

An Educator's Guide

The activities in this guide align with **Common Core State Standards** and fit into the curriculum for **Grades 7 and up**



San Francisco, 1906: Fifteen-year-old Mercy Wong is determined to break from the poverty in Chinatown, and an education at St. Clare's School for Girls is her best hope. Although St. Clare's is off-limits to all but the wealthiest white girls, Mercy gains admittance through a mix of cunning and a little bribery, only to discover that getting in was the easiest part. Not to be undone by a bunch of spoiled heiresses, Mercy stands strong—until disaster strikes.

On April 18, an historic earthquake rocks San Francisco, destroying Mercy's home and school. With martial law in effect, she is forced to wait with her classmates for their families in a temporary park encampment. Mercy can't sit by while they wait for the Army to bring help. Fires might rage, and the city may be in shambles, yet Mercy still has the 'bossy' cheeks that mark her as someone who gets things done. But what can one teenaged girl do to heal so many suffering in her broken city?

In this new novel set against a unique historical backdrop, Mercy Wong, a strong-willed and spirited Chinese-American girl leads a cast of diverse characters in this extraordinary tale of survival.

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400 pages

Ages 12 and up

Grades 7 and up



About the Author:



Stacey Lee is a fourth generation Californian with roots in San Francisco Chinatown. Born in Southern California, she graduated from UCLA then got her law degree at UC Davis King Hall. She has lots of experience with earthquakes, having skinned her knees more times than she wants to remember diving under tables. One day she hopes to own a hypoallergenic horse and live by the sea.

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About this Educator's Guide:

Alice Chen is an English Language Arts teacher, technology coach, speaker, and consultant. She is also a Google for Education Certified Innovator, Lead PBS Digital Innovator, and PBS SoCal American Graduate Champion. You can follow her on Twitter [@wondertechedu](https://twitter.com/wondertechedu), circle her on [Google+](https://plus.google.com/+wondertechedu), or read her blog at wondertechedu.blogspot.com.

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Praise for *Outrun the Moon*

- ★ "Full of beautiful turns of phrase, lessons in Chinese customs and superstitions, and a refreshing protagonist representing intersectional diversity, this is a must-read for followers of historical fiction. Propelled by a feisty and fabulous heroine, Lee's sophomore novel is powerful, evocative, and thought-provoking."

— *Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

Discussion Guide

1. The book starts off with the main character literally flying off into the sky. What could this symbolize about Mercy Wong's personality?
2. What are some prejudices and preconceived notions that Mercy and people of Chinese descent face in this story?
3. Due to artful negotiation skills, Mercy manages to enroll herself as a student at St. Claire's School for Girls. Discuss a time in your life in which you successfully changed someone's mind.
4. Which characters accept Mercy and become her friends? Which characters dislike Mercy and become her rivals?
5. What are some similarities and differences between Mercy and Elodie's personalities?
6. What aspects of Mercy's character are revealed after the San Francisco earthquake devastates the city? Provide specific examples of her actions and how they support your claim.
7. In the days immediately following the earthquake, chaos reigns in the city. Examine Mercy's actions and compare them to those of the other characters in the story.
8. Many small incidents in the story foreshadow future events. What are they and where do they appear in the book?
9. Study the clues in the story that laid the foundation for romance between Mercy and Tom.
10. Are Mercy and Tom well-matched for each other? Why or why not?
11. As the story progresses, Mercy is slowly accepted by the other students. Trace the events that lead up to this acceptance.
12. Why is the novel called *Outrun the Moon*? Where in the story does this phrase appear? Is this significant?

Suggested Activities*

1. Before starting the novel, introduce background information on Chinese Americans by using these [PBS LearningMedia resources](#).
2. Watch these clips ([San Francisco Earthquake of 1906](#) and [San Francisco: Chapter 5](#)) from the Genealogy Roadshow. Have students analyze and compare the information in the videos to the events in the novel.
3. Create a timeline of important events from this novel. For each event on the timeline, have students write a justification for their choices.
4. Show students this TED Talk "[Hit by a natural disaster? The first 6 things to do for your community's relief effort](#)" and have them read the post that follows. In teams, have students create a "Disaster Relief Pamphlet" for their community. Include real contact information from local agencies and other helpful tips in the pamphlet that could be used in an actual emergency. Also include relevant information from the TED Talk blog that could be incorporated into the pamphlet.

* Please note that some web-based tools listed in this guide may be discontinued by the developers themselves in the future.

- PBS LearningMedia resources: <http://ca.pbslearningmedia.org/shared/1175216/4453833/>
- San Francisco Earthquake of 1906: <http://ca.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/97deb3b5-5289-47d9-8af9-c41157027adb/san-francisco-earthquake-of-1906/>
- San Francisco: Chapter 5: <http://ca.pbslearningmedia.org/resource/38bddfd9-ab7c-4cad-a0bb-51fd5410c086/genealogy-roadshow-san-francisco-part-5/>
- TED Talk "Hit by a natural disaster? The first 6 things to do for your community's relief effort": <http://blog.ted.com/hit-by-a-natural-disaster-the-first-6-things-to-do-for-your-communitys-relief-effort/>

Common Core State Standards

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1, 8.1, 9.1, 10.1, 11.1, 12.1

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2, 8.2, 9.2, 10.2, 11.2, 12.2

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3, 8.3, 9.3, 10.3, 11.3, 12.3

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.9

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.7, 8.7, 9.7, 10.7, 11.7, 12.7

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.9, 8.9, 10.9, 11.9, 12.9

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9.9-10.9

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1, 8.1, 9.1, 10.1, 11.1, 12.1

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.A, 8.1.A, 9.1.A, 10.1.A, 11.1.A, 12.1A

Standards with Description

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.1](#)

Cite several pieces of textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.2](#)

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.3](#)

Analyze how particular elements of a story or drama interact (e.g., how setting shapes the characters or plot).

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.9](#)

Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.1](#)

Cite the textual evidence that most strongly supports an analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.2](#)

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to the characters, setting, and plot; provide an objective summary of the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.3](#)

Analyze how particular lines of dialogue or incidents in a story or drama propel the action, reveal aspects of a character, or provoke a decision.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.1](#)

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.2](#)

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze in detail its development over the course of the text, including how it emerges and is shaped and refined by specific details; provide an objective summary of the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.3](#)

Analyze how complex characters (e.g., those with multiple or conflicting motivations) develop over the course of a text, interact with other characters, and advance the plot or develop the theme.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.1](#)

Cite strong and thorough textual evidence to support analysis of what the text says explicitly as well as inferences drawn from the text, including determining where the text leaves matters uncertain.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.2](#)

Determine two or more themes or central ideas of a text and analyze their development over the course of the text, including how they interact and build on one another to produce a complex account; provide an objective summary of the text.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.3](#)

Analyze the impact of the author's choices regarding how to develop and relate elements of a story or drama (e.g., where a story is set, how the action is ordered, how the characters are introduced and developed).

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.7](#)

Conduct short research projects to answer a question, drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions for further research and investigation.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.9](#)

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.7](#)

Conduct short research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question), drawing on several sources and generating additional related, focused questions that allow for multiple avenues of exploration.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.9](#)

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.7](#)

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.9-10.9](#)

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.7](#)

Conduct short as well as more sustained research projects to answer a question (including a self-generated question) or solve a problem; narrow or broaden the inquiry when appropriate; synthesize multiple sources on the subject, demonstrating understanding of the subject under investigation.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.11-12.9](#)

Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1-12.1](#)

Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.7.1.A-12.1A](#)

Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.