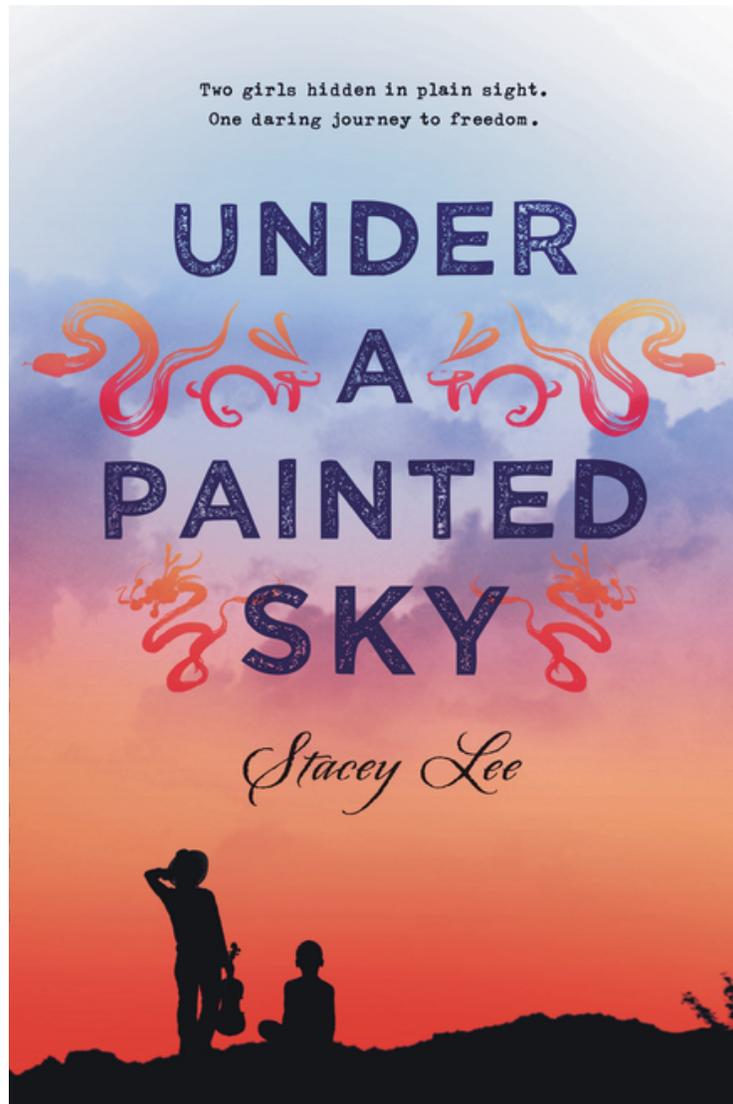


DISCUSSION & ACTIVITY GUIDE



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DISCUSSION GUIDE

1. Samantha and Annamae disguise themselves as boys in order to escape. Was this a good choice that they made? Why or why not?
2. Compare the different characters in the novel. How are they similar and how are they different? Focus your discussion on these pairings:

Samantha and her father

Samantha and Annamae

Samantha and West

Anname and Peety

3. Explain how Lady Tin-Yin serves as more of a character than a favorite instrument in the story.
4. Discuss the significance of losing Lady Tin-Yin in the river.
5. Why is the novel called *Under a Painted Sky*? Where in the story does this phrase appear? Is this significant?
6. References to Chinese Zodiac signs appear throughout the novel. What is each character's sign and are the character traits associated with each zodiac animal fitting for each of the characters?
7. Though Mr. Trask and the Broken Hand Gang only appear briefly in the story, they are frequently referenced throughout the novel. Why do you think this is the case? Are these minor characters significant to the plot of the story? Why or why not? What purpose do they serve?
8. Though the book is mostly historically accurate, the author decided to change the location of Yellowstone and she invented Harp Falls. Why do you think the writer did this? What purpose does it serve?
9. Why did Isaac pull the MacMartin brothers with him down the waterfall? Consider all the events leading up to this one. What reasons drove Isaac to make this decision?



10. Discuss how Samantha's character and abilities change in the book. Compare what she was like in the beginning of the novel to the person she became at the end of the novel.
11. Samantha has many flashbacks. What purpose do these flashbacks serve?
12. Is there symbolism behind some of the characters' names? If so, what is it?
13. Examine how Samantha's friendship with Annamae grew and deepened through the course of the novel.
14. The bonds of family are featured prominently in this book even though only a few characters are related to each other. Which characters have formed a family? Also, analyze the relationships of each "family" in the story.
15. Trace the clues in the story that laid the foundation for romance between Samantha and West.
16. Water is frequently mentioned throughout the novel. Explain what water symbolizes in this book and what purpose it serves.
17. Explain how the setting sometimes functions as an antagonist in this story for Samantha.



SUGGESTED ACTIVITIES*

1. Before starting the novel, introduce background information on the Gold Rush and the Oregon Trail.

The Sacramento Bee's "California Gold Rush!" (guide.sacbee.com/153) provides a brief overview of this era on their webpage **Chapter 1: Gold! An Era Remembered.**

(<http://guide.sacbee.com/154>)

- After browsing this resource, have students make a list of all the different routes to California, by land and sea.
- Next, have them discuss all the dangers and challenges these travelers had to endure.

Learn about the Oregon Trail by visiting the Bureau of Land Management website (www.blm.gov).

- Their webpage **Basic Facts About the Oregon Trail** is a good place to start. (<http://www.blm.gov/or/oregontrail/history-basics.php>)
- This resource also has a lesson called "**Pack Your Wagon,**" which gives students the opportunity to plan and discuss the challenges of undertaking this journey to the West. (<http://www.blm.gov/or/oregontrail/files/packwagon.pdf>)

2. After reading Chapter Four, learn more about the Underground Railroad by visiting PBSLearningMedia.org or Education.NationalGeographic.com and enter "underground railroad" in the search bar.

3. Have students conduct their own research on the Gold Rush, the Oregon Trail, or the Underground Railroad.

- Teach students how to evaluate the resources found on the Internet by directing them to Jim Capoun's "**Five Criteria for Evaluating Web Pages.**" This guide is published on Cornell University Library's website at: <https://olinuris.library.cornell.edu/ref/research/webcrit.html>.
- Using Google Advanced Search, show students how they can narrow their research within specific domains like ".gov" and ".edu." (http://www.google.com/advanced_search)
- After conducting their research, have students create poster boards showcasing what they've learned.

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



4. Create a Chinese Zodiac card for each of the five characters:

Samantha, Annamae, West, Cay, and Peety

- On the front of each card, draw the zodiac animal and list three personality traits that are often attributed to this animal.
- On the back of the card, find evidence from the story that supports each personality trait listed on the front of the card. Quote directly from the novel.

Alternate Digital Activity: Create the Zodiac cards on Google Slides.

- Use Google Advanced Image Search to find images and have students filter their results by choosing “Free to use or share.”
- Teach students the difference between public domain, Creative Commons licensing, and copyrighted images. Include a lesson on proper credit attribution. To learn more on this topic, visit creativecommons.org.

5. Trace Samantha and Annamae’s journey to the West on a map of the United States.

- Where were some of the places they stopped or passed through?
- Were they all historically accurate?
- If not, why would the author make the change?

For each location, examine the setting by quoting from the story. Then compare it to its modern equivalent.

- Students can use sticky notes to add their notes to the map.

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

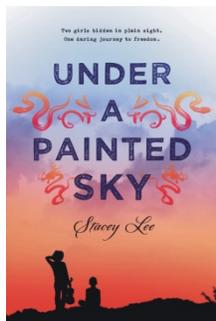
- Using Google My Maps, students can drop markers on the map to indicate each location the characters visited. Students can include short descriptions or images for each place they pin. This idea is inspired by Jerome Burg’s Google Lit Trips.
- Using [Google Drawings](#), [Thinglink](#), or [VoiceThread](#),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

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



BOOK INFORMATION

A powerful story of friendship and sacrifice



Missouri, 1849: Samantha dreams of moving back to New York to be a professional musician—not an easy thing if you’re a girl, and harder still if you’re Chinese. But a tragic accident dashes any hopes of fulfilling her dream and, instead, leaves her fearing for her life. With the help of a runaway slave named Annamae, Samantha flees town for the unknown frontier.

Life on the Oregon Trail is unsafe for two girls, so they disguise themselves as Sammy and Andy, two boys headed for the California gold rush. Sammy and Andy forge a powerful bond as they each search for a link to their past and struggle to avoid any unwanted attention. But when they cross paths with a band of cowboys, the lighthearted crew turns out to be unexpected allies. With the law closing in on them and new setbacks coming each day, the girls quickly learn that there are not many places to hide on the open trail.

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

Published by G. P. Putnam’s Sons, an imprint of Penguin Young Readers Group
978-0-399-16803-1 • March 17, 2015 • Ages 12 up • Grades 7 up



Author Bio:

Stacey Lee is a fourth-generation Chinese American. A Southern California native, she graduated from UCLA and got her law degree at UC Davis King Hall. Now she plays classical piano, wrangles children, and writes young adult fiction. Stacey lives outside San Francisco, California.

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This discussion and activity guide is authored by Alice Chen, an English teacher, Technology Coach, Google Certified Teacher, and Lead PBS Lead Digital Innovator. She has also been recognized for her work in the classroom by UCSD and Microsoft. You can follow her on Twitter [@wondertechedu](https://twitter.com/wondertechedu).



COMMON CORE STATE STANDARDS

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

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

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

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.4, 8.4, 9.4, 10.4, 11.4, 12.4

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

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.6, 8.6

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RL.7.9

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

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.7.8, 8.8, 9.8, 10.8, 11.8, 12.8

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

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

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

