. Read more about them: <http://mandarin.about.com/od/chineseculture/a/Chinese-Chops-Or-Seals.htm>

- Pacy has an interesting experience with a Japanese toilet in a restaurant (p. 78). Watch this video of a girl and her dad showing how Japanese toilets work: <http://safeshare.tv/w/UUCIBYrfWE>
- When Lissy has her pictures taken, the make-up artist uses eye folds (p. 94). View a picture of how the eye folds change the look of the eyelid: <http://i0.wp.com/media.tab.co.uk/blogs.dir/7/files/2013/06/be4after.png?resize=610%2C337>
- Pacy watches a man make hand-pulled noodles (p. 116). Watch how this is done: <http://safeshare.tv/w/PRVbtOzbhr>
- Read about the Chinese Lion Dance (celebrated at Pacy's grandma's birthday party): <http://www.china-family-adventure.com/lion-dance.html>
- Helpful images:
 - [Wax apples](#)
 - [Temple at Lugang](#)
 - [Elaborate costumes and makeup of Chinese opera](#)
 - [Taepei 101 building](#)

Discussion: [RL.3.1, 3.6; W.3.3; RL.4.1; W.4.3]

- On page 137, Pacy's family sees statues representing the four best pleasures in life. What do you think of these four choices? What are *your* four best pleasures? Why did you choose them?
- Pacy gets lost in the busy night market. Have you ever been lost for a few minutes? What happened? How did you get found again? Write or tell about your experience.
- When Pacy's painting class ends (p. 228), she regrets that she missed an opportunity to be friends with Eva because she was so worried about Audrey being mean to her. Can you think of a time when you felt regret for a choice you made? What was it? What did you learn from it?
- One major event in this book is the birthday party for Grandma, who is turning 60. What kinds of things do you like to do at birthday parties? Have you ever been to a birthday party for an older relative, like a grandparent? How are parties for older people the same and different from kids' birthday parties?

Activities: [RL.3.9; RL.4.7, 4.9]

- Go go to <http://www.kayak.com/flights> or another travel site and look up the price of an adult round-trip ticket from Chicago to Taipei. What is the price for an adult ticket? It is 7,447 miles from Chicago to Taipei. Using what you learned from your airline ticket search, how much does an adult pay per mile to fly to Taipei?

- Use Kayak.com again to learn how much it would cost for your whole family to travel to Taipei, Taiwan. (Put in the number of adults and the number of children.)
- On page 62, Pacy learns that her name means *precious* or *treasured thought*. What does your name mean? Ask your parents or go to <http://www.babynames.com/> and search your name.
- Pacy's relatives perform a lion dance at Grandma's birthday celebration. Watch a video of a lion dance performance during the Chinese New Year:
 - <http://safeshare.tv/w/gdhAAJicKI> (3 min, 49 sec; all on the ground)
 - <http://safeshare.tv/w/rRwcgvNVOI> (3 min, 37 sec; with pedestals)
 - <http://safeshare.tv/w/uBsYPGtnkg> (10 min, 3 sec; with pedestals)
- Pacy loves dumplings! Use this recipe (or find one of your own) to make dumplings at home: <http://allrecipes.com/recipe/chinese-pork-dumplings/>
- Read *The Year of the Dog* and/or *The Year of the Rat*. How are the books similar? How are they different? You might consider Pacy's goals in each book, the setting in each book, and the lessons Pacy learns in each book.
- Visit Grace Lin's website, www.gracelin.com, and her publisher's website, www.gracelinbooks.com for more information, discussion questions, and downloadable activities.

Where the Mountain Meets the Moon

by Grace Lin

2010 Newbery Honor Book

Type of literature: Fantasy

Characters:

Minli—lively, loving, hopeful, and adventurous girl

Ba—Minli’s father, who loves telling stories

Ma – Minli’s mother, who is worn by work and worry

Dragon – a dragon born from a painting who becomes Minli’s travel companion; his greatest wish is to fly

Setting: Ancient Asia

Plot: Minli and her parents live in a poor village at the base of Fruitless Mountain. Food and money are scarce in their home, but Ba’s storytelling is plentiful. When a magical goldfish tells Minli how to get to Never-Ending Mountain, home of the Old Man of the Moon, she decides to undertake a journey to change her family’s fortune. Along the way she befriends a dragon, a boy with a water buffalo, a king in disguise, and two children who live in a magical mountain village. When she finally reaches her destination, Minli has to make a difficult decision about who is most in need of the Old Man’s help.

Point of view: Third person limited

Theme: Spending time with those you love is more valuable than money.

Pre-Reading and Background:

- Define the following terms and items that may not be familiar to students: magistrate, imperial, subordinates, jade, lychee nuts
- Grace Lin considers this book to be a tribute to her late husband, who died from cancer before she finished writing it. She said that the book helped her “realize the important things in life.” Plan to look for evidence of this as you read the book.
- This story is inspired by Chinese folklore, including the legend of the Old Man of the Moon, who ties future friends and acquaintances together with a red thread, sometimes called the red string of fate. Read a version of this story, such as Grace Lin’s picture book, *The Red Thread: An Adoption Fairy Tale*.

Discussion: [RL.3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.7; RL.4.7]

- This story has been called an Asian *Wizard of Oz*. What are some similarities between the two stories?
- Why can't Minli's mother hear the goldfish when it talks? In what ways does she change as the story progresses? Why is she happier at the end than she was in the beginning?
- On page 220 the kite looks smaller and smaller in the sky, eventually "becoming the size of a name chop mark." Read pages 43-48 in *Dumpling Days* for an explanation of name chop marks.
- Grace Lin wanted this book to have colorful illustrations as opposed to black and white drawings which usually appear in chapter books. She said, "I delighted in those of my old fairy tale books that had full page color illustrations." Discuss some ways in which having colorful pictures improved the reading experience.
- Notice how Grace Lin wraps up the story in the last chapter, which takes place years or months after Minli returns from her journey. How many changes to the village can you explain because of the story? Examples: two dragons are flying in the sky, a Dragon Pearl has been given to a king, pictures of A-Fu and Da-Fu appear on the doors, and Ba serves a special kind of tea.
- Before Grace's husband died, he asked her to write a fantasy "to help him imagine himself elsewhere." Discuss whether or not you think the story might have met this goal. Why or why not?

Activities: [W3.4, 3.7, 3.8; W4.4, 4.7, 4.8]

- Minli is a Chinese version of the name Emily. It means "quick and clever," which is why Grace Lin chose this name for her character. Find out what your name means. Does it suit your personality? Here are two websites and a book to get you started:
 - <http://www.bestnamemeanings.com/Chinese-name-meanings.html>
 - http://names.dulya.com/origin/chinese-names_0.html
 - *Best Chinese Names—Your Guide to Auspicious Names* by Liu Xiaoyan
- In Asian culture, a goldfish in a bowl translates to gold and jade in a house. Research other symbols of wealth from around the world.
- *TeachingBooks.net* (available through Iowa AEA Online) has additional information and activity ideas for *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon*.
- Visit Grace Lin's website, www.gracelin.com, and her publisher's website, www.gracelinbooks.com, for more information, discussion questions, and downloadable activities.

Starry River of the Sky by Grace Lin

Type of literature: Fantasy/ Folklore

Characters:

Rendi – runaway boy, now working at an Inn
Peiyi – Innkeeper’s daughter
Master Chao – Innkeeper
Madame Chang – guest at the Inn
Mr. Shan – daily diner at the Inn
Widow Yan - neighbor the the Inn
MeiLan – Widow Yan’s daughter
Jiming – the Innkeeper’s son

Setting: Ancient Asia in a fictional village called the Village of Clear Sky

Plot: A young runaway, Rendi, finds himself stuck working as a chore boy at an Inn in The Village of Clear Sky. The moon has disappeared from the sky, causing oppressive heat and drought, and Rendi hears relentless, miserable moans in the night. What is happening in this strange place? Soon a mysterious guest arrives, Madame Chang, who tells tales at meal times. For every tale she tells, she insists that Rendi tells a tale of his own. Through these tales, Rendi discovers how to put things right once again, both in the Village of Clear Sky and in his own life.

Point of view: Third person limited

Theme: For all to be right in the world, one needs family, loyalty, and forgiveness.

Pre-Reading and Background:

- This story occurs during the Day of 5 Poisons. Background can be found at <http://primaltrek.com/fivepoisons.html>
- When Rendi tells *The Story of the Three Questions*, he refers to the Magistrate Tiger being invited to the Imperial Palace for the Mid-Autumn Moon Festivities. There are many stories associated with this celebration. Read the one found at <http://www.chinahighlights.com/festivals/mid-autumn-festival-story.htm> and discuss how it is similar to and different from the stories Madame Chang tells.

Discussion: [RL.3.1, 3.3, 3.4; RL.4.1, 4.3]

- Several characters in this book change over the course of the story. As the book is read, make a list of characteristics that fit Rendi, Peiyi, Madame Chang, Mr. Shan, and the others. As the story progresses, talk about how the characters change, using examples from the text that demonstrate the changes in the character, and adjust the list of characteristics accordingly.
- Look at these two similes Grace Lin chose and discuss why she chose these particular descriptions:
 - P. 176 "...the door closed with a solid bang, like the lid of a coffin."
 - P. 178 "...leaving the room as dark as the inside of a tomb."

Activities: [RL.3.2, 3.4, 3.5, 3.9; RL.4.7, 4.9]

- The folktales woven into the story are essential to understanding the whole book. Ask the students (or choose a group of students for each tale) to illustrate the main points of each tale as the book is read. Post these visuals on the wall so students can refer to them as the book is read and discuss how the stories fit together.
- Visit your school or public library and check out some Chinese folktales. Read them, and determine the messages the stories have for the reader (the moral or theme). See if you can find any tales that are similar to the stories Grace Lin used in this book.
- Choose a favorite folktale (Chinese or other) and practice telling it as a storyteller, like Madame Chang and Rendi did in this book. You may want to make stick puppets or other props to help you tell the story. Tell your story to a group of your classmates. Or write your own tale and tell it aloud.
- Grace Lin uses many similes in her writing. In this book, many of the similes refer to items important to the Chinese culture. Write your own similes that refer to things that are common or important in your own lives. Examples:
 - P. 8 "Rendi's muscles were as soft as (uncooked tofu)"
 - P. 8 "...and his face as friendly as (an angry tiger)"
 - P. 9 "Rendi wrinkled his nose, looking at her as if she were (a worm in a half-eaten peach)"
 - P. 71 "...the sun sat right on the horizon like (a balancing egg yolk)"
- Read *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* by Grace Lin. Look for connections between it and *Starry River to the Sky*, noting similarities in the folklore used within the two books. See if you can also determine how the characters in the two books are related.
- Visit Grace Lin's website, www.gracelin.com, and her publisher's website, www.gracelinbooks.com, for more information, discussions questions, and downloadable activities.