

Alliance Theatre

institute

The Chinese Lady

STUDY GUIDE

Grades 7–12

Created as part of the Alliance Theatre's **Dramaturgy by Students program**

By: Courtney Moors-Hornick, Teaching Artist

with: Mr. Cole Jones-Ford's Drama 1 class at Miller Grove High School

September 18 – October 13, 2024

Content advisory: depicts drinking alcohol and smoking a cigarette



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Note: This study guide is thorough and abundant in content. Educators are encouraged to access and utilize the sections (outlined below) that are most relevant to the instructional needs and goals of each unique classroom.

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GEORGIA STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

Suggested Grade Level: Grades 7-12

Content advisory: depicts drinking alcohol, smoking a cigarette, and addresses issues related to racism and violence.

English Language Arts

- **ELAGSE7RL2:** Determine a theme and/or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary of the text
- **ELAGSE7RL6:** Analyze how an author develops and contrasts the points of view of different characters or narrators in a text.
- **ELAGSE8RL3:** 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.
- **ELAGSE9-10RL3:** 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
- **ELAGSE9-10RL4:** 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.)
- **ELAGSE11-12RL3:** 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).
- **ELAGSE11-12RL5:** 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.

Social Studies

- **SS7G12:** Analyze the diverse cultural characteristics of the people who live in Southern and Eastern Asia.
- **SSUSH7:** Investigate political, economic, and social developments during the Age of Jackson.
- **SSSocC2:** Evaluate how cultures evolve over time.
- **SSWH16:** Analyze the rise of nationalism and worldwide imperialism.
- **SSWH16.c:** Examine anti-imperial resistance, include: Opium Wars, Boxer Rebellion, and the Indian Revolt of 1857.
- **SSUSH12:** Evaluate how westward expansion impacted the Plains Indians and fulfilled Manifest Destiny.
- **SSUSH12.a:** Examine the construction of the transcontinental railroad including the use of immigrant labor.
- **SSUSH11:** Examine connections between the rise of big business, the growth of labor unions, and technological innovations.
- **SSUSH11.d:** Describe Ellis and Angel Islands, the change in immigrants' origins and their influence on the economy, politics, and culture of the United States.

GEORGIA STANDARDS OF EXCELLENCE

World Languages: Chinese I

- **MLI.CU:** Cultural Perspectives, Practices, and Products (CU)
- **MLI.CU1:** The students develop an awareness of perspectives, practices, and products of the cultures where the target language is spoken.
- **MLI.CU1A:** Demonstrate knowledge of contributions of target culture(s) to civilization.
- **MLI.CU1B:** Identify commonly held viewpoints of the cultures, such as those relating to time, education, and meals.
- **MLI.CU1C:** Describe customs and traditions of the cultures such as greetings, celebrations and courtesies.

Theater

- **TA7.CN.2:** Examine the role of theatre in a societal, cultural, and historical context.
 - b. Identify and analyze cultural influences on theatre.
 - c. Utilize multi-disciplinary research skills to obtain cultural and historical information to justify artistic choices (e.g. costuming, make-up, setting of a time period in relation to the play).
- **TA8.CN.2:** Examine the role of theatre in a societal, cultural, and historical context.
 - d. Discuss theatre's role in reflecting the culture of a society.
- **TAHSA.RE.1:** Engage actively and appropriately as an audience member.
 - a. Examine and reflect on the relationship between actor and live audience in historical and contemporary performances.
- **TAHSA.RE.2:** Critique various aspects of theatre and other media using appropriate supporting evidence.
 - a. Develop and utilize meaningful, structured criteria for assessing the work of an actor.

SYNOPSIS AND PLAYWRIGHT STUDY

Synopsis

Inspired by the true story of Afong Moy, *The Chinese Lady* is a darkly poetic, yet whimsical portrait of our collective past seen through the eyes of a young Chinese woman. Afong is only 14 years old when she's brought to the United States in 1834 and displayed as "The Chinese Lady" – the first to step foot on U.S. soil. Decade after decade, she performs as a living exhibit, showing curious white visitors how she eats and what she wears as merchants sell tea and Chinoiserie in the lobby. As time wears on, the lines between her performance and her identity begin to blur. Described as "moving and often sharply funny" (*The New York Times*), *The Chinese Lady* examines the ongoing struggle for empathy and understanding across cultural divides.

Playwright Study



Lloyd Suh is the author of plays including *The Far Country* (2023 Pulitzer Prize finalist), *The Heart Sellers*, *American Hwangap*, *Franklinland*, and *Bina's Six Apples*, which premiered at Alliance Theater in 2022 (co-production with Children's Theater Company). His work has been produced across the country, including *The Public*, Atlantic Theatre Company, Huntington, Berkeley Rep, and with Ma-Yi Theatre Company and Ensemble Studio Theatre. This summer, he collaborated with Atlanta-based artist and illustrator Nicole Kang Ahn on *Bina's Harvest*, a book for young readers as part of the Mayor's Summer Reading Club. Awards include the Steinberg Playwright


Award, the Horton Foote Prize, the Herb Alpert Award in the Arts, and the Guggenheim Fellowship. He was elected in 2016 to the Dramatists Guild Council, and serves as a Professor of the Practice at Princeton University.

Source: <https://www.alliancetheatre.org/production/2024-25/the-chinese-lady>

VOCABULARY

A list of advanced vocabulary terms used throughout the script is provided below, in order of appearance. Compiled by: Khalil S., Jalil K., Jalon K.

WORD (Part of Speech)	DEFINITION	IN CONTEXT
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Word	Used in Context	Definition
<i>Chinoiserie</i> (noun)	<i>Inside the box, it is ornate, decorated with various types of Chinoiserie.</i> (page 1)	A style of ornamentation from 18th century Europe and recognized by its intricate patterns and Chinese motifs
<i>lacquered</i> (verb)	<i>She wears a traditional Chinese gown, and jade or lacquered jewelry in her hair.</i> (page 1)	A shiny coating used to provide protection and wear resistance commonly used on wood or metal
<i>irrelevant</i> (adjective)	"Atung is irrelevant ." (page 1)	Not important or relevant
<i>manservant</i> (noun)	"Atung has been in service to Misters Nathaniel and Frederick Carnes as a manservant and translator of Chinese to English and back again" (page 1)	A male servant
<i>fluency</i> (noun)	"You do not need to know who I am or where I come from, or how it came to be that I speak both languages with such practical and occasionally poetic fluency ." (page 2)	Being able to speak a language easily
<i>Orient</i> (noun)	"The Chinese Lady: the first woman from the Orient ever to set foot in America." (page 2)	The countries of Asia, especially East Asia 
	<p>Note: the words "Orient" and "Oriental" are used throughout the play, but are considered outdated and offensive today, as they are Eurocentric terms that connote the exoticization and fear of people from Asia.</p> <p>Learn more: https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/after-50-years-asian-american-advocates-say-term-more-essential-n875601</p>	

VOCABULARY

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WORD (Part of Speech)	DEFINITION	IN CONTEXT
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<i>exotic</i> (adjective)	"But I have been told to highlight certain features that I possess, as they may seem exotic and foreign and unusual to you." (page 2)	Of foreign origin or character
<i>foreign</i> (adjective)	"But I have been told to highlight certain features that I possess, as they may seem exotic and foreign and unusual to you." (page 2)	Of or relating to contact or dealings with other countries
<i>refinement</i> (noun)	"In many parts of China, it is considered a sign of elevated social status and cultural refinement for women and young girls to have tiny feet." (page 3)	Fineness or elegance of feeling, taste, manners, language, etc.
<i>herbs</i> (noun)	"When I was four years old, my feet were placed into a hot mixture of herbs and animal blood to soften the skin and muscles." (page 3)	A plant valued for its medicinal properties (flavor, scent, or the like.)
<i>revolution</i> (noun)	"In one revolution around the Room, to illustrate and demonstrate the form and function of my feet." (page 3)	Moving in a circular or curving course, as about a central point
<i>ritualistic</i> (adjective)	"Atung will bring to me plates of steamed shrimp and Chinese vegetables, along with a pot of tea which I will pour and drink in a ritualistic way so as to demonstrate its importance in my culture." (page 3)	Of, relating to, or suggestive of ritualism
<i>chopsticks</i> (noun)	"I will eat these foods with chopsticks ." (page 4)	A pair of slender sticks (as of wood or plastic) held between the thumb and fingers and used to lift food to the mouth
<i>novel</i> (adjective)	"It is a lovely home with details quite peculiar and novel to my experience." (page 4)	New and unusual
<i>unaccustomed</i> (adjective)	"I am unaccustomed to such foods." (page 4)	Not habituated; not used to or familiar with
<i>inauthenticity</i> (noun)	"These accents are comforting despite their inauthenticity , but I am even more appreciative and fascinated by the differences." (page 4)	Not authentic

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WORD (Part of Speech)	DEFINITION	IN CONTEXT
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<i>phenomenon</i> (noun)	"A curious phenomenon ." (page 4)	A remarkable or exceptional event or thing
<i>ambivalent</i> (adjective)	"I am ambivalent about the fork." (page 4)	Having mixed feelings about someone or something
<i>functionality</i> (noun)	"I have seen it in <u>use</u> and I understand its functionality ." (page 4)	The quality of being functional
<i>contaminated</i> (adjective)	"The story goes that over 4,000 years ago, the Chinese Emperor Shennong would boil his water before he drank it so that he could be sure it was not contaminated ." (page 5)	Being impure or polluted
<i>steeped</i> (verb)	"One day, while traveling outdoors, a leaf from a wild bush fell into the water and steeped itself in the cup." (page 5)	To soak in a liquid at a temperature under the boiling point (as for softening, bleaching, or extracting an essence)
<i>migrate</i> (verb)	"We migrate , from the trees, through the jungle, across oceans and rivers, we are constantly searching." (page 5)	To go from one country, region, or place to another.
<i>impulse</i> (noun)	"It is the same impulse that brought you here, to this room, to me." (page 5)	The influence of a particular feeling, mental state, etc.
<i>deemed</i> (verb)	"The price of admission to Peale's Museum has increased, and I am grateful that you have deemed me worthy of such an honorable price as 50 cents adults, 25 cents children." (page 6)	To form or have an opinion; judge; think
<i>justify</i> (verb)	"I hope that I can entertain and educate you well enough to justify such a luxurious amount." (page 6)	To defend or uphold as warranted or well-grounded
<i>luxurious</i> (adjective)	"I hope that I can entertain and educate you well enough to justify such a luxurious amount." (page 6)	Wanting or requiring what is choice, expensive
<i>Magnitude</i> (noun)	"I have only recently come to understand the magnitude of my presence here." (page 6)	The greatness of size or amount

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WORD (Part of Speech)	DEFINITION	IN CONTEXT
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<i>pursuit</i> (noun)	"So far in the history of America, there have been a very small number of Chinese men, who have migrated in pursuit of work in merchant or mining trades." (page 6)	An effort to secure or attain; quest:
<i>merchant</i> (noun)	"So far in the history of America, there have been a very small number of Chinese men, who have migrated in pursuit of work in merchant or mining trades." (page 6)	A person who buys and sells commodities for profit
<i>strenuous</i> (adjective)	"Some have been granted less strenuous labor." (page 6)	Demanding or requiring vigorous exertion; laborious
<i>nobility</i> (noun)	"I am the first Chinese from nobility , the first educated Chinese, the first with bound feet, the first the first the first." (page 6)	The quality or state of being noble in character, quality, or rank
<i>impart</i> (verb)	"Perhaps I can travel to various cities there, and impart to the villagers all the lessons I have learned in America." (page 7)	To give, bestow, or communicate
<i>edification</i> (noun)	"Perhaps I can tour her throughout the country and let the Chinese look at her and study her, put her on display for the education and edification of the Chinese curiosity!" (page 7)	The state of being edified (instructed or improved, educated)
<i>eternal</i> (adjective)	"The rain is eternal ." (page 8)	Without beginning or end; lasting forever; always existing
<i>convey</i> (verb)	"When a white person asks me a complex question, such as "Are you excited to tour the country?", I can say only "Yes" or "Oh yes sir very much", and while this might convey some enthusiasm, it cannot convey the poetry of it." (page 9)	To impart or communicate by statement, suggestion, gesture, or appearance
<i>barbaric</i> (adjective)	"Most Americans consider it barbaric ." (page 10)	Without civilizing influences; uncivilized; primitive

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WORD	DEFINITION	IN CONTEXT
(Part of Speech)		

<i>entrenched</i> (adjective)	“I have noticed there are traditions in the American identity that are similarly entrenched , despite some controversy about them among the populace.” (page 10)	Firmly or solidly established; placed in a position of strength
<i>populace</i> (noun)	“I have noticed there are traditions in the American identity that are similarly entrenched, despite some controversy about them among the populace .” (page 10)	The common people of a community, nation, etc., as distinguished from the higher classes.
<i>corsets</i> (noun)	“I have noticed there are traditions in the American identity that are similarly entrenched, despite some controversy about them among the populace. Such as corsets .” (page 10)	A close-fitting undergarment, stiffened with whalebone or similar material and often capable of being tightened by lacing, enclosing the trunk
<i>dismantling</i> (verb)	“But before we can move on to a new set of traditions, we must live in a slow dismantling of the old ways.” (page 10)	To break up or disassemble
<i>variations</i> (noun)	“Every evening for two and a half years, I have eaten the same dinner with slight variations .” (page 10)	Alteration or change
<i>consumption</i> (noun)	“I wonder what other instruments might exist for the consumption of food around the world.” (page 11)	The act of consuming (to eat)
<i>romanticize</i> (verb)	“Because while I very much romanticize the differences between people and cultures, I am even more appreciative and fascinated by the similarities.” (page 11)	To hold romantic notions, ideas
<i>appropriate</i> (verb)	“That one culture can be so moved by another that it simply cannot resist the urge to appropriate it for themselves?” (page 11)	To take or make use of without authority or right
<i>renowned</i> (adjective)	“You probably cannot even tell, but this room has been dismantled and carried by carriage all across the United States, reassembled in museums and fairgrounds in your most renowned cities.” (page 15)	Celebrated; famous

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WORD (Part of Speech)	DEFINITION	IN CONTEXT
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<i>relevance</i> (noun)	"For what kind of a story would it be, if the bell lacked such relevance ?" (page 15)	The condition of being relevant, or connected with the matter at hand
<i>incomprehensible</i> (adjective)	"You have dangerous and incomprehensible ideas." (page 17)	Impossible to understand or comprehend; unintelligible
<i>pneumonia</i> (noun)	"It resulted in pneumonia ." (page 18)	Inflammation of the lungs with congestion
<i>suffice</i> (verb)	"For in order to illustrate the extraordinary conversation I had with Emperor Jackson, a simple description will not suffice ; Atung as you were there, let us... recreate the dialogue together!" (page 18)	To be enough
<i>tangible</i> (adjective)	"Like cracks in a bell or a story of when it first rang, we can only simulate the past, not in pursuit of the literal truth but some other less tangible truth about ourselves and the nature of truth itself." (page 19)	Definite; not vague
<i>benevolent</i> (adjective)	"It has been my great honor to be a guest in your most powerful and benevolent nation, and it is my hope that my presence here can lead to greater understanding between the peoples of China and America." (page 21)	To be good
<i>winsomely</i> (adjective)	"I do like Chinese <u>yes</u> , in fact I've often found Oriental people to be quite winsomely exotic." (page 21)	Sweetly or innocently charming
<i>boundless</i> (adjective)	"And I admire the American people for their boundless curiosity and fierce individuality." (page 21)	Having no limit
<i>adornments</i> (noun)	"I feel my fame has provided me a tremendous opportunity to share more about who we are; not simply on the surface levels of clothing and adornments , but a deeper, more lasting intimacy." (page 21)	Something that adds attractiveness, like an accessory

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WORD (Part of Speech)	DEFINITION	IN CONTEXT
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<i>proximity</i> (noun)	“Through such proximity and visibility, we might be able to share the very best parts of Chinese culture and American culture with one other, in pursuit of greater empathy and commonality.” (page 22)	Being near or close by
<i>empathy</i> (noun)	“Through such proximity and visibility, we might be able to share the very best parts of Chinese culture and American culture with one other, in pursuit of greater empathy and commonality.” (page 22)	The psychological identification with or vicarious experiencing of the emotions, thoughts, or attitudes of another
<i>commonality</i> (noun)	“Through such proximity and visibility, we might be able to share the very best parts of Chinese culture and American culture with one other, in pursuit of greater empathy and commonality .” (page 22)	A sharing of features or characteristics in common; possession or manifestation of common attributes
<i>lucrative</i> (adjective)	“The trade routes are lucrative and so it behooves us, you understand.” (page 23)	Profitable; moneymaking; remunerative
<i>behooves</i> (verb)	“The trade routes are lucrative and so it behooves us, you understand.” (page 23)	To be necessary, proper, or advantageous for
<i>diversion</i> (noun)	“This was a marvelous diversion .” (page 23)	The act of diverting or turning aside, as from a course or purpose
<i>fruitful</i> (adjective)	“You, Afong Moy, are a special and most outstanding person, and your work in this country is an important step in the fruitful exchange of cultures and in the promotion of world peace.” (page 24)	Producing good results; beneficial; profitable
<i>prose</i> (noun)	“I only... you see, I only hesitated because he spoke with such beautiful prose , a type of elevated lyricism that I could not so promptly translate.” (page 24)	The ordinary form of spoken or written language, without metrical structure, as distinguished from poetry or verse
<i>lyricism</i> (noun)	“I only... you see, I only hesitated because he spoke with such beautiful prose, a type of elevated lyricism that I could not so promptly translate.” (page 24)	The quality or state of being lyric (musical in nature)
<i>opium</i> (noun)	“Britain conquered what is now India, giving them access to fields and fields and fields of opium .” (page 25)	An addictive narcotic commonly used in medicine

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WORD (Part of Speech)	DEFINITION	IN CONTEXT
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<i>weaponized</i> (verb)	“The British eventually weaponized this opium, distributing it throughout China, which ravaged the countryside.” (page 25)	To be used as a weapon
<i>bore</i> (verb)	“I dream of my childhood, of sky and streams of memory, of earth that bore me and mother and father that look like me.” (page 29)	To form, make, or construct
<i>parasols</i> (noun)	“The white women with their white dresses and flowery hats, their parasols and lace.” (page 29)	A lightweight umbrella used as sunshade
<i>possess</i> (verb)	“I know I can never possess a spirit like the spirit of Afong Moy.” (page 30)	To have as belonging to one; have as property; own
<i>wisp</i> (noun)	“She is like a wisp , a memory, an idea, a poem.” (page 30)	A person or thing that is small, delicate, or barely discernible
<i>tedium</i> (noun)	“Before I start describing my various daily ills and the general tedium of repetitious life inside a box, allow me to fill you in on what has happened in the twelve years or so since we last spoke.” (page 31)	The quality or state of being wearisome; irksomeness; tediousness
<i>impresario</i> (noun)	“Peale’s Museum has been sold to our new employer, Mr. P.T. Barnum, a theatrical impresario and purveyor of exotic entertainments for the viewing pleasure of all ages.” (page 31)	A person who organizes or manages public entertainments, especially operas, ballets, or concerts
<i>purveyor</i> (noun)	“Peale’s Museum has been sold to our new employer, Mr. P.T. Barnum, a theatrical impresario and purveyor of exotic entertainments for the viewing pleasure of all ages.” (page 31)	A person who purveys, provides, or supplies
<i>counterparts</i> (noun)	“Eager to work for lower wages than their white American counterparts .” (page 32)	A person or thing closely resembling another, especially in function
<i>decreed</i> (verb)	“So Andrew Jackson decreed that all Americans east of the Mississippi River had to resettle in the West.” (page 32)	A formal and authoritative order, especially one having the force of law

VOCABULARY

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WORD (Part of Speech)	DEFINITION	IN CONTEXT
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<i>erhu</i> (noun)	"She is fourteen years old; her feet have been bound half an inch smaller than mine, she plays the erhu and performs improbable Chinese acrobatics, sings like a trained chorus of nightingales and arrives in New York Harbor later this afternoon." (page 34)	A Chinese two-stringed musical instrument held in the lap and played with a bow
<i>improbable</i> (adjective)	"She is fourteen years old, her feet have been bound half an inch smaller than mine, she plays the erhu and performs improbable Chinese acrobatics, sings like a trained chorus of nightingales and arrives in New York Harbor later this afternoon." (page 34)	Not probable; unlikely to be true or to happen
<i>privilege</i> (noun)	"I have spent my life in aid to you, and it was a privilege to do so." (page 34)	A right, immunity, or benefit enjoyed by a particular person or a restricted group of people beyond the advantages of most
<i>endure</i> (verb)	"You will endure ." (page 35)	To hold out against; sustain without impairment or yielding; undergo
<i>ingenuity</i> (noun)	"It is one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken in the history of American ingenuity , and it will join East and West together." (page 36)	The quality of being cleverly inventive or resourceful; inventiveness
<i>finite</i> (adjective)	"Fortune is finite." (page 37)	Having bounds or limits; not infinite; measurable
<i>Nitroglycerine</i> (noun)	" Nitroglycerine , mixed on site, Creating holes in the mountains for trains to pass." (page 38)	A pale yellow viscous explosive liquid substance made from glycerol and nitric and sulphuric acids and used in explosives, and in medicine as a vasodilator
<i>simultaneous</i> (adjective)	"I should also mention however Simultaneous to this As you know There is Civil War." (page 38)	Existing, occurring, or operating at the same time; concurrent

VOCABULARY

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WORD	DEFINITION	IN CONTEXT
(Part of Speech)		

<i>fracture</i> (verb)	“There is fracture .” (page 38)	The act of breaking; state of being broken
<i>conceived</i> (verb)	“In the Gettysburg Address, delivered last year by President Abraham Lincoln, he says this nation was conceived in Liberty.” (page 39)	Having been formed, originated, or expressed
<i>forge</i> (verb)	“I will forge steel.” (page 40)	To form or make, especially by concentrated effort
<i>indulge</i> (verb)	“This is a different space entirely, though you will please indulge me as I allow the details of where I am to remain a mystery for the time being.” (page 41)	To yield to, satisfy, or gratify
<i>refuge</i> (noun)	“Those Chinese already here are forced to find refuge in new spaces, their own improvised spaces, separate spaces, safe spaces.” (page 41)	A place of shelter, protection, or safety
<i>improvised</i> (adjective)	“Those Chinese already here are forced to find refuge in new spaces, their own improvised spaces, separate spaces, safe spaces.” (page 41)	Made or said without previous preparation
<i>metaphysical</i> (adjective)	“If I had shown you more of myself. If I had walked differently. Eaten differently, provided more clarity on the metaphysical metaphor of tea, perhaps...” (page 42)	Highly abstract or abstruse
<i>metaphor</i> (noun)	“Eaten differently, provided more clarity on the metaphysical metaphor of tea, perhaps...” (page 42)	Something used, or regarded as being used, to represent something else; emblem; symbol
<i>renewed</i> (adjective)	“The Chinese Exclusion Act is renewed for another 10 years.” (page 42)	Resumed, revived, or reestablished
<i>replica</i> (noun)	“It is but a replica , a performance.” (page 42)	A close or exact copy or reproduction
<i>earnest</i> (adjective)	“The place I began was a place of endless possibility and earnest good hope.” (page 43)	Serious and zealous in intention, purpose, or effort

VOCABULARY

Compiled by: Khalil S., Jalil K., Jalon K.

WORD

(Part of Speech)

DEFINITION

IN CONTEXT

<i>aspiration</i> (noun)	"It was a place of aspiration and empathy, where we could all look upon something we've never seen before and recognize that the world is so much more vast and varied than we could ever have imagined." (page 43)	A goal or objective that is strongly desired
<i>variance</i> (noun)	"Then we might see, through all that vastness and variance , something true and real and wonderful." (page 43)	The state, quality, or fact of being variable, divergent, different, or anomalous

Sources:

www.Dictionary.com

www.merriam-webster.com

AFONG MOY, THE CHINESE LADY

Historical information about the real-life Afong Moy

Compiled by: Hannah S., Michelle D., Breyonna F., and Gianna M.

Afong Moy was just a young girl when she was brought to America from her home country of China in October of 1834. Nathaniel and Fredrick Carnes were merchants who, along with ship captain Benjamin Obear, were responsible for her trip. The Carnes brothers sold mass-produced Oriental wares, and it was Afong's job to pose in a room amidst these objects, in the hope that more people would be interested in buying the goods she posed with. Between the hours of 10am and 2pm and later from 5pm to 9pm, Moy sat in the box at Peale's Museum while spectators looked on, curious about this young woman from the other side of the world. She wore traditional Chinese gowns, jewelry in her hair, and displayed her bound feet. Afong's translator, a man named Atung, was likely the only person she could properly communicate with, as she did not speak or understand much English.



Afong did not return to China, as was originally intended in her contract, but instead continued traveling around the country. During this time, she did gain some level of fame and notoriety, but she also had to deal with a substantial amount of exploitation and stereotyping. Peale's Museum was eventually sold to P.T. Barnum, known for his exploitation of his performers. Afong continued to perform but eventually was replaced with a younger Chinese performer named Pwan Ye-Koo (image below).

Moy's last known exhibition was on February 21, 1851. There is no record of her death, and it is unlikely that she ever returned to China.

Above Image: Afong Moy <https://journalpanorama.org/2021/02/01/remembering-afong-moy>



Image at left: Pwan Ye-Koo

<https://journalpanorama.org/article/re-reading-americanphotographs/>



[daguerreotypes-and-humbugs/](https://journalpanorama.org/article/re-reading-americanphotographs/)

Sources: <https://librarycompany.org/2021/02/01/remembering-afong-moy/>

<https://www.nyhistory.org/blogs/afong-moy-the-chinese-lady>



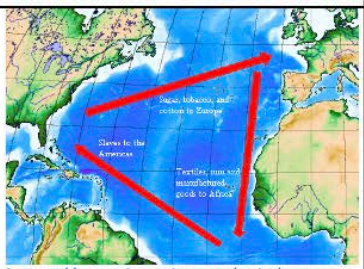
LITERARY ALLUSIONS

A literary allusion is a reference to a person, event, thing, or other text within a literary work.
 Compiled by: Tori-Anno S., Jenny T., and Antonio P.

Allusion	In Context	Description	Image
Trade with China (Far East Oriental Imports)	“My family has sold me for two years of service to Mistery Nathaniel and Frederick Carnes, traders of Far East Oriental imports to New York.” (page 1)	Oriental Imports was a company that bought and sold goods between Western countries and Asian countries like China. This trade includes products like silk, tea, spices, and porcelain. It started many centuries ago and has grown over time, helping different cultures exchange goods, ideas, and technologies.	 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Old_China_Trade
Peale’s Museum (NYC, Rubens Peale)	“I will be on display here at Peale’s Museum , for your education and entertainment, at a price of 25 cents adults, 10 cents children.” (page 1)	Ruben Peale’s Museum in Philadelphia opened in 1786 and is not only one of this country’s most important natural history institutions, <u>it</u> set the stage for pioneering museums across the country. His New York museum opened in 1825. Both museums offered fine arts and historical portraits as well as exotic offerings, such as two mummies from Cairo. When the museums faced financial difficulty, Peale sold the entire collection to rival P.T. Barnum and his American Museum (down the street from the NY location of Peale’s Museum) https://www.boweryboyshistory.com/2008/05/new-yorks-first-natural-history-museum.html	

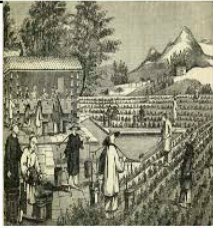
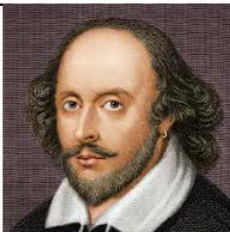

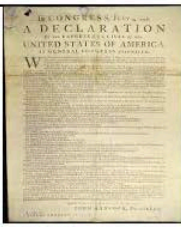
LITERARY ALLUSIONS

Compiled by: Tori-Anno S., Jenny T., and Antonio P.

<p>Foot binding</p>	<p>“In many parts of China, it is considered a sign of elevated social status and cultural refinement for women and young girls to have tiny feet.” (page 3)</p>	<p>Foot binding is a cultural practice that existed in China from the 10th century until the establishment of the Peoples Republic of China in 1949. Foot binding involved tightly bandaging the feet of women to alter their shape for aesthetic purposes.</p> <p>Foot binding usually began when girls were between 4 and 6 years old.</p> <p>https://www.britannica.com/science/foot-binding</p>	 <p>https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Cast_of_women%27s_foot_deformed_by_foot_binding_Wellcome_L0005105.jpg</p>
<p>Chinese Emperor Shennong/Tea</p>	<p>“The story goes that over 4,000 years ago, the Chinese Emperor Shennong would boil his water before he drank it so that he could be sure it was not contaminated. One day, while traveling outdoors, a leaf from a wild bush fell into the water and steeped itself in the cup. He did not notice this leaf, and to his surprise he drank the very first cup of Chinese tea.”</p>	<p>Tea was invented accidentally by the Chinese Emperor Shen Nong in 2737 B.C. Emperor Shen Nong was a scholar and herbalist, as well as a creative scientist and patron of the arts.</p>	 <p>https://chazhidao.org/en/third-circle/first-period-tea-history-herb-tea-times-2700-206-bc</p>
<p>Transatlantic Slave Trade</p>	<p>“I have noticed there are traditions in the American identity that are similarly entrenched, despite some controversy about them among the populace. Such as corsets. Or the Transatlantic Slave Trade.” (page 10)</p>	<p>The transatlantic slave trade was an oceanic trade in African men, women, and children which lasted from the mid-sixteenth century until the 1860s.</p>	 <p>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Triangular_trade</p>



LITERARY ALLUSIONS

Compiled by: Tori-Anno S., Jenny T., and Antonio P.

<p>The British discovery of Chinese Tea</p>	<p>“Tea is Chinese. It is ancient and traditional and ours. In London, the British existed for hundreds of years without it. And yet when they encountered our Chinese tea in the year 1615, it quickly became so important to them that they started wars over it.” (page 11)</p>	<p>The Chinese domesticated tea over thousands of years, but they lost their near monopoly on international trade when a Scottish botanist, disguised as a Chinese nobleman, smuggled it out of China in the 1800s, in order to secure Britain's favorite beverage and prop up its empire for another century.</p>	 <p>https://www.npr.org/sections/thesalt/2015/03/10/392116370/tea-tuesdays-the-scottish-spy-who-stole-chinas-tea-empire</p>
<p>William Shakespeare</p>	<p>“They shifted the rituals of their day to include a tea time that has now become a deeply entrenched English cultural tradition as integral to their identity as William Shakespeare or the River Thames.” (page 11)</p>	<p>William Shakespeare was an English playwright, poet and actor. He is widely regarded as the greatest writer in the English language and the world's pre-eminent dramatist.</p>	 <p>https://www.biography.com/authors-writers/william-shakespeare</p>
<p>Liberty Bell</p>	<p>“In Philadelphia I saw the Liberty Bell!” (page 15)</p>	<p>The State House bell, now known as the Liberty Bell, rang in the tower of the Pennsylvania State House.</p>	 <p>https://www.viator.com/en-PH/Philadelphia-attractions/Liberty-Bell-Center/overview/d906-a2967?dd_referrer=</p>
<p>Declaration of Independence</p>	<p>“They say it is the bell that rang upon the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, when you overthrew the Dynasty of George III.” (page 15)</p>	<p>The Declaration of Independence, formally titled The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America in both the engrossed version and the original printing, is the founding document of the United States.</p>	 <p>https://teachingamericanhistory.org/document/declaration-of-independence/</p>


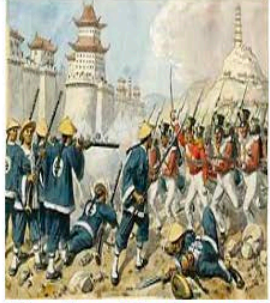

LITERARY ALLUSIONS

Compiled by: Tori-Anno S., Jenny T., and Antonio P.

<p>King George III</p>	<p>“They say it is the bell that rang upon the signing of the Declaration of Independence in 1776, when you overthrew the Dynasty of George III.” (page 15)</p>	<p>George III was born on 4 June 1738 in London, the eldest son of Frederick, Prince of Wales, and Princess Augusta of Saxe-Gotha. He ruled England from 1760 until his death in 1820. During the American Revolution, George fought to retain control of the American colonies, which he would eventually lose.</p>	 <p>https://www.royal.uk/george-iii</p>
<p>President Andrew Jackson</p>	<p>“I have just returned from a private meeting with your emperor, Andrew Jackson.” (page 17)</p>	<p>Andrew Jackson was the seventh President of the United States from 1829 to 1837. In addition to President, he was a planter, lawyer, general, and statesman. Jackson was responsible for the adoption by Congress of the Indian Removal Act, which established a process whereby the President could grant land west of the Mississippi River to Indian tribes that agreed to give up their homelands. This led to the forced mass migration of Native Americans which resulted in more than 4,000 deaths. This migration became known as the Tail of Tears.</p> <p>https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/indian-removal-act-signed-andrew-jackson</p>	 <p>https://www.britannica.com/biography/Andrew-Jackson</p>

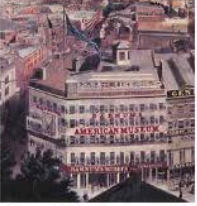



LITERARY ALLUSIONS

Compiled by: Tori-Anno S., Jenny T., and Antonio P.

<p>Mughal Empire</p>	<p>“In our last episode, we discussed the British appropriation of tea. British Imperial rule in the Mughal Empire allowed for the...” (page 25)</p>	<p>The Mughal emperors were among India's greatest patrons of art, responsible for some of the country's most spectacular monuments, like the palaces at Delhi, Agra, and Lahore (in present-day Pakistan) and the famous mausoleum, the Taj Mahal.</p>	 <p>https://www.britannica.com/topic/Mughal-dynasty</p>
<p>Opium Wars</p>	<p>“Britain conquered what is now India, giving them access to fields and fields and fields of opium. The British eventually weaponized this opium, distributing it throughout China, which ravaged the countryside. This led to the first of the Opium Wars, which led to the Treaty of Nanking. At least economically, the British Empire took over China as well.” (page 25)</p>	<p>The Opium Wars in the mid-19th century were a critical juncture in modern Chinese history. The first Opium War was fought between China and Great Britain from 1839 to 1842. In the second Opium War, from 1856 to 1860, a weakened China fought both Great Britain and France. China lost both wars.</p>	 <p>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Opium_Wars</p>
<p>Treaty of Nanking</p>	<p>“This led to the first of the Opium Wars, which led to the Treaty of Nanking. At least economically, the British Empire took over China as well.” (page 25)</p>	<p>The Treaty of Nanjing, (August 29, 1842) was a treaty that ended the first Opium War, the first of the unequal treaties between China and foreign imperialist powers. China paid the British an indemnity, ceded the territory of Hong Kong, and agreed to establish a “fair and reasonable” tariff.</p>	 <p>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Treaty_of_Nanking</p>



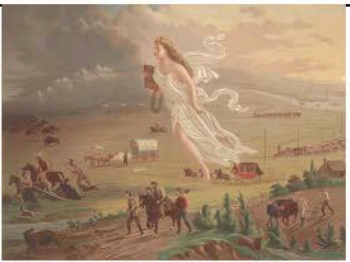

LITERARY ALLUSIONS

Compiled by: Tori-Anno S., Jenny T., and Antonio P.

<p>P.T. Barnum/P.T. Barnum's American Museum</p>	<p>"Peale's Museum has been sold to our new employer, Mr. P.T. Barnum, a theatrical impresario and purveyor of exotic entertainments for the viewing pleasure of all ages." (page 31)</p>	<p>The museum was owned by famous showman P. T. Barnum, who was known for promoting celebrated hoaxes. He later founded the famous "Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey's Circus".</p> <p>https://www.biography.com/business-leaders/pt-barnum</p>	 <p>https://historymatters.gmu.edu/d/5289</p>
<p>Qing Dynasty</p>	<p>"The Opium Wars have led to widespread hardship and instability in the Qing Dynasty, and the promise of gold has brought waves of Chinese men to California." (page 32)</p>	<p>The Qing Dynasty is known for its strong central government and cultural achievements, but it also faced many challenges, like internal rebellions and pressure from foreign countries. The dynasty ended when the last emperor, Puyi, was forced to abdicate, leading to the creation of the Republic of China.</p>	 <p>https://medium.com/@kenzie_sr/the-chinese-dragon-a-brief-history-of-modern-china-part-1-e5a079939e7e</p>
<p>Indian Removal Act of 1830 and Trail of Tears</p>	<p>"Here's where the gold comes in. Because the European-Americans discovered that the mountains of Georgia had gold in them. Andrew Jackson said hey let's take their land so that we can better access the gold. So Andrew Jackson decreed that all Americans east of the Mississippi River had to resettle in the West. How did they get there? They walked." (page 32)</p>	<p>The U.S. Government used treaties as one means to displace Indians from their tribal lands, a mechanism that was strengthened with the Removal Act of 1830. In cases where this failed, the government sometimes violated both treaties and Supreme Court rulings to facilitate the spread of European Americans westward across the continent.</p>	 <p>https://www.sumnernews.com/schgs-to-host-the-trail-of-tears-the-indian-removal-act-of-1830/</p>
<p>The California Gold Rush</p>	<p>"See, 1849's gonna change the whole world and me right there with it. They're calling it the California Gold Rush, so I'm pulling up stakes and heading west." (page 33)</p>	<p>People from all over the world rushed to California hoping to find gold and get rich. These people were called "forty-niners" because many of them arrived in 1849. The Gold Rush led to a huge increase in California's population and helped it become a state in 1850.</p>	 <p>https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/american-experience/features/goldrush-impact-california/</p>





LITERARY ALLUSIONS

Compiled by: Tori-Anno S., Jenny T., and Antonio P.

<p>Pwan Ye Koo</p>	<p>“This morning I have learned that Mr. P.T. Barnum has made arrangements for the importation of a young woman by the name of Pwan Ye Koo from Peking.” (page 34)</p>	<p>A historical figure known for being one of the earliest Chinese women to live in the United States. She arrived in the U.S. in the 19th century and became a significant figure in the Chinese-American community. Her life story highlights the experiences and challenges faced by Chinese immigrants, especially women, during that time.</p>	 <p>https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Portrait_of_Pwan_Ye-Koo.jpg</p>
<p>Transcontinental Railroad</p>	<p>“Beginning last year, in 1863, work on the Transcontinental Railroad began. It is one of the most ambitious projects ever undertaken in the history of American ingenuity, and it will join East and West together.” (page 36)</p>	<p>A huge railway project completed in 1869 in the United States. It connected the East Coast with the West Coast, making it much easier for people and goods to travel across the country. The railroad was built by two companies, the Union Pacific and the Central Pacific, who started from opposite ends and met in Utah.</p>	 <p>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_transcontinental_railroad</p>
<p>Manifest Destiny</p>	<p>“The vision of course Was Manifest Destiny...” (page 38)</p>	<p>The belief in the 19th century that Americans were destined by God to expand westward across the North American continent. People believed it was their right and duty to spread their culture and government from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean.</p>	 <p>https://www.newsweek.com/manifest-destiny-history-westward-expansion-us-1515999</p>
<p>Civil War</p>	<p>“I should also mention however Simultaneous to this As you know There is Civil War There is fracture Some land you claim, but Some land breaks away And thus you battle To understand the proper shape of yourself...” (page 38)</p>	<p>A conflict in the United States from 1861 to 1865 between the Northern states (the Union) and the Southern states (the Confederacy) that wanted to break away. The main issue was slavery, with the South wanting to keep the practice and the North wanting to end it.</p>	 <p>https://www.vpm.org/2021-04-12/the-civil-war-began-160-years-ago-today-here-are-people-you-should-know</p>



LITERARY ALLUSIONS

Compiled by: Tori-Anno S., Jenny T., and Antonio P.

<p>Gettysburg Address</p>	<p>"In the Gettysburg Address, delivered last year by President Abraham Lincoln, he says this nation was conceived in Liberty." (page 39)</p>	<p>Gettysburg was the site of a significant battle during the Civil War. In the speech known as "The Gettysburg Address", Lincoln talked about the importance of equality, freedom, and democracy. He honored the soldiers who died in the battle and emphasized that the nation should continue fighting to ensure that "government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth."</p>	 <p>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gettysburg_Address</p>
<p>President Abraham Lincoln</p>	<p>"In the Gettysburg Address, delivered last year by President Abraham Lincoln, he says this nation was conceived in Liberty." (page 39)</p>	<p>Lincoln served during the Civil War, a time when the country was divided between the North and the South. Lincoln is best known for his efforts to end slavery. He gave a famous speech called the Gettysburg Address and signed the Emancipation Proclamation, which declared that all enslaved people in the Confederate states were free.</p>	 <p>https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Abraham_Lincoln</p>
<p>Chinese Exclusion Act</p>	<p>"In this year, 1882, Congress passes the Chinese Exclusion Act, banning Chinese migration to the United States for 10 years." (page 41)</p>	<p>This Act stopped Chinese people from coming to the U.S. to live and work. This law was the first to ban a specific group of people based on their nationality. It happened because many Americans were worried that Chinese workers were taking their jobs.</p>	 <p>https://www.kpbs.org/news/arts-culture/2018/05/25/chinese-exclusion-act-special-presentation-america</p>
<p>The Chinese Massacre of 1871</p>	<p>"In the year 1871, a mob of 500 Californians descend upon the residents of Los Angeles' Chinatown. 52 Chinese Americans are injured, while 20 are tortured, lynched, and displayed along the town's borders in exhibition." (page 41)</p>	<p>A mob of around 500 people attacked the Chinese community in Chinatown. The violence started because of a conflict between rival Chinese groups, but it quickly escalated. The mob killed about 18 Chinese people and destroyed many homes and businesses.</p>	 <p>https://allthatsinteresting.com/chinese-massacre-of-1871</p>

LITERARY ALLUSIONS

Compiled by: Tori-Anno S., Jenny T., and Antonio P.

<p>Rock Springs Massacre</p>	<p>“It is the year 1885, and I am sixty five years old. One of these safe spaces, in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, is burned to the ground by a mob of 150 white men, resulting in the mutilation, decapitation, and castration of 50 Chinese American miners, many of whom are burned alive or left to die along the river as they fled.” (page 41)</p>	<p>This Massacre involved a violent attack by white miners. The white miners were angry because the Chinese miners were willing to work for lower wages. During the attack, many Chinese miners were killed, and their homes were burned down.</p>	 <p>https://www.history.com/topics/immigration/rock-springs-massacre-wyoming</p>
<p>Snake River Massacre</p>	<p>“It is the year 1887, and I am sixty seven years old. The Snake River Massacre in Hells Canyon, Oregon, results in the death and torture of 34 Chinese Americans, stripped of their gold, their bodies dumped in the river; many will not be discovered for years.” (page 42)</p>	<p>This Massacre involved a group of Shoshone Native Americans being attacked by a group of white settlers and miners near the Snake River in Idaho.</p>	 <p>https://www.ranker.com/list/oregon-trail-deaths/mike-rothschild</p>

CHARACTER ANALYSIS

Compiled by Isaiah D., Malachi M., and Steven W.

AFONG MOY, FEMALE, FROM 14 YEARS OLD TO ADVANCED AGE: The character of Afong Moy serves as an example of the extreme cultural appropriation of minority ethnic groups in The United States of America. Throughout her story, we see her character go through an arc of Americanization, (whether it be intentional by her captors or not).

Throughout the play, Afong Moy gradually becomes more and more corrupted by the environment she sees and interacts with every day. This is crucial to the story because it highlights the impact of cultural assimilation and the loss of one's identity due to a dominant culture.

In the beginning of Afong's story, she is only an impressionable child in a foreign country with no parental guidance whatsoever. She is introduced as a young Chinese woman who is brought to America as a curiosity, a living exhibit for the American public. Her initial role is to showcase her exoticism and traditional Chinese attire to audiences unfamiliar with her culture. This portrayal positions her as a spectacle, stripped of her personal identity and reduced to a symbol of cultural otherness. Her arrival in America is marked by a profound sense of dislocation. The vibrant and bustling environment of 19th-century America contrasts starkly with the world she left behind in China. This transition is not merely geographical but also deeply cultural, and Afong's initial experiences are colored by confusion and alienation. As Afong adjusts to her new reality, she faces significant personal struggles. She is not just a foreigner in an unfamiliar land but a child without parental guidance. This lack of familial support exacerbates her vulnerability. She is subjected to the whims of her handlers and the expectations of her audience, which compounds her sense of powerlessness. The conflict between her ingrained cultural identity and the demands of her new environment becomes a central theme. Her handlers, who are more interested in her as a spectacle than as a person, impose an Americanized version of her identity. This imposed identity gradually distorts her sense of self, forcing her to navigate the complex dynamics of cultural assimilation.

As the play progresses, Afong Moy's character undergoes a significant transformation. The process of Americanization, whether deliberate or inadvertent, starts to reshape her. This transformation is not merely superficial; it affects her core identity. She begins to adopt American customs and behaviors, often at the expense of her traditional Chinese values and practices. By the end of the play, Afong Moy's character reveals the deep emotional and psychological toll of her experiences. The loss of her original cultural identity is stark. She is no longer the vibrant, proud representative of her heritage but someone who has been significantly altered by her environment. Her story reflects the painful reality of losing one's cultural identity in the face of a dominant culture that demands conformity. Her emotional struggle is compounded by the constant lack of genuine connection and understanding

from those around her. The play portrays her as increasingly disillusioned and detached, emphasizing the personal cost of cultural assimilation. Afong Moy's narrative serves as a powerful commentary on cultural appropriation and the pressures of assimilation. Her story highlights the broader societal issues related to the exploitation of minority cultures and the impact on individual identities. By presenting Afong's journey, Suh invites the audience to reflect on the consequences of cultural objectification and the ongoing challenges faced by those who navigate between different cultural worlds.

Character Motivations

Afong has multiple (and at times conflicting) motivations throughout the play. They include:

Cultural Preservation: She wants to maintain her Chinese heritage despite being objectified.

Adaptation: She seeks to navigate and survive in a foreign environment.

Connection: She yearns for genuine human relationships and understanding.

Internal Conflict: She struggles to balance her cultural identity with the pressures to assimilate.

Character Arc

Afong Moy evolves from a proud representative of her Chinese heritage to someone increasingly shaped and detached by American culture. Initially resistant to losing her identity, she becomes more assimilated into her role as a spectacle, leading to a profound sense of emotional isolation and disillusionment.

Interactions with other Characters

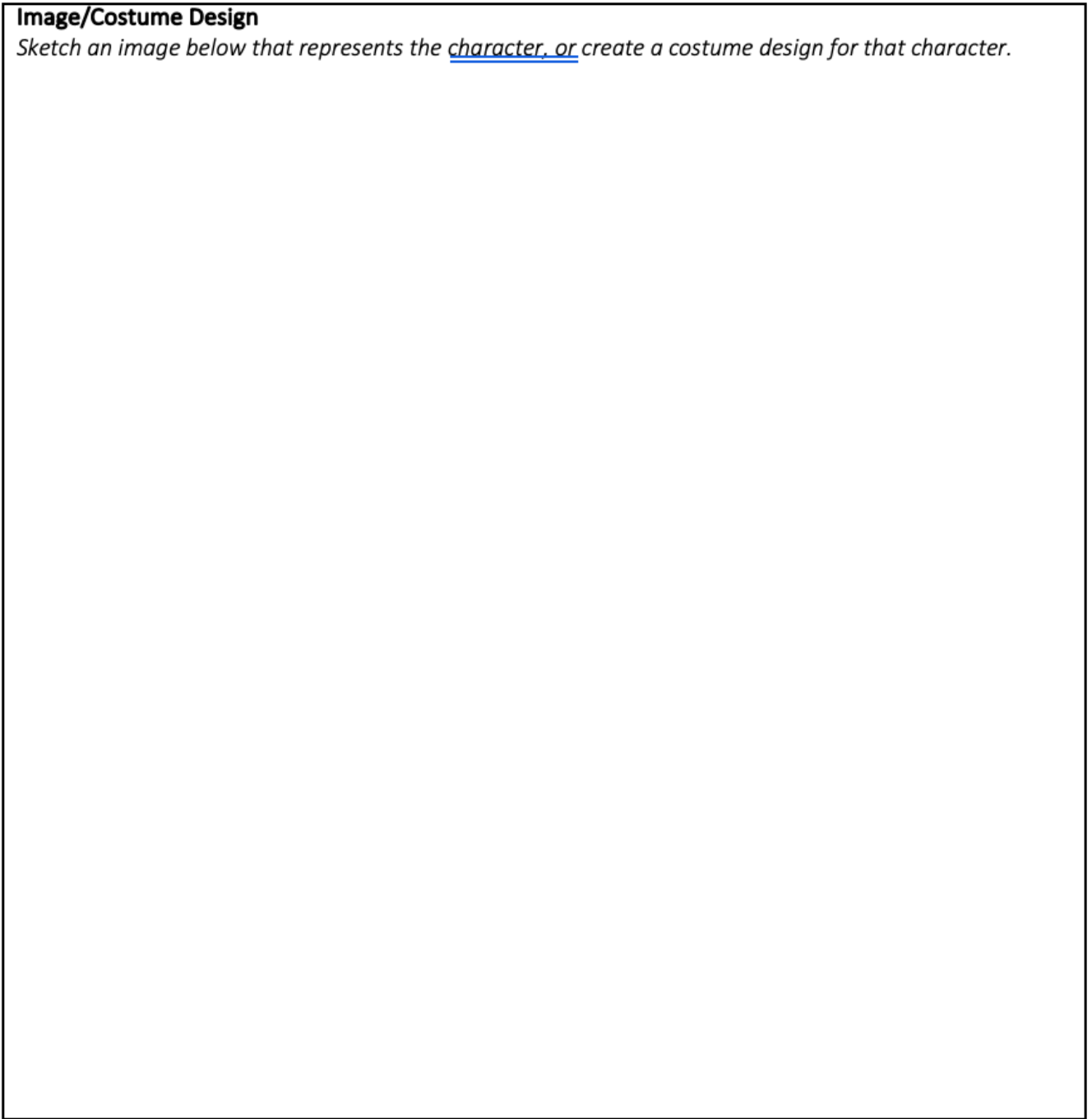
Afong Moy interacts with other characters in *The Chinese Lady* primarily through her evolving awareness of her role as an object on display. Her interactions with the audience are central, as she starts by presenting herself as a cultural exhibit, performing her "Chineseness" for Western eyes. Over time, her dynamic with her assistant, Atung, reveals a deeper emotional layer as she moves from innocence to disillusionment. Their relationship, marked by both tension and mutual understanding, reflects the shifting nature of her identity and her isolation in a foreign world.

Role in Advancing the Plot

Afong Moy advances the plot and develops the theme of cultural objectification and identity through her evolving self-awareness. As she transitions from a naive young woman eager to share her culture to someone who becomes disillusioned by how she is commodified and exoticized, her journey highlights the tension between perception and reality. Her reflections on her experiences as a spectacle deepen the play's exploration of themes like exploitation, cultural assimilation, and the dehumanizing effects of being treated as "other." Through her personal growth, the play critiques how societies fetishize and marginalize foreign cultures.

Image/Costume Design

Sketch an image below that represents the character, or create a costume design for that character.







SETTING STUDY

Below is a list of places mentioned in the play, explored in greater detail.


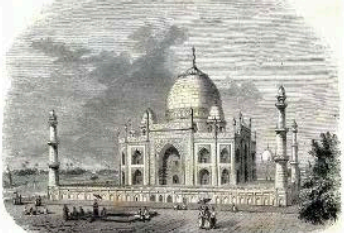


Compiled by: Tony M., Daelyn M., Robert B., and Arkee B. F

From the play: The United States, beginning in 1834.

Place	In Context	Background Information	Image
Guangzhou	"I was born in Guangzhou in 1820." (page 1)	Guangzhou, then known as Panyu, was founded on the eastern bank of the Pearl River in 214 BC. Ships commanded by tradespersons arrived on the South China coast in the late antiquity. Surviving records from the Tang dynasty confirm that the residents of Panyu observed a range of trade missions. https://www.britannica.com/place/Guangzhou/History	 https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timeline_of_Guangzhou
New York City	"My family has sold me for two years of service to Misters Nathaniel and Frederick Carnes, traders of Far East Oriental imports to New York. " (page 1)	New York City traces its origins to Fort Amsterdam and a trading post founded on Manhattan Island by Dutch colonists around 1624. The settlement was named New Amsterdam in 1626 and was chartered as a city in 1653. https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/new-amsterdam-becomes-new-york	 https://www.history101.nyc/history-of-nyc-1800-1840
River Thames	"They shifted the rituals of their day to include a tea time that has now become a deeply entrenched English cultural tradition as integral to their identity as William Shakespeare or the River Thames. " (page 11)	The River Thames is the chief river of southern England. Its basin covers an area of approximately 5,500 square miles. https://www.britannica.com/place/River-Thames	
London, England	"In London , the British existed for hundreds of years without it. (tea)" (page 11)	London is the capital of England, as well as its largest city. It is among the oldest of the world's great cities—its history spanning nearly two millennia—and one of the most cosmopolitan. By far Britain's largest metropolis, it is also the country's economic, transportation, and cultural center. https://www.britannica.com/place/London	

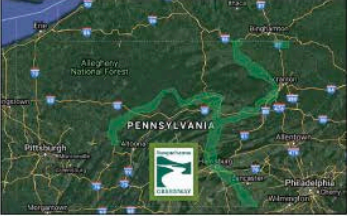



SETTING STUDY

Compiled by: Tony M., Daelyn M., Robert B., and Arkee B. F

Philadelphia	"In Philadelphia I saw the Liberty Bell!" (page 15)	<p>The country's first World Heritage City, Philadelphia is also the birthplace of the United States, where our Founding Fathers met, discussed, debated and formed a new country. Much of Philadelphia's history has been preserved to this day.</p> <p>https://www.visitphilly.com/history-in-philadelphia/</p>	 <p>https://www.ushistory.org/libertybell</p>
India	"Britain conquered what is now India , giving them access to fields and fields of opium." (page 25)	<p>India has a unique culture and is one of the oldest and greatest civilizations of the world. India has achieved all-round socio-economic progress since its Independence. India covers an area of 32,87,263 sq. km, extending from the snow-covered Himalayan heights to the tropical rain forests of the south.</p> <p>https://knowindia.india.gov.in/profile/india-at-a-glance.php</p>	 <p>https://www.thoughtco.com/timeline-of-india-in-the-1800s-1774016</p>
The Cincinnati Zoo	"In Cincinnati , we went to a zoo." (page 27)	<p>The Zoological Society of Cincinnati was founded in 1873 and officially opened its doors in 1875, making the Cincinnati Zoo & Botanical Garden the second oldest Zoo in the United States.</p> <p>https://cincinnati-zoo.org/about-us/</p>	
Washington, D.C.	"Since Washington, DC and my triumphant tour of the United States, and my most memorable meeting with President Andrew Jackson." (page 31)	<p>In 1790, Washington D.C. was established as the capital of the United States. Washington D.C. remains a major northeastern corridor metropolis today, hosting the buildings that house our government's headquarters (The White House, the Capitol Building, The Supreme Court building, and others).</p> <p>https://www.britannica.com/place/Washington-DC/History</p>	


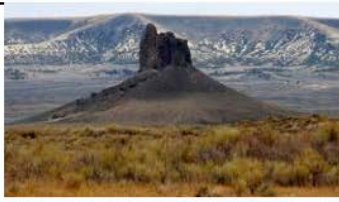
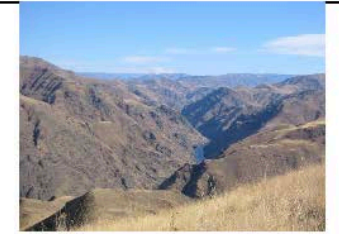
SETTING STUDY

Compiled by: Tony M., Daelyn M., Robert B., and Arkee B. F

<p>Susquehanna River</p>	<p>“It was your idea to go swimming in the Susquehanna River.” (page 18)</p>	<p>The Susquehanna River flows from upstate New York state to the Chesapeake Bay in Maryland. At approximately 444 mi long, it is the longest river on the American east coast and the 16th longest in the United States. https://www.visitcentralpa.org/things-to-do/parks-trails-nature/lakes-rivers/the-susquehanna-river/</p>	
<p>San Francisco</p>	<p>“Perhaps you had the delightful expectation that for this scene, once Atung pulled the curtain back, I would be in San Francisco California, on a mountain high up in the Sierras, feeling the wide wild western wind in my hair, great autumn sunset behind me and the expansive liberty of America at my feet?” (page 34)</p>	<p>San Francisco (Spanish for Saint Francis) was founded on June 29, 1776, when colonists from Spain established Presidio of San Francisco at the Golden Gate and Mission San Francisco de Asís named for St. Francis of Assisi a few miles away. https://californiamissionsfoundation.org/mission-san-francisco-de-asis/</p>	 <p>https://www.historynet.com/william-leidesdorff-san-francisco-founder/</p>
<p>New York Harbor</p>	<p>“She is fourteen years old, her feet have been bound half an inch smaller than mine, she plays the erhu and performs improbable Chinese acrobatics, sings like a trained chorus of nightingales and arrives in New York Harbor later this afternoon.” (page 34)</p>	<p>New York Harbor was originally settled by the Lenape Native Americans. Europeans explored the region as early as 1524 (Giovanni Verrazano) and 1609 (Henry Hudson), with the initial European settlement beginning in 1624 by the Dutch (New Amsterdam), followed by English settlement. https://www.history.com/topics/us-states/new-york</p>	 <p>https://images.nypl.org/index.php?id=1659102&t=w</p>
<p>Peking</p>	<p>“This <u>morning</u> I have learned that Mr. P.T. Barnum has made arrangements for the importation of a young woman by the name of Pwan Ye Koo from Peking.” (page 34)</p>	<p>Now Beijing, Peking was the capital of China. Today it is the world’s most populous national capital city. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beijing</p>	 <p>https://monovisions.com/peking-china-19th-century-vintage-historic-bw-photos/</p>

SETTING STUDY

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<p>Chinatown (LA)</p>	<p>"In the year 1871, a mob of 500 Californians descend upon the residents of Los Angeles' Chinatown. 52 Chinese Americans are injured, while 20 are tortured, lynched, and displayed along the town's borders in exhibition." (page 41)</p>	<p>The early Chinatowns such as those in San Francisco and Los Angeles in the United States were naturally destinations for people of Chinese descent as migration were the result of opportunities such as the California Gold Rush and the Transcontinental Railroad drawing the population in, creating natural Chinese enclaves. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinatown</p>	 <p>https://www.huffpost.com/entry/american-chinatowns-history_n_6090692</p>
<p>Sweetwater County, Wyoming</p>	<p>"It is the year 1885, and I am sixty five years old. One of these safe spaces, in Sweetwater County, Wyoming, is burned to the ground by a mob of 150 white men, resulting in the mutilation, decapitation, and castration of 50 Chinese American miners, many of whom are burned alive or left to die along the river as they fled." (page 41)</p>	<p>The county of Sweetwater was formed of territory partitioned from Laramie County. The county was originally named Carter County for Judge W.A. Carter of Fort Bridger in 1869, but the newly established legislature of the Wyoming Territory renamed the county for the Sweetwater River. https://www.wyohistory.org/encyclopedia/sweetwater-county-wyoming</p>	
<p>Hells Canyon, Oregon</p>	<p>"It is the year 1887, and I am sixty-seven years old. The Snake River Massacre in Hells Canyon, Oregon, results in the death and torture of 34 Chinese Americans, stripped of their gold, their bodies dumped in the river; many will not be discovered for years." (page 42)</p>	<p>The Snake River began carving Hells Canyon out of the plateau about 6 million years ago. The canyon contains dense forests, scenic overlooks and mountain peaks. https://www.fs.usda.gov/detail/wallowa-whitman/recreation/?cid=stelprdb5238987</p>	

SETTING STUDY

Compiled by: Tony M., Daelyn M., Robert B., and Arkee B. F



Notes from the play about “The Room”

Lights up on Afong Moy, 14 years old, in her Room. The Room is a box placed in the center of the larger stage. Outside the box, the stage is unadorned. Inside the box, it is ornate, decorated with various types of Chinoiserie. Watercolor paintings, vases, curtains, silks, furniture, etc. (page 1)

What Afong says about “The Room”:

“This Room in which I am seated is intended to be representative of China, just as I am intended to be representative of The Chinese Lady: the first woman from the Orient ever to set foot in America, and yet this Room is unlike

any room in China, and I am unlike any lady to ever live.” (page 2)

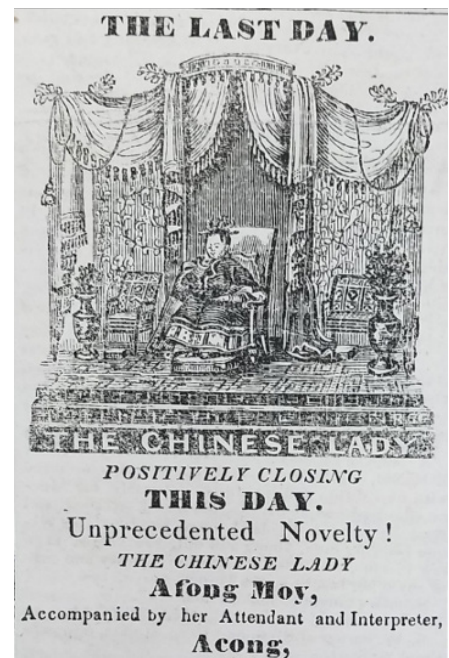
Image source: <https://wams.nyhistory.org/expansions-and-inequalities/industry-and-immigration/afong-moy/>

“Some customers stand quietly and expectantly, while some come directly towards the Room and examine its contents. They look at the furniture. The vases. The silks and the paintings.” (page 2)

“The Room” in history:

Merchants Francis and Nathaniel G. Carnes, along with ship captain Benjamin Obear and his wife Augusta, used Afong Moy as a marketing ploy to promote the Chinese goods they were selling. To garner attention and attract customers, they created an “exhibition and salon,” using Moy to draw a crowd. The first exhibition and sales campaign with Moy presenting Chinese objects began at Obear’s house in New York City in November 1834. He erected a tableau where she was seated. Through her interpreter, she discussed the objects around her to entice buyers to purchase the items for sale.

Right, image source: <https://librarycompany.org/2021/02/01/remembering-afong-moy/>



TIME PERIOD

The play takes place between 1834 and 1902, and even travels to our current day in 2024.

Below is a timeline of some major historical events occurring between 1830 and 1884.

- May 30, 1830: The Indian Removal Act was signed into law by President Andrew Jackson. The law led to the relocation of Indigenous peoples which became known as the “Trail of Tears.”
- January 1836: The siege of the Alamo began at San Antonio, Texas.
- June 1839: Louis Daguerre patented his camera in France.
- August 29, 1842: The First Opium War ended with the Treaty of Nanking.
- May 22, 1843: “Oregon Fever” gripped America, beginning mass migration westward on the Oregon Trail.
- January 24, 1848: James Marshall, a mechanic at John Sutter’s sawmill in northern California, recognized some unusual nuggets. His discovery would set off the California Gold Rush.
- March 4, 1861: Abraham Lincoln was inaugurated as the president of the United States.
- April 12, 1861 – May 26, 1865: American Civil War
- January 1, 1863: President Abraham Lincoln signed the Emancipation Proclamation.
- February 3, 1870: The 15th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which gave the right to vote to Black men, became law when the required number of states ratified it.
- June 25, 1876: General George Armstrong Custer, commander of the 7th Cavalry, is killed, along with more than 200 of his men, at the Battle of the Little Bighorn.
- August 6, 1884: The cornerstone for the Statue of Liberty’s pedestal is placed on Bedloe’s Island in New York Harbor.

1830’s source: <https://www.thoughtco.com/timeline-from-1830-to-1840-1774037>

1840’s source: <https://www.thoughtco.com/timeline-from-1840-to-1850-1774038>

1860’s source: <https://www.thoughtco.com/timeline-from-1860-to-1870-1774043>

1870’s source: <https://www.thoughtco.com/timeline-from-1870-to-1880-1774040>

1880’s source: <https://www.thoughtco.com/timeline-from-1880-to-1890-1774041>

THEMES

Themes are the main ideas or underlying meanings a writer explores in a literary work. The theme of a story can be conveyed using characters, setting, dialogue, plot, or a combination of all of these elements.

Compiled by: Amore R., Carlin C., Damarcus W., Jalon K., and Nariah C.

Theme	Evidence (i.e. line of dialogue in script)	Analysis
Liberty	<p>AFONG "The crack in the bell appeared after the very first time it was rung. I think this is such a beautiful detail, isn't it? A beautiful poem, for it tells us that liberty is fragile. The crack is growing, as well. Even though the bell no longer rings, the crack continues to grow. Simply through the passage of time. This is another poem. It tells us that liberty has a cost. And an expiration." (page 16)</p> <p>AFONG "Since 1492, European-Americans colonized these lands, constructed a liberty bell, and rang that bell for their freedom. The Americans, meanwhile, were slowly forced to leave their native lands, and fight for their survival." (page 32)</p>	<p>Liberty means freedom. Afong uses The Liberty Bell as a symbol to explain different aspects of freedom. The play symbolizes that freedom has a price and it can be worn down over time. Afong herself doesn't enjoy much (or any) freedom. She doesn't have agency to go where she pleases or fulfill her own goals or destiny.</p>
Cultural Appropriation (Taking vs. Sharing)	<p>AFONG "Atung, you cannot possibly object to such a beautiful example of cultural sharing, for is this not our very purpose in America?"</p> <p>ATUNG "There is a difference, Afong Moy. Between sharing, and taking." (page 12)</p>	<p>Early in the play, Afong doesn't see the difference between sharing one's culture willingly vs. that culture being taken and used for profit by another. Tea is used as an example of cultural appropriation in the play, as tea has been an integral part of Chinese culture for centuries. Many people, however, associate tea with the English, who first imported tea from China.</p>
Interpreting and Interpretation	<p>ATUNG "It's just that there are sometimes words or phrases which do not directly translate from Guangzhou Cantonese to American English, so the act of translation is more like... interpretation than direct recreation...Even as we play-act our roles, this is but an interpretation. For this is not then. I can present to you a memory of someone, but it will only be a performance." (page 19)</p>	<p>Words often get lost in translation when people don't speak the same language. It makes it difficult for simple conversations because of the possibility of misinterpretation. Atung helps Afong with translating and interpreting sentences from others, but in the play, we see even <i>he</i> selects what he shares with her and what he chooses to omit.</p>

THEMES

Compiled by: Amore R., Carlin C., Damarcus W., Jalon K., and Nariah C.

Representation and Perception	<p>AFONG "This Room in which I am seated is intended to be representative of China, just as I am intended to be representative of The Chinese Lady: the first woman from the Orient ever to set foot in America, and yet this Room is unlike any room in China, and I am unlike any lady to ever live." (page 2)</p>	<p>Afong is expected to be representative of all of China, and of all Chinese people, which is an impossibility. Our own perceptions of others can be skewed based on our own background and experiences.</p>
Belonging	<p>AFONG "What if we simply do not belong here?"</p> <p>ATUNG "Whether we belong here or not... we are here." (page 28)</p>	<p>We all seek to belong somewhere. It can be a struggle if you don't feel like you belong, leading to feelings of loneliness and isolation. Afong faces this struggle as she's growing up outside of her home, forced to travel throughout the United States without friends or family who understand her. She begins to feel used as a prop or animal rather than a human being.</p>
The "gaze"/ Objectification	<p>AFONG "What do they see when they see me?"</p> <p>ATUNG "You cannot think about that."</p> <p>AFONG "What if it is not good, Atung?" (page 27)</p>	<p>The way we see (or even objectify) others colors how we feel about them. We can make unfair assumptions about a person based on what we see, or what we think we see. In the play, Afong feels judged and misinterpreted by the spectators who gaze at her.</p>
Traditions that define our cultures	<p>AFONG "I have noticed that my feet are a source of constant fascination. Most Americans consider it barbaric. Of course, in China, there are many who feel the same way, but it is tradition, and so there is hesitancy to alter it. Personally, I don't consider it barbaric. I like my feet. I have noticed there are traditions in the American identity that are similarly entrenched, despite some controversy about them among the populace. Such as corsets. Or the Transatlantic Slave Trade. Perhaps this is the way of tradition. We set systems in place so that we can provide a structure. So that we can feel secure. And then, at some point, as we evolve, these systems become unnecessary. But before we can move on to a new set of traditions, we must live in a slow dismantling of the old ways. It may take time. But it is useful work." (page 10)</p>	<p>Afong is the first Chinese lady to go to America. Since she is novel, Americans are curious and intrigued by her portrayal of China, its customs and traditions. The tradition of foot binding is interpreted by Americans as barbaric, even though Afong claims she likes her feet, and it is a common and elevated tradition in China to bind a young woman's feet. Afong points out the irony of Americans finding this practice barbaric, while at the same time a system of slavery was in place in this country and considered "the norm".</p>

MOTIFS

Motifs are recurring subjects, ideas, or elements in a literary work. Motifs help to develop the themes and mood of the piece.

Compiled by: Carlin C., Amore' R., and Nariah C.

Motif	Evidence (i.e. line of dialogue in script)	Analysis
The Room	<p>AFONG "This Room in which I am seated is intended to be representative of China, just as I am intended to be representative of The Chinese Lady: the first woman from the Orient ever to set foot in America, and yet this Room is unlike any room in China..." (page 2)</p> <p>"In Cincinnati, we went to a zoo. They had many animals on display at this zoo. I did not think very much about what the animals were thinking. If they had dreams or ambitions, or what they hoped to achieve in their lives behind glass. I admired them for the way they moved, their hair, their eyes. If I am in a cage, what sort of animal am I? Times I feel I am a swan or a peacock, with adornments to be admired. Times I feel I am an ox, or a donkey, or some other beast of burden. Times I feel I am a sheep. Times I feel I am a tiger. But I am none of these things, am I? I am a human being." (page 27)</p>	<p>Afong realizes and understands her role as a symbol, the "Chinese Lady" constructed and shaped for a western audience. She remarks how the room is nothing like any room in China, likely because it was created by American merchants based on their skewed understanding of Chinese culture. The tension between how she is presented vs. her authentic self is a recurring theme, as she has been placed in a foreign setting to fulfill the role of a cultural artifact.</p> <p>As the play goes on, she feels like she's in captivity in The Room. She compares herself to zoo animals on display. Afong begins to question her own identity. Her identity has shifted from feeling pretty (like a swan or peacock) to feeling like a pawn, or a "beast of burden" (like an ox or donkey).</p>
Stereotype of the Asian woman (docile, submissive, feminine, "butterfly", "China Doll")	<p>AFONG "I shall assume that you have paid your 25 cents, 10 cents for children, because you are curious about China. Curious about what a Chinese lady might look like or act like. I have not been in this country long enough to know the ways in which I might differ from other ladies you have encountered, or what your particular curiosities might be. But I have been told to highlight certain features that I possess, as they may seem exotic and foreign and unusual to you. I understand it is my duty to show you things that are exotic, and foreign, and unusual." (page 2)</p>	<p>Throughout the play, Afong reflects on her role as an object of curiosity for American audiences. She is acutely aware that people have paid to view her, not as an individual, but as a spectacle. She realizes how her audience is fascinated by what they deem "exotic, foreign, and unusual".</p>

MOTIFS

Compiled by: Carlin C., Amore' R., and Nariah C.



Walking	<p>AFONG "And for this part of the exhibition, I walk. In one revolution around the Room, to illustrate and demonstrate the form and function of my feet." (page 3)</p> <p>AFONG "Here's where the gold comes in. Because the European-Americans discovered that the mountains of Georgia had gold in them. Andrew Jackson said hey let's take their land so that we can better access the gold. So Andrew Jackson decreed that all Americans east of the Mississippi River had to resettle in the West. How did they get there? They walked." (page 32)</p> <p>"I walk but I am not going anywhere. I walk in a circle." (page 43)</p>	<p>Throughout the play, Afong's walking is part of the exhibition, specifically designed to highlight her bound feet. Forcing her to walk around the room is a form of objectification; spectators want to view her bound feet and see how she walked on them. Her movement is restricted to showcase her exoticized body for the curiosity of others. This act of walking in a revolution around "The Room" is not natural but rather a performance to reinforce her status as an object of fascination. Her bound feet symbolize both physical and cultural restriction, as Afong's mobility is controlled and shaped by the expectations of her audience.</p>
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STANDARDS OF BEAUTY AND BEAUTY PRACTICES AROUND THE WORLD

Compiled by: Faith S., Paola M., Nephtaline M.



In the play, Afong’s bound feet are a source of constant curiosity, fascination, and sometimes scorn by her spectators. However, foot binding was a common practice in China for centuries, and was seen as a rite of passage and symbol of beauty and prestige.

Below, find more information about foot binding as well as other cultural practices from around the globe.

Cultural Practice	Culture/Country of Origin	Image	Information	Source(s)
Foot binding	China		Foot binding is a cultural practice that has existed in China since the 10th century. It involves tightly bandaging the feet of women to alter their shape for aesthetic purposes, with the ultimate goal to make the feet just 3 inches long. Decorative shoes and leggings were worn over the bandages and could differ with the time of day and occasion. Once a girl married, the bandages were taken off, and she reentered the workforce.	https://www.britannica.com/science/footbinding https://www.theatlantic.com/health/archive/2020/02/lasting-damage-foot-binding/606439/
Corset wearing	Multiple		The oldest known shapewear came in the form of leather belts worn by Minoans around 1300 to 1450 B.C. Minoan artwork suggests that women wore these pieces to achieve a small waist. Other cultures continued the practice: elaborate corsets of the 18th century became synonymous with the upper class and aristocracy. These corsets, made from linen reinforced with whale bones (“boning”), helped the wearer achieve the ideal “hourglass figure”. This silhouette is still sought out in our modern era by wearers of shapewear, most notably social media influencers and high-profile celebrities.	https://thewellful.com/uncategorized/history-of-shapewear-and-body-autonomy/

STANDARDS OF BEAUTY AND BEAUTY PRACTICES AROUND THE WORLD

Compiled by: Faith S., Paola M., Nephtaline M.

<p>Henna</p>	<p>Pakistan, India, Africa, and the Middle East</p>		<p>The art of Henna—called mehndi in Hindi and Urdu—has been practiced in Pakistan, India, Africa, and the Middle East for over 5000 years. Originally, Henna was used for its natural cooling properties for people living in hot desert climates. A paste would be made, in which the palms of hands and soles of feet would be soaked. It was also used for medicinal purposes and applied to the skin to treat such ailments as stomach aches, burns, headaches, and open wounds.</p> <p>The paste left a temporary stain on the skin, so Henna began being used as skin decoration.</p> <p>Today, Henna is mainly used in celebration of special occasions such as weddings and birthdays in the joyous gathering of people. The Henna paste symbolizes good health and prosperity in marriage, and in some cultures, the darker the henna stain, the deeper the love between two individuals.</p>	<p>https://www.stu.ca/lnap/henna-its-history-and-cultural-significance</p> <p>https://www.kew.org/read-and-watch/five-things-henna</p>
<p>Neck rings/coils</p>	<p>Africa and Asia</p>		<p>Neck rings or coils are any form of stiff jewelry worn as an ornament around the neck of an individual, as opposed to a loose necklace, with the purpose of elongating the neck. In the cultures of the Ndebele people of Africa and the Kayan Lahwi people of Asia, having an extremely long neck is not only attractive but dignifying as well.</p>	<p>https://medium.com/lessons-from-history/the-culture-that-stretches-womens-necks-to-make-them-beautiful-e716631339a8</p>

MENTAL HEALTH

Compiled by: Phoenix H., Samiyah B., and Dejah C.

In the play, we believe the character Afong Moy was displaying signs of depression and an identity crisis due to the exploitation she was facing and the state of captivity she was kept in. The character questions her role and purpose in America and struggles with feeling like she doesn't belong. The character copes by talking to the audience (her viewers), though sometimes we see her working through her inner monologue to keep herself sane. She is forced to eat the same meals and engage in the same rituals (walking in a revolution around the room) every day. She's slowly losing her memories of China as well as her native language, Cantonese. Additionally, her bound feet are on display for her audience to view and judge.

The character reveals to us the heartbreaking truth that she can no longer remember her parents' faces. She wrote letters home to her parents as a young woman yet she never got a response back, because the Carnes brothers never bothered to deliver them. This likely added to her sense of isolation and hopelessness.

The real-life Afong Moy was sent to a New Jersey "poorhouse" in 1838 after her handlers, the Carnes Brothers, faced financial difficulties. The poorhouse likely took a horrible toll on her mental health. Poorhouses of the time were overcrowded and infested with rats and bugs. With Afong's limited English, it must have been a terrifying place to be.

Sources:

<https://www.history.com/news/in-the-19th-century-the-last-place-you-wanted-to-go-was-the-poorhouse>

<https://www.americanstage.org/post/the-real-woman-behind-the-chinese-lady-americas-forgotten-spectacle-afong-moy>

PRE-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Compiled by Khalil S., Oneil H., Se'Kwone B., Damarcus W.

1. How would you define the word “culture”?
 - Provide a few examples of traditions and practices that are a unique part of your identity and/or culture.
2. Have you been in a situation where you felt like you were being stereotyped or misunderstood? What was that experience like?
3. What examples of objectification can you think of in our modern era? Consider celebrities such as rappers, athletes, and/or actors in your discussion.
4. Do you believe we need family beyond childhood (into teenage years and adulthood)? What does a supportive family provide? What type of toll might it take on an individual to be taken from family and kept from communicating with them?
5. This play is called *The Chinese Lady* because it is based on Afong Moy, the first Chinese woman on American soil. Do you have any predictions about what her experience in America will be like?

POST-SHOW DISCUSSION QUESTIONS AND JOURNAL PROMPT

Compiled by Khalil S., Olivia U., Se'Kwone B., Oneil H.

1. What reasons do you think Afong Moy’s parents might have for allowing her to leave China and journey to New York?
 2. How does the play address cultural appropriation and exoticism? How do you feel about cultural appropriation? What is the difference between taking and sharing when it comes to cultural traditions?
 3. How does Afong Moy’s identity evolve throughout the play?
 4. How does Afong Moy’s physical and emotional isolation shape her character and the narrative of the plot?
 5. In what ways does the play critique the exploitation of Afong Moy’s image and story?
 6. How does the dynamic between Afong Moy and Atung reflect larger societal attitudes toward race and gender? How does their relationship evolve over time?
 7. How does the playwright reclaim or rewrite history through this work?
 8. We as the audience of this play are put in the same position as the original audience who went to see Afong Moy perform. How did it feel to be a spectator looking in at Afong in her “Room”? Can you draw any connections between yourself/your peers as a modern audience and Afong’s original audience from the mid-1800s?
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JOURNAL PROMPT



Image source:

www.nytimes.com

Reflect on your emotional and intellectual response to “The Chinese Lady”. How did the play challenge your understanding of identity, cultural representation, and history?

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