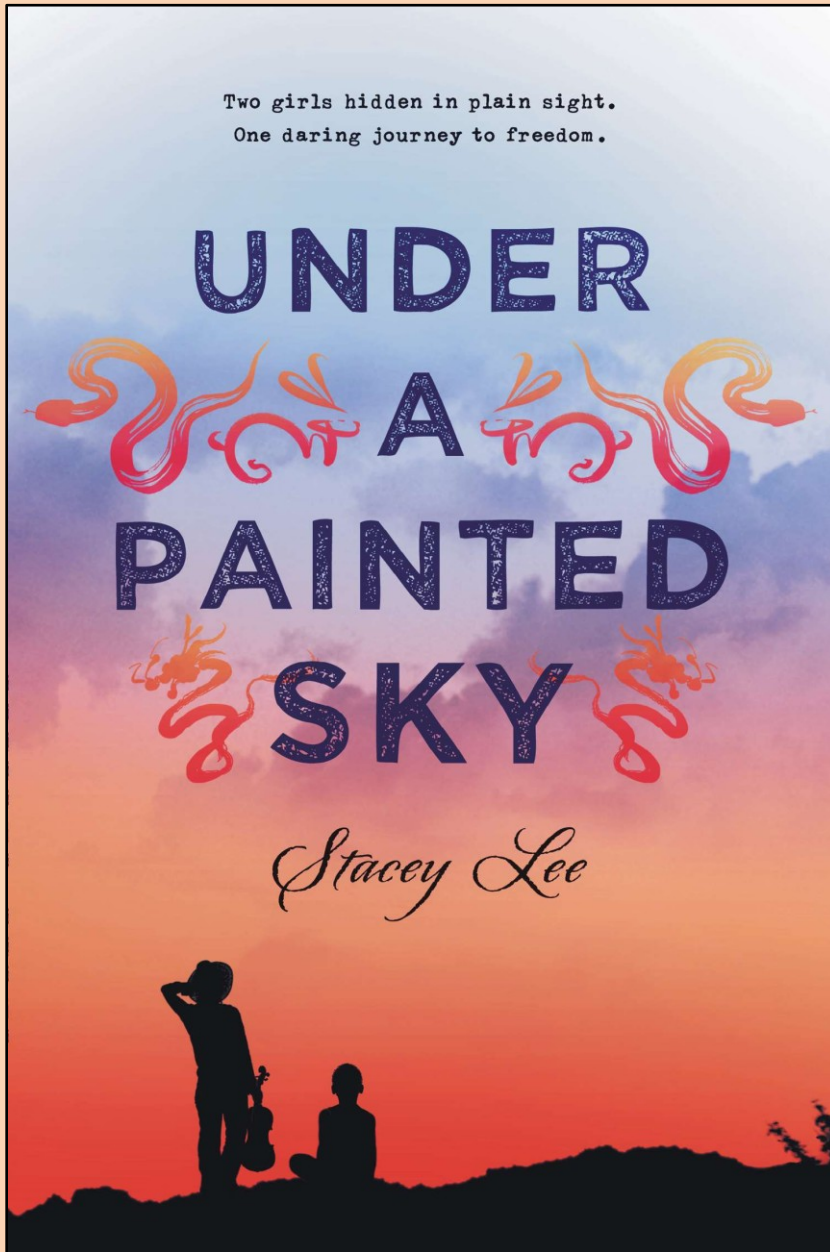


# An Educator's Guide

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



Missouri, 1849: Samantha dreams of moving back to New York to be a professional musician—not an easy thing if you’re a girl, and harder still if you’re Chinese. But a tragic accident dashes any hopes of fulfilling her dream, and instead, leaves her fearing for her life. With the help of a runaway slave named Annamae, Samantha flees town for the unknown frontier. But life on the Oregon Trail is unsafe for two girls, so they disguise themselves as Sammy and Andy, two boys headed for the California gold rush.

Sammy and Andy forge a powerful bond as they each search for a link to their past, and struggle to avoid any unwanted attention. But when they cross paths with a band of cowboys, the light-hearted troupe turn out to be unexpected allies. With the law closing in on them and new setbacks coming each day, the girls quickly learn that there are not many places to hide on the open trail.

This debut is an exciting adventure and heart-wrenching survival tale. But above all else, it’s a story about perseverance and trust that will restore your faith in the power of friendship.

ISBN: 978-0-399-16803-1

384 pages

Ages 12 and up

Grades 7 and up



## About the Author:



Stacey Lee is a fourth generation Chinese-American whose people came to California during the heydays of the cowboys. She believes she still has a bit of cowboy dust in her soul. A native of southern California, she graduated from UCLA then got her law degree at UC Davis King Hall. After practicing law in the Silicon Valley for several years, she finally took up the pen because she wanted the perks of being able to nap during the day, and it was easier than moving to Spain. She plays classical piano, raises children, and writes YA fiction.

Other books by Stacey:



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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/), or read her blog at [wondertechedu.blogspot.com](http://wondertechedu.blogspot.com).

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### Praise for *Under a Painted Sky*

★ "Well-crafted and suspenseful, with more flow than ebb to the tension that stretches like taut wires across plotlines, Lee's tale ingeniously incorporates Chinese philosophy and healing, music, art and religion, as well as issues of race and discrimination (including abolitionist views and examples of cruel slave treatment)... Emotionally resonant and not without humor, this impressive debut about survival and connection, resourcefulness and perseverance will keep readers on the very edges of their seats."

– *Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

"High drama, tension, romantic longings, and touches of humor will entice historical fiction fans, and will be a perfect tie-in to social studies curriculum."

– *School Library Journal*

## Discussion Guide

1. Samantha and Annamae disguise themselves as boys in order to escape. Was this a good choice that they made? Why or why not?
2. Compare the different characters in the novel. How are they similar and how are they different? Focus your discussion on these pairings: Samantha and her father, Samantha and Annamae, Samantha and West, and Anname and Peety.
3. Explain how Lady Tin-Yin serves as more of a character than a favorite instrument in the story.
4. Discuss the significance of losing Lady Tin-Yin in the river.
5. Why is the novel called *Under a Painted Sky*? Where in the story does this phrase appear? Is this significant?
6. References to the character's Chinese Zodiac signs appear throughout the novel. What is each character's sign and are the character traits associated with each zodiac animal fitting for each of the characters?
7. Though Mr. Trask and the Broken Hand Gang only appear briefly in the story, they are frequently referenced throughout the novel. Why do you think this is the case? Are these minor characters significant to the plot of the story? Why or why not? What purpose do they serve?
8. Though the book is mostly historically accurate, the author decided to change the location of Yellowstone and she invented Harp Falls. Why do you think the writer did this? What purpose does it serve?
9. Why did Isaac pull the MacMartin brothers with him down the waterfall? Consider all the events leading up to this one. What reasons drove Isaac to make this decision?
10. Discuss how Samantha's character and abilities change in the book. Compare what she was like in the beginning of the novel to the person she became at the end of the novel.
11. Samantha has many flashbacks. What purpose do these flashbacks serve?
12. Is there symbolism behind some of the characters' names?
13. Examine how Samantha's friendship with Annamae grow and deepen through the course of the novel.
14. The bonds of family are featured prominently in this book even though only a few of them are related to each other. Which characters have formed a family? Also, analyze the relationships of each "family" in the story.
15. Trace the clues in the story that laid the foundation for romance between Samantha and West.
16. Water is frequently mentioned throughout the novel. Explain what water symbolizes in this book and what purpose it serves.
17. Explain how the setting sometimes functions as an antagonist in this story for Samantha.

## Suggested Activities\*

1. Before starting the novel, introduce background information on the Gold Rush and the Oregon Trail.
  - a. The Sacramento Bee's "California Gold Rush!" ([guide.sacbee.com/153](http://guide.sacbee.com/153)) provides a brief overview of this era on their webpage [Chapter 1: Gold! An Era Remembered](#). After browsing this resource, have students make a list of all the different routes to California, by land and sea. Next, have them discuss all the dangers and challenges these travelers had to encounter.
  - b. Learn about the Oregon Trail by visiting the Bureau of Land Management website ([www.blm.gov](http://www.blm.gov)). Their webpage [Basic Facts About the Oregon Trail](#) is a good place to start. This resource also has a lesson called "[Pack Your Wagon](#)" which gives students the opportunity to plan and discuss the challenges of undertaking this journey to the West.
2. After reading Chapter Four, learn more about the Underground Railroad by visiting [PBSLearningMedia.org](http://PBSLearningMedia.org) or [Education.NationalGeographic.com](http://Education.NationalGeographic.com) and enter "underground railroad" in the search bar.
3. Have students conduct their own research on the Gold Rush, the Oregon Trail, or Underground Railroad. Teach students how to evaluate the resources found on the Internet by directing them to Jim Capoun's "Five Criteria for Evaluating Web Pages." This guide is published on Cornell University Library's website at <http://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/webcrit.html>.

Using Google Advanced Search ([http://www.google.com/advanced\\_search](http://www.google.com/advanced_search)), show students how they can narrow their research within specific domains like ".gov" and ".edu."

After conducting their research, have students create poster boards showcasing what they've learned.

Alternate Digital Activity: Create a multimedia poster boards with web tools like Thinglink ([thinglink.com](http://thinglink.com)), Popplet ([popplet.com](http://popplet.com)), Padlet ([padlet.com](http://padlet.com)), or Glogster ([glogster.com](http://glogster.com)).

4. Create a Chinese Zodiac card for each of the five characters: Samantha, Annamae, West, Cay, and Peety. On the front of each card, draw the zodiac animal and list three personality traits that are often attributed to this animal. On the back of the card, find evidence from the story that supports each personality trait listed on the front of the card. Quote directly from the novel.

Alternate Digital Activity: Create the zodiac cards on Google Slides. Use Google Advanced Image Search to find images and have students filter their results by choosing “Free to use or share.” Teach students the difference between public domain, Creative Commons licensing, and copyrighted images. Include a lesson on proper credit attribution. To learn more on this topic, visit [creativecommons.org](http://creativecommons.org).

5. Trace Samantha and Annamae’s journey to the West on a U.S. map. Where were some of the places they stopped or passed through? Were they all historically accurate? If not, why would the author make the change? For each location, examine the setting by quoting from the story. Then compare it to its modern equivalent. Students can use sticky notes to add their notes to the map.

Alternate Digital Activity: Trace Samantha and Annamae’s journey to the West.

- Using Google My Maps, students can drop markers on the map to indicate each location the characters visited. Students can include short description or images to each place they pin. This idea is inspired by Jerome Burg’s Google Lit Trips.
- Using [Google Drawings](#), [Thinglink](#), or [VoiceThread](#), students can import a “free to reuse” or public domain image of the U.S. map, and identify Samantha and Annamae’s journey by adding links to each location. Include various forms of media annotations (i.e. text, additional images, audio, and video.)

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

### 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.7.4, 8.4, 9.4, 10.4, 11.4, 12.4

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9.5, 10.5, 11.5, 12.5

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.6, 8.6

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.7.8, 8.8, 9.8, 10.8, 11.8, 12.8

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

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.7.4](#)

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.

### [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.6](#)

Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.

### [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.8.4](#)

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.

### [CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.8.6](#)

Analyze how differences in the points of view of the characters and the audience or reader (e.g., created through the use of dramatic irony) create such effects as suspense or humor.

### [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.9-10.4](#)

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the cumulative impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone (e.g., how the language evokes a sense of time and place; how it sets a formal or informal tone).

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.9-10.5](#)

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure a text, order events within it (e.g., parallel plots), and manipulate time (e.g., pacing, flashbacks) create such effects as mystery, tension, or surprise.

[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.RL.11-12.4](#)

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in the text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including words with multiple meanings or language that is particularly fresh, engaging, or beautiful.

[CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.11-12.5](#)

Analyze how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comedic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.

[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.7.8](#)

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

[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.8.8](#)

Gather relevant information from multiple print and digital sources, using search terms effectively; assess the credibility and accuracy of each source; and quote or paraphrase the data and conclusions of others while avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

[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.9-10.8](#)

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the usefulness of each source in answering the research question; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and following a standard format for citation.

[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.11-12.8](#)

Gather relevant information from multiple authoritative print and digital sources, using advanced searches effectively; assess the strengths and limitations of each source in terms of the task, purpose, and audience; integrate information into the text selectively to maintain the flow of ideas, avoiding plagiarism and overreliance on any one source and following a standard format for citation.

[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.