

## TEACHER'S GUIDE



LEE & LOW BOOKS

# Shining Star: The Anna May Wong Story

*written by Paula Yoo*

*illustrated by Lin Wang*

## About the Book

**Genre:** Nonfiction (biography)

**\*Reading Level:** Grades 3–4

**Interest Level:** Grades 1–6

**Guided Reading Level:** R

**Accelerated Reader® Level/Points:** 6.0/0.5

**Lexile™ Measure:** 970L

\*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

**Themes:** Famous Asian Americans, Self-esteem, Overcoming Obstacles, Arts (movies/acting), World Culture (China), Identity, Self-Esteem, Responsibility, Pride, Dreams/Aspirations, Determination, Discrimination/Prejudice, Asian American Interest

## SYNOPSIS

Born in 1905, Anna May Wong spent her childhood working in her family's laundry in Los Angeles's Chinatown. Whenever she could afford it, Anna May slipped off to the movies, escaping to a world of adventure, glamour, and excitement. After seeing a movie being filmed in her neighborhood, young Anna May was hooked. She decided she would become a movie star!

Anna May struggled to pursue an acting career in Hollywood in the 1930s. There were very few roles for Asian Americans, and many were demeaning and stereotypical. Anna May made the most of each limited part. She worked hard and always gave her best performance. Finally, after years of unfulfilling roles, Anna May began crusading for more meaningful roles for herself and other Asian American actors.

Anna May Wong—the first Chinese American movie star—was a pioneer of the cinema. Her spirited determination in the face of discrimination is an inspiration to all who must overcome obstacles so that their dreams may come true.



## BACKGROUND

**Whitewashing:** The practice of casting white actors in nonwhite character roles is known as whitewashing in Hollywood. This can involve *racebending*, or changing the race or ethnicity of the character, as well as turning an originally nonwhite character into a white character in script adaptations. Racist and discriminatory practices, such as *yellowface* and *blackface*, were also used in Hollywood whereby white actors portrayed characters of color based on demeaning physical stereotypes. White actors wore makeup and exaggerated prosthetics so they appeared to be Asian or black, resulting in inauthentic and degraded depictions.

**From the Author's Note:** Starting in the 1930s, Anna May Wong accepted only positive roles, including the characters of Lin Ying in *Bombs Over Burma* (1943) and Kwan Mei in *The Lady from Chungking* (1942). Anna May donated money she earned from these movies to the China War Relief to aid Chinese refugees during the Japanese invasions of the late 1930s. She also auctioned off her extensive collection of ball gowns and sent the money and medical supplies to China during World War II.

In the 1950s, Anna May eventually made the transition from movies to television, starring in guest roles on popular shows such as *The Life and Legend of Wyatt Earp* and the *Mike Hammer* detective series. She also starred in a short-lived television show called *The Gallery of Madame Liu-Tsong*, about an art gallery owner/detective who hunted for art treasures.

*Portrait in Black*, the last of more than fifty films in which Anna May appeared, was released in 1960. Anna May never married or had children. In her later years, she lived with her brother Richard and owned several cats and dogs. She also carefully tended a large garden of exotic plants.

On February 3, 1961, Anna May Wong died in her sleep of a heart attack at the age of fifty-six. For many years after her death, her career was viewed in a negative light. Film scholars and the general public criticized what they perceived to be her stereotypical portrayals of Asian characters. In recent years, however, many scholars and fans have realized how much Anna May struggled in her fight against discrimination in the movie industry. Critics now praise Anna May's ability to

portray her limited roles with humanity and sympathy. Today, aspiring Asian American actors and actresses acknowledge her important contributions to improving Asian images on-screen. Anna May Wong said she felt "suspended between worlds" because of her Chinese ancestry and American upbringing. Her legacy bridged a gap between both worlds and helped open doors for today's generation of actors.

### Additional titles to teach about persistence and following your dreams:

***Little Melba and Her Big Trombone*** written by Katheryn Russell-Brown, illustrated by Frank Morrison

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2854>

***Ira's Shakespeare Dream*** written by Glenda Armand, illustrated by Floyd Cooper

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2885>

***Baby Flo: Florence Mills Lights Up the Stage***

written by Alan Schroeder, illustrated by Cornelius Van Wright and Ying-Hwa Hu

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2767>

***Knockin' On Wood: Starring Peg Leg Bates*** by Lynne Barasch

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2419>

***Catching the Moon: The Story of a Young Girl's Baseball Dream*** written by Crystal Hubbard,

illustrated by Randy DuBurke

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2372>

***In Her Hands: The Story of Sculptor Augusta***

***Savage*** written by Alan Schroeder, illustrated by JaeMe Bereal

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2712>

***Jim Thorpe's Bright Path*** written by Joseph Bruchac, illustrated by S. D. Nelson

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2411>

***Sixteen Years in Sixteen Seconds: The Sammy Lee Story*** written by Paula Yoo, illustrated by Dom Lee

<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2451>



## VOCABULARY

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)

The story contains several content-specific and academic words and phrases that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary below. Encourage a variety of strategies to support students' vocabulary acquisition: look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, create a specific action for each word, list synonyms and antonyms, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

### Content Specific

Chinatown, matinee, cinema, theater, cliff-hanger, movie set, stardom, damsel in distress, Hollywood, flapper, extras, audition, director, movie critics, costars, movie studios, yellowface, China doll, dragon lady, rickshaw, Shanghai, silk factory, *cheongsam*, Sacramento, gold mines, The Great Wall of China, coal-burning

### Academic

plume, heritage, vanished, toiling, gritty, scoured, squeaky, cylindrical, dreary, malice, backbreaking, lug, stashing, rescued, taunted, reluctantly, proud, amused, collapsed, blunt, discourage, snarled, imitating, forbidding, stylish, grudgingly, permission, expressive, racist, convey, graceful, disappointed, disapproved, diligence, stubborn, hard-earned, admired, insisted, forbade, disturbed, ashamed, claimed, exaggerated, portrayed, pride, submissive, dignified, demeaning, domineering, sensation, kindhearted, interracial, realistic, heartbroken, sacrificed, disrespectful, defended, resented, absorbed, ancestral, unsympathetic, authentic

## BEFORE READING

### Prereading Focus Questions

(Reading Standards, Craft & Structure, Strands 4 and 5 and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Before introducing this book to students, you may wish to develop background knowledge and promote anticipation by posing questions such as the following:

1. Take a look at the front and back covers. Take a picture walk. Ask students to make a prediction. Do you think this book will be fiction or nonfiction? What makes you think so? What evidence do you see in the pictures and text that supports your claim?
2. What is *persistence*? Share a time you demonstrated persistence and worked hard to achieve a goal. What was your goal? Who helped you achieve it? What challenges did you face? What advice would you give someone who has a goal he or she wants to achieve?
3. What does an actor do? What are some movie genres with which you are familiar? Do you enjoy going to a movie theater or watching movies at home? Why do you think people enjoy movies?
4. What is *discrimination*? What kinds of things do people discriminate against? What does discrimination look like? How does discrimination isolate groups of people? Is discrimination still an issue today? Why or why not?
5. What is a *stereotype*? On what are stereotypes based? What assumptions do stereotypes make? How do stereotypes limit our thinking? Is stereotyping an issue today?
6. What do you know about Hollywood and movies? Why are the late 1920s to the 1940s referred to as the “Golden Age of Hollywood”? What do you think it was like to be a person of color acting in Hollywood at this time?
7. What do you know about discrimination in Hollywood? What are some examples? Is discrimination still an issue in Hollywood today? Why or why not?

### Exploring the Book

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strand 1, Craft & Structure, Strand 5, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

Read and talk about the title of the book. Ask students what they think the title, *Shining Star: The Anna May Wong Story*, means. Then ask them what and whom they think this book will most likely be about. What places or situations might be talked about in the text? What do you think might happen? What information do you think you might learn? Why?



Take students on a book walk and draw attention to the following parts of the book: front and back covers, title page, illustrations, author's note, photographs, dedications, acknowledgements, author's sources, and author and illustrator bios (found on the back flap of the jacket).

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3)

Have students read to find out:

- the controversy and legacy of Anna May Wong
- the history of whitewashing and prejudice in the Hollywood film industry
- how Anna May Wong confronted racial discrimination and stereotypes in Hollywood

Encourage students to consider why the author, Paula Yoo, would want to share this story with young people.

## AFTER READING

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, enhance comprehension, and develop appreciation for the content. Encourage students to refer to passages and/or illustrations in the book to support their responses.

**To build skills in close reading of a text, students should cite evidence with their answers.**

### Literal Comprehension

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1–3 and Craft & Structure, Strand 4)

(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strand 4)

1. What is Anna May daydreaming about at the beginning of the story?
2. How does Anna May feel about working at her father's laundry in Los Angeles? Why does she feel this way?
3. On what does Anna May spend her tip money? How much does a movie ticket cost in the early 1900s?
4. Why does Anna May enjoy going to the cinema? Why does she wish life were more like the movies?
5. What is Anna May's experience like at school?
6. How does the movie set become Anna May's new classroom?
7. What influences Anna May to want to become an actress? Why?
8. How does Anna May's father feel about her dream to become a Hollywood actress? How does his opinion change throughout the story? Why?
9. What does Anna May think of her first role as an extra in *The Red Lantern*? How does this differ with the director's opinion?
10. What do the movie critics notice about Anna May Wong?
11. How does Anna May's father show his admiration for her diligence?
12. Why is Anna May not allowed to kiss her co-star, Lon Chaney, in *Bits of Life*?
13. What is *yellowface*? What is it used for? How does yellowface make Anna May feel?
14. What types of character roles does Anna May play? What images do these roles promote of Asian people?
15. Why doesn't Anna May turn down stereotypical and discriminatory roles? How does she give dignity to the roles she accepts?
16. How does Anna May finally achieve her dream of international movie stardom?
17. Why doesn't Anna May earn the lead role of O-lan in *The Good Earth*?
18. What factors motivate Anna May to go to China in 1936?
19. Why do many Chinese people resent Anna May? What responsibility does she have to them? How does she handle their criticism?
20. How does Anna May embrace her Chinese ancestry and culture during her stay? How does immersing herself into the culture help her connect with her father?



“Full-page spreads showcase her stylish garb. . . and her early-20th-century surroundings. . . A fascinating account of the life of a determined actress.”

–*Publisher’s Weekly*

“Readers will be entranced by the actress’s rags-to-riches story, and her efforts at confronting racial discrimination will resonate with all ethnic minorities. . . A fine choice for libraries.”

–*School Library Journal*

“Wang’s watercolor-and-acrylic pictures are . . . quite lovely set pieces, like a graceful adult Anna May with floral hat and tea cup....Yoo’s earnest text illuminates the actress’s life and times.”

–*Kirkus Reviews*

21. What does Anna May’s father mean when he says, “We must be proud always of our people and race”? How does this influence Anna May’s vow to fight for authentic Asian American roles and refuse films that negatively portray Asians?

### Extension/Higher Level Thinking

(Reading Standards, Key Ideas & Details, Strands 1 and 3, Craft & Structure, Strands 4–6, and Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strand 7)

1. How do movies and acting provide an escape for Anna May?
2. How do racial discrimination and stereotyping affect Anna May’s career and self-esteem?
3. How does growing up in a traditional Chinese family in America create obstacles for Anna May? How do her dreams conflict with her family’s cultural traditions and expectations?
4. What does Anna May’s father mean when he says, “A good girl will not be an actress”? What do you think is Anna May’s father’s definition of a “good girl”?
5. How does Anna May’s passion and determination help her attain her dreams?
6. How does Anna May’s career cause her to struggle with her identity? What internal conflict does she face?
7. Although Anna May’s father is eventually proud of her, do you think he approves of her career as an actress? Why or why not?
8. How does Anna May overcome the obstacles she faces throughout her career? How does she use her acting talent to challenge character stereotypes?
9. How does being a woman of color in Hollywood affect Anna May’s career? How is her gender an additional challenge?
10. Why does Hollywood repeatedly cast white actors in leading Asian roles and not a Chinese-American actress like Anna May?
11. What does Hollywood’s use of yellowface say about the movie industry’s idea of the ideal look for Asian characters? How are Asians and Asian Americans viewed? How does yellowface perpetuate stereotypes?
12. How is Anna May Wong an outsider in her home country of the United States?
13. How does geography affect Anna May’s career opportunities? Why do you think Anna May a movie star in Europe but not in the United States?
14. Why are Anna May Wong’s career and choices controversial, and to whom?
15. How is the loss of the lead role in *The Good Earth* a turning point in Anna May’s career?
16. How is Anna May’s acting career associated with great responsibility? What responsibility does Anna May have to Asians and Asian Americans, as well as all Americans?
17. What does Anna May mean when she says, “I’m traveling to a strange country and yet, in a way,



I am going home”? What does this say about her struggle with her identity?

18. How do cultural traditions build understanding between people? How does culture bring people together?
19. Why do stereotypes exist? How do stereotypes marginalize individuals or groups of people? How is fear a foundation for stereotypes?
20. How does Anna May’s understanding of her responsibility to be “proud always of our people and race” grow throughout the story?
21. How is Anna May Wong a trailblazer for Asian Americans and women of color in Hollywood? What is significant about her career decisions?
22. Do you think Anna May Wong would be proud of the roles and movies Asian Americans play today? Why or why not?
23. Do you think Hollywood has changed in its casting and selection of subject matter to be more inclusive of people of color? Women? Other diverse perspectives? Why or why not?

### Reader’s Response

*(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1 and 2 and Production & Distribution of Writing, Strands 4–6)*  
*(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strand 1 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4 and 6)*

Use the following questions and writing activities to help students practice active reading and personalize their responses to the book. **Suggest that students respond in reader’s response journals, essays, or oral discussion.** You may also want to set aside time for students to share and discuss their written work.

1. Anna May Wong dreamed of achieving Hollywood movie stardom. What dreams do you have? What will you need to do to achieve your dreams? Why is it helpful to study people who have worked hard to achieve their dreams? What can these stories teach us? How can they inspire us?
2. Anna May’s controversial role in Hollywood was met with resentment from many Asians and Asian Americans. Do you think Anna May was wrong to portray stereotypical characters? Can

she still be a positive role model while playing stereotypical roles? Did Anna May’s career make her responsible to positively represent and advocate for Asians? Why or why not?

3. Along with Anna May’s Hollywood fame comes great responsibility to her Asian heritage and people. Have you ever been in a position or role of responsibility? What expectations were set? How did you set an example for others? What was challenging or rewarding about your experience? How did you feel in that situation? What did you learn?
4. Stereotypes make assumptions about groups people based on oversimplified characteristics. Has anyone ever made an assumption about you or your abilities? How did the experience make you feel? Were you able to change that person’s mind? Why or why not? How can stereotypes and assumptions limit someone’s thinking and reduce one’s full understanding?
5. Even though Anna May’s father does not approve of her career choice, he is proud of her. Describe a time when someone special in your life was proud of you. How did she or he show her or his feelings? How did it make you feel? Do you think everyone needs someone who believes in her or him? Why or why not?
6. Write about a time you have tried to change an adult’s mind about something. Were you successful? What advice do you have for Anna May to help her father understand why acting is so important to her?

### ELL/ESL Teaching Activities

*(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)*  
*(Language Standards, Vocabulary Acquisition & Use, Strands 4–6)*

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English Language Learners.

1. Assign ELL students to partner-read the story with strong English readers/speakers. Students can alternate reading between pages, repeat passages after one another, or listen to the more fluent reader.



2. Have each student write three questions about the story. Then let students pair up and discuss the answers to the questions.
3. Depending on students' level of English proficiency, after the first reading:
  - Review the illustrations in order and have students summarize what is happening on each page, first orally, then in writing.
  - Have students work in pairs to retell either the plot of the story or key details. Then ask students to write a short summary, synopsis, or opinion about what they have read.
4. Have students give a short talk about what they admire about Anna May Wong in the story, what the author's message in the book is, or what goal or dream they have of their own.
5. The book contains several content-specific and academic words that may be unfamiliar to students. Based on students' prior knowledge, review some or all of the vocabulary. Expose English Language Learners to multiple vocabulary strategies. Have students make predictions about word meanings, look up and record word definitions from a dictionary, write the meaning of the word or phrase in their own words, draw a picture of the meaning of the word, list synonyms and antonyms, create an action for each word, and write a meaningful sentence that demonstrates the definition of the word.

## INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

*(Introduction to the Standards, page 7: Students who are college and career ready must be able to build strong content knowledge, value evidence, and use technology and digital media strategically and capably)*

Use some of the following activities to help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas. These can also be used for extension activities, for advanced readers, and for building a home-school connection

### English Language Arts

*(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1–3, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9)*

*(Reading Standards, Key Ideas and Details, Strands 1–3, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7–9)*

*(Speaking and Listening Standards, Comprehension and Collaboration, Strands 1–2, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4–6)*

1. Have students identify and break down stereotypes with the Checking on Stereotypes lesson plan from Teaching Tolerance (<http://www.tolerance.org/activity/checking-stereotypes>).
2. Ask students to imagine that they are going to interview an actor or actress that they admire in Hollywood today. In their interview reports, have students explain what they enjoy about the actors' or actresses' performances or work, and encourage students to ask the actors or actresses about their experiences in Hollywood.
3. Encourage students to write a diary from the perspective of Anna May Wong. Students should include multiple dates and passages as Anna May chronicles her feelings about becoming an actress, the controversial roles she plays, her family's disapproval, and finding out where she belongs. How does Anna May feel about portraying Asians in a negative light? Her Chinese-American culture? Her father's disapproval? Following her dreams?
4. Anna May's decision to play controversial and stereotypical character roles is often met with resentment from Asians and Asian Americans. Do you think her critics are justified? Why or why not? In a persuasive essay, have students argue whether or not they think Anna May Wong helped break or reinforce Asian stereotypes. Alternatively, students may argue whether or not Anna May Wong's career and role choices opened more opportunities for Asian Americans on screen.
5. Have students use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast whitewashing and racial/ethnic typecasting in Hollywood. How are they similar? How are they different? What effect do these practices have on stereotypes, discrimination, and diversity? What are some solutions or alternatives?
6. Have students write and present a proposal for increasing diversity representation in Hollywood.



What could directors, producers, actors, colleges and schools, the government, and/or the general public do to increase representation of diverse backgrounds and perspectives in movies and television?

7. Have students analyze the diversity representation among the books in their classroom library using the Discovering My Identity lesson plan from Teaching Tolerance (<http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/discovering-my-identity>). Encourage students to think about the following questions: How many books have protagonists of color? How many books have protagonists with a disability? How many books have protagonists who are LGBTQ? How are the diverse characters they find portrayed?
8. Have students read *Little Melba and Her Big Trombone* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2854>), written Katheryn Russell-Brown and illustrated by Frank Morrison, and *Ira's Shakespeare Dream* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/books/2885>) written by Glenda Armand and illustrated by Floyd Cooper. Ask students to compare and contrast each book to *Shining Star: The Anna May Wong Story*. What is the central idea of each book? How are the books connected? What themes or ideas do they share?
9. Have students watch the video interview with Paula Yoo, author of *Shining Star: The Anna May Wong Story* (<https://www.leeandlow.com/writers-illustrators/interviews/paula-yoo-talks-about-her-book-shining-star>). Then ask students to imagine that they are going to interview Ms. Yoo and the illustrator of the book, Lin Wang. Students should write down interview questions they would ask the author and illustrator if they were on a talk show, news show, or radio show. What do students want to learn more about in terms of the writing process, the illustration process, inspiration for the story, Anna May Wong, Hollywood, racial stereotyping, and/or whitewashing?
10. Check out the Anti-Defamation League's lesson, "The Movies, The Academy Awards, and Implicit Bias" ([http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/movies-academy-awards-implicit-bias.html#.VPndQ2TF\\_P4](http://www.adl.org/education-outreach/curriculum-resources/c/movies-academy-awards-implicit-bias.html#.VPndQ2TF_P4)). Students will

reflect on their own experiences and opinions about movies and explore the role of implicit bias.

### Social Studies/Geography

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strands 1 and 2, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–9)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1 and 3 and Presentation of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 4–6)

1. Ask students to research the diversity in Hollywood movies or television from the 1920s to the present day and create an informational poster to present to the class. How has the diversity in Hollywood changed or not changed? What types of racial discrimination and stereotyping did people of color face and still face in Hollywood? Who were instrumental actors of color who broke barriers in the industry? How have they affected people of color in Hollywood? How have their reputations changed or evolved? What progress has been made, if any? Encourage students to examine the Diversity Gap in the Academy Awards (<http://blog.leeandlow.com/2014/02/20/wheres-the-diversity-hollywood-85-years-of-the-academy-awards/>), Diversity Gap in Sci-fi and Fantasy Films (<http://blog.leeandlow.com/2014/07/29/wheres-the-diversity-hollywood-sci-fi-and-fantasy-blockbusters-overwhelmingly-white-male/>), and the Diversity Gap in the Emmy Awards (<http://blog.leeandlow.com/2013/09/18/wheres-the-diversity-a-look-at-the-emmy-awards-and-tv/>) studies in their research.
2. Have students work in small groups to create timelines illustrating the history of whitewashing in Hollywood movies from the 1920s until today, and then discuss and share their timelines as a class. How has whitewashing changed or transformed? What events or shifts in history initiated the changes? Is whitewashing still a problem in Hollywood? Why or why not? What is being done to address this problem?
3. Ask students to research diversity representation in another industry, such as book publishing or technology. How well is diversity (race/ethnicity, gender, disability, sexual identity) represented? Where is the diversity gap evident? What are some



solutions or alternatives? What organizations and programs are offering action-based solutions to close the diversity gap in this industry? How will they achieve their goals or objectives? How can other people get involved to push for greater diversity representation?

4. Have students research and create an informational presentation about another influential American who overcame obstacles to pave the way for positive change. Who was this person? What did he or she do that influenced others? Why was his or her work or efforts important? What should people know about him or her?
5. Have students learn more about Chinese immigrant life during the late 1800s and early 1900s in Los Angeles and San Francisco Chinatowns. Make a chart with the following topics: Housing, Family life, Jobs, Discrimination. Have students explore the Chinese Immigration presentation from the Library of Congress for more information (<http://www.loc.gov/teachers/classroommaterials/presentationsandactivities/presentations/immigration/chinese.html>).
6. Using a T-chart graphic organizer, students should represent their research about how the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and the Immigration Act of 1924 affected Asians and Asian Americans in the United States. What did these laws limit or prevent? What factors led to these laws? What were the effects? What statement did these laws make to Asians and Asian Americans? How do you think these laws impacted the treatment and portrayal of Asian Americans in American culture? When were these laws repealed? Why were they repealed?

### Art/Media

(Reading Standards, Integration of Knowledge & Ideas, Strands 7 and 9)

(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1-3, Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas, Strands 4-6)

1. Have students watch the “Anna May Wong: In Her Own Words” movie trailer ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rdjiMN\\_NSs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2rdjiMN_NSs)). How does Anna May appear? What do you notice about the roles Anna May plays? How does she handle herself on film and in public? What surprises or does not surprise you? What questions do you have?
2. Ask students to design a movie poster advertisement for an upcoming movie starring Anna May Wong. Encourage students to think carefully about the words, phrases, and imagery they will include in their movie poster. What would her ideal movie role be? Why should people see this movie, and how will you persuade them to see it? Have students write a summary explaining their movie poster design and present it to the class.
3. Anna May struggled with her Chinese-American identity throughout her career. Have students create a mixed-media collage based on their own personal and cultural identities. Each student should include a photograph of herself or himself within the collage, as well as experiment with colored pencils, paints, magazine clippings, text, and other art materials. How will you capture and depict your personality, family background, and different and interconnected identities? What symbols, imagery, words, and colors will you use? How will you organize them? How do the included images or objects represent you? Ask students to present their mixed-media collages in small groups.
4. Have students make a list of ten recent live-action movies or television shows they have enjoyed and investigate how many depict a protagonist of color, a protagonist with a disability, or a protagonist who is LGBTQ. Then ask students to identify the diverse supporting characters (race/ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation). In small groups and as a class, have students share and discuss their results. How are the diverse characters portrayed? What types of roles are the diverse actors playing? What surprises or does not surprise you about these results? Do you think only people of a particular race or ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, or physical/mental ability can play these lead and supporting roles? Why or why not?
5. In small groups, have students examine and discuss photographs, advertisements, and video examples of racial stereotyping in the American media from the early 20th century to the present day. How do you feel looking at these pictures and documents? What influence does the media have on society?



How has racial and ethnic representation in American media and entertainment industries changed or not changed? What changes still need to be made? What are some recent examples of racial and ethnic stereotyping in the media?

6. Help students learn how to view media advertisements with a critical lens and identify stereotypical messages with the Reading Advertisements lesson plan series from Teaching Tolerance (<http://www.tolerance.org/lesson/reading-advertisements>) and the race and ethnicity lesson plan from The Critical Media Project (<http://www.criticalmediaproject.org/cml/topicbackground/race-ethnicity/>).

### School–Home Connection

*(Speaking & Listening Standards, Comprehension & Collaboration, Strands 1–3)*

*(Writing Standards, Text Types & Purposes, Strand 2, Production & Distribution of Writing, Strand 4, and Research to Build & Present Knowledge, Strands 7–8)*

1. Anna May Wong engages and connects with her culture and heritage during her visit to China. Have students bring in something from their family to share with the class. Ask students to write a summary explaining how their item is significant to and representative of who they are.
2. Have students interview a parent or guardian about what they were passionate about when they were growing up. How was this passion important, meaningful, or enjoyable? Did the person pursue a career in her or his passion? If not, does the person wish she or he had pursued a career in this field or does she or he still enjoy it as a hobby? What does the person think is challenging and rewarding about pursuing a passion as a career? What advice would the person give to someone turning a passion into a career? Students should write down their interviewee’s responses and be prepared to share them in class.
3. Encourage students to ask a parent or guardian to describe a time he or she experienced discrimination or witnessed discrimination toward someone else. How did the experience make the person feel? What did the person do, if anything?

What positive changes has the person seen since his or her childhood, or hopes to see in the future?

4. Invite students to research an actor from their community, city, or state. In what movies, television shows, or plays has this actor performed? What challenges has this actor faced? Create a timeline of major events in the actor’s life and career. Have student use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the artist’s life and career with Anna May Wong’s. Alternatively, invite a local actor from a community theater group or nearby university to discuss with students the joys and challenges of pursuing acting today (either in theater, on television, or in movies).

### Awards and honors:

**Carter G. Woodson Book Award Honor**, National Council for Social Studies (NCSS)

**Best Children’s Books of the Year**, Bank Street College

**“Choices,”** Cooperative Children’s Book Center



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**Paula Yoo** is the author of *Sixteen Years in Sixteen Seconds*, a Texas Bluebonnet Award Masterlist selection and winner of Lee & Low's New Voices Award. Yoo is a graduate of Yale University and Columbia University Graduate School of Journalism. She earned her MFA in creative writing from Warren Wilson College. She is a children's book author, novelist, and television writer/producer. Her TV credits include *Supergirl* (The CW), *The Greenhouse* (Netflix), *Defiance* (Syfy), *Mozart in the Jungle* (Amazon), *Eureka* (Syfy) and *The West Wing* (NBC). She is an honoree of the 2012–2013 Writers Guild of America Feature Access Project competition for movie/feature screenwriting. Yoo and her husband live in Los Angeles, California. You can visit her at [paulayoo.com](http://paulayoo.com).

## ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

**Lin Wang** is a classically trained portrait painter with a Masters in Fine Arts from the Savannah College of Art and Design. She has illustrated several books for children, including Lee & Low's *The Crane Girl*. Her work has been recognized by the Society of Illustrators Original Art Show. Wang lives with her husband and their son and daughter in Fremont, California. You can visit her at [linstudio.com](http://linstudio.com).

## ABOUT LEE & LOW BOOKS

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\$9.95, PAPERBACK

978-1-62014-257-8

32 pages, 11 X 8-5/16

\*Reading Level: Grades 3–4

\*Reading level based on the Spache Readability Formula

Interest Level: Grades 1–6

Guided Reading Level: R

Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 6.0/0.5

Lexile™ Measure: 970L

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