



# Dragonwings

*Laurence Yep*

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## **Dragonwings** Laurence Yep

Moon Shadow was eight when he sailed from China to join his father Windrider in America. Windrider lived in San Francisco's Chinatown and worked in a laundry. Moon Shadow had never seen him.

But he soon loved and respected this father, a man of genius, a man with a fabulous dream. And with Moon Shadow's help, Windrider was willing to endure the mockery of the other Chinese, the poverty, and the longing for his wife and his own country to make his dream come true.

Inspired by the account of a Chinese immigrant who made a flying machine in 1909, Laurence Yep's historical novel beautifully portrays the rich traditions of the Chinese community as it made its way in a hostile new world.

## **Dragonwings Details**

Date : Published January 23rd 2001 by HarperCollins (first published 1975)

ISBN : 9780064400855

Author : Laurence Yep

Format : Paperback 336 pages

Genre : Historical, Historical Fiction, Young Adult, Fiction, Childrens, Academic, School, Middle Grade, Cultural, China, Read For School

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# From Reader Review Dragonwings for online ebook

## Meghan says

I really enjoyed this book. It's listed as appropriate for 10+ year olds, which I think I would have to agree. But I really appreciated that it didn't talk down to the reader but rather, it felt like he was challenging the reader to think bigger than "normal".

As I am moving to China and learning more about the culture and traditions of these people, I was quite excited to read about the various festivals and holidays Moon Shadow celebrated throughout his story. It actually reminded me a lot of All-in-the-Family books, which teach about various Jewish culture.

The story is loosely based on an actual historical figure (a Chinese man did really improve upon the Wright brothers airplane in the US). So this really appealed to my love for historical fiction.

This book is actually Book 3 in a series. The series spans 150 years of one family's journey from China to the US. It deals with how life was like for these families without caricaturizing or stereotyping any one person. There are good Americans, but Yep doesn't shy away from portraying the ugly ones either. I'm looking forward to reading the rest of the series. It ends with a modern-day Chinese American dealing with the problems (and rewards) of integrating into two very distinct cultures--trying to remain true to their Chinese heritage while accepting their stature as an American.

I highly recommend this series. My husband, who's Chinese, also really enjoyed this story. He was very excited when he read it as Yep portrayed the characters and settings accurately. His main compliment for the story was that he could picture it in his mind--the characters, the clothing, the buildings, etc. He also has spent a lot of time in San Francisco (which is the setting for the story), so he really enjoyed that aspect as well.

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## Lars Guthrie says

I'm given to dissing teachers who assign the same old book year after year, and this is the umpteenth time I've read 'Dragonwings' because it was assigned to a middle schooler with whom I was working. 'Dragonwings,' however, is just the greatest of novels on so many levels--as an historical novel, an adventure novel, a multicultural novel, a coming-of-age novel. I love it, and each time I read it, gain more from the reading. 'Dragonwings' encompasses everything from the 'I Ching' to E. Nesbit, opium to aviation, and Yep has stellar style. So I guess I would say to those fusty pedagogues who pedantically prescribe their perennial books over and over again, stop doing that! Get a new perspective on things and the children you teach! Grow a little! But if you just can't, at least use books like this one. Highly recommended, just not as regularly required reading.

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## Jonathan says

This is an enjoyable tale of a young Chinese boy who travels to the US to be with his father. His father longs to fly and begins a correspondence with the Wright Brothers. I'll spare the details of his quest to avoid

spoilers, but honestly, that part of the plot seems to take a back seat to what I felt the true message of the story is.

The author calls *Dragonwings* an historical fantasy. It is loosely based on a Chinese man who did actually create a flying machine that stayed airborne for 20 minutes in the early 1900's. Few details remain about that man, so the author intertwined his character with other stories of what life was like for the Chinese immigrants back then.

I love stories like this that invite the reader to see the world from another perspective. I love the beauty of various cultures and I love stories of friendships that form, allowing different individuals to understand each other a little better and see how those cultural beliefs and practices influence the human being behind them.

Too often, we define others by the strange differences we perceive. A Hasidic Jew might seem weird, with his dark suit, tzitzits, sidelocks, and beard. It can be hard to figuratively see past the burqa worn by a Muslim woman. And in the case of this book, one might have been blinded by the stereotypes about the china-men "stealing jobs from Americans" while building railroads or washing clothes.

In the end, we're all people. People with families and dreams. People who draw strength and understanding from traditional stories, religion, or folklore. People trying to survive. And in the most beautiful cases - people working hard to realize a dream.

Wow, this review got soap-boxy in a hurry. Anyway, I recommend this story. It's not on my top ten list, but it did make my commute much more enjoyable over the last week or so.

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## **Rian says**

**Summary:** This novel tells the story of Moon Shadow's decision to leave the Middle Kingdom and come live in turn-of-the-century San Francisco with his father. It chronicles his life in America, first in the Tang people's part of the city (what white people call Chinatown), and then living alone with his father among the "demons," as he considers white people.

**Response:** I have never read a Laurence Yep book, and I am so glad I finally did. I will definitely read more. Aside from how much I enjoyed the narrative elements, I enjoyed the perspective-shift that Yep provided me as a white reader. He not only chooses a character who can provide me with a new perspective, but he uses language conventions in such a way as to jar me out of my usual position. For example, he refers to China and the Chinese people by the names they themselves would use (the Middle Kingdom, the T'ang people), and his main character constantly refers to white people as demons. He also italicizes all the American words in the book, a convention that usually highlights the "foreign" words in a story. The cumulative effect of this was to make me feel like the outsider, in a way, because from Moon Shadow's point of view, my familiar world is his foreign world. many writers of immigrant stories convey that very well, but I really enjoyed how Yep accomplished this goal in a very specific way. It is the same reason that I enjoyed the reading experience, as well as the information, in *A to Zen*, where the book is not only about Japan, but is laid out in a Japanese book format.

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## **HISTORICAL FICTION**

## **malak Mosilhy says**

This book was really intense and dramatic. For example, it included the great San Francisco earthquake, death, life challenges, and many more! The story revolve around a little boy named Moon Shadow, his father (Windrider), and their company. Moon Shadow travels from China to San Francisco; leaving his mother behind. He worked with his father at the company until something happened that made them leave the company, and move in with a kind lady named Miss Whitlaw and her niece Robin. Few years later, the San Francisco earthquake happens, and leaves with many challenges and obstacles to survive. Later, Windrider chases his dream, which he wants to create a machine that will make a human fly (Dragonwings) with help from his son. Meanwhile, no one else believing Windrider's dream except his son. " 'It's only a dream of ours, Shadow,' Father said" gently. "...it could be managed; but I'm more likely to fly again in this life than to bring our mother over here." " 'But perhaps you will fly,' I said." The writing of this book was alright because it was sort of boring during few events. One strength this book has is that it includes a lot of academic vocabularies. One weakness this book has is that it some point it becomes uninteresting. If this book was a part of serious of books I will read it because I love dramatic stories.

"But perhaps you will fly," I said

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## **Kailey\_C1 says**

### **Dragon Wings**

I read this book in the beginning of 2017. This book is a historical fiction. It was a true story that happened in the early 19 hundred. This book talks about an 8-year-old boy named Moon Shadow. When I got this book from my teacher the cover was plain. I didn't want to read at first but, as I read the story it got more and more interesting. The best part in the story was when he made the airplane and flew it on the top of the mountain with his father. It felt very touching when his family flew the airplane with him. It was touching because the family didn't support the main character's dreams at first and the boy never gave up. A pretty good book.

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## **Timothy Grossano says**

Dragonwings was a fantastic book. It is a historical fiction, and based very loosely on the true life a Chinese inventor and aviator who lived in San Francisco in the early 1900s. Most is fictional as very little is known about the real Fung Joe Guey.

The book is filled with wonderful characters, dialog, and life lessons. Descriptions of events like the 1906 San Francisco earthquake are realistic and full of life. The story is told from the perspective of a young Chinese boy, who full of misunderstanding and prejudice, sees white culture through a justifiably tainted lens. The protagonist isn't dragged over a steep plot arch. There's no grand climax. Instead, he's faced with a constant onslaught of trial and conflict which he bravely faces, and in spite of all, never ceases to see beauty in the world in which he lives.

Dragonwings is a wonderful story. Those who might be interested in living, for a few days, in the life of a

young Chinese immigrant in 1900s San Francisco, can find what they're looking for here.

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### **Vincent Lin says**

racist

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### **Kevin Kennedy-Spaen says**

A man and his son coming to understand each other, their adopted homeland and the power of flight in earthquake-ravaged 1903 San Francisco.

Read for work - Loved it!

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### **Tanisha says**

So far it's pretty good!!!!

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### **Alicia Gordon says**

I don't know why exactly but I felt overcome with emotion after finishing this. I read the play version for a class and it only took me about an hour. This tale takes place in the early twentieth century and follows a young boy, Moon Shadow, who moves from China to San Francisco to live and work with his father. Moon Shadow soon realizes that California is not the mythical "Land of the Golden Mountains" that he'd heard so much about, but rather a foreign space filled with hostile natives and horrible prejudices. It was both painful and inspiring to witness Moon Shadow struggle but accomplish in sustaining pride for where he came from, and to see both him and his father hold onto their dream to fly like the dragons, even in the midst of intolerance and devastation. I noticed that some people have mentioned that it was slow paced and perhaps it was, but I had no trouble keeping interest because I cared so much about the well-being of the character. I really enjoyed this and I feel like this is one of those stories that stay with you for a long, long time. The only bothersome bit is how swiftly the "climax" and "resolution" (if you can call it that) came and went. These story structures seemed to exist only within the last few pages. It isn't a huge issue though.

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### **Sumayyah says**

Now, I had to read this book for school so it wasn't my choice. I say this because I normally don't read books with the main theme being flying. And I'll be honest I did NOT like this book. At first, I thought it was okay, but when the story progressed, rather slowly, I thought it was kind of slow paced. It also seemed like the author made the character's meet just for the purpose to be used later, not for emotional or mental thought. I hope you know what I mean. And the story didn't even seem to be about Moon Shadow, for as much of the

story is his, his father's parts probably triple it. I also got rather annoyed when something his father does in particular. You may know that Moon Shadow is shipped off to America to live with his father because he wants him to come. BUT what you don't know is that he acts like he's not even there sometimes, read the book and you'll see. There is also another problem with the rating, it is rated 10+ but really shouldn't be. They mention prostitutes, drugs, murder (not just mention, it actually happens right in front of the main character) and bad language. Is that what 10 yr olds should be reading about? They may need to know those things but not that soon. 12+ at least.

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### **EJ Johnson says**

A juvenile fiction book about 8 year old Moon Shadow from China who joins his father in San Francisco at the beginning of the 20th Century. His father, Windrider, kite maker extraordinaire, had been in America since before Moon Shadow was born because their own national government and society couldn't or wouldn't provide employment or means for families to survive. America was a land of promise for them and provided the means of supporting their families in China. Windrider worked in a laundry run by the Company but dreamed of being a dragon and flying. While most of the Company didn't plan on ever bringing their families to America, Windrider worked for that goal. The book deals with many adult issues which would be hard for young readers to comprehend--prostitution, Chinese gangs, opium, family separation, earthquake and fire disaster and death. Racism was obvious from both sides. Also includes swearing as Moon Shadow becomes more proficient in English. One aspect overlooked in the reviews I read was the love and acceptance of Miss Whitlaw and Robin and the kindness of other Americans. This would be a good book for families to share together. And they should also fly kites together when they read it.

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### **Andrew M says**

I though dragonwings was a pretty good book I don't know what. I liked about the book and what I didn't but it was pretty decent book

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### **Jinbin says**

Moon Shadow, an 8-year-old Chinese boy, migrates to America to join his father Windrider. The father and son meet for the first time in their life because Windrider sails to Aemrica before Moon Shadow was born. Seeing his own father as a stranger at first, Moon Shadow learns to love and respect his father as time passes. They together make a living by doing laundry for the "white demons" as they called.

I was a little disappointed by this book because I was looking forward to learn more about the Chinese culture and making connections to it. However, as it turns out, it's different from what I have expected. The story focuses on the Chinese immigration during the late 1800s and the life of the immigrants in San Francisco. There are places where the events described are very similar to what I have learned in class. Many of the Americans viewed the Chinese as foreigner or "aliens" and treated them poorly and without respect. Sometimes I found this book boring because of the details and confusing names.

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### **Naomi says**

This book was ok, I guess I enjoy the realism of this story as it could be possible but it wasn't a wow. I really enjoyed how at the end of the story Windrider realizes that Moonshadow and his whole entire family is worth more than flying and is fine with just knowing he could fly. I also enjoyed how Uncle started to gaze upon life in a different manner as now he has befriended a demon.

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### **Isaac says**

This was the worst book I've ever read.

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### **Frankie says**

For me this reminds me of the hard work that my grand-parents had to do for me to be here right now. It is a story about a boy who's father is in america and now he wants to me meet his father so he goes on this joureny to find his father. Once he is there they have a good time but other people do not like his father so bad things happen. then there was a big commotion in the story. Close to end (as you can see there is a plane that is on the cover) they fly there plane but bad things happen again.

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### **Sarah LaFleur says**

I read DRAGONWINGS by Laurence Yep with my seventh grade guided reading group. For those of you unfamiliar with this method of teaching, it means working with a small group of students (4-8 kids depending) and guiding them through an instructional level book by facilitating discussion, providing meaning, and pointing out details that may be missed by inexperienced readers. When we finished reading, I decided to take their comments and compile them to turn my review of the book into another learning experience. Here is what they thought:

Collectively, we give DRAGONWINGS three stars.

The positives included the great writing with meaningful details. Yep's use of higher level vocabulary provided many teaching moments, and I always appreciate an opportunity to add words to the repertoire existing in young minds. More than one member of our group felt like they really got to know the characters, and I think this is a testament to Yep's writing style. Finally, the book was historically accurate (yes we checked!) and the kids were excited to see it was based on an actual person despite the fact that the story itself was a work of fiction.

On the flip side, my students found some parts of this book boring despite the sections with intense action or emotion. They felt the story was predictable. As their guide, making predictions about the outcome of the story is one of the big ways to engage student readers, and many of their predictions along the way did turn out to be accurate. The story at times was choppy with inadequate transitions from major action sequences to



unrelated character driven scenes. We spoke frequently about author purpose during those moments, but I can understand how that disrupted the continuity of the story for them. Finally, there were several missing plot pieces that never were resolved, and none of us were satisfied with the ending. Everything was summed up at the end very quickly, making us feel like it ended abruptly. Several students lamented that they wished for more drama, that something drastic would happen in the final pages to make the whole journey more worthwhile.

Although they didn't love this book, I enjoyed watching my students make meaningful connections, learn new vocabulary, and react emotionally to this book. I would definitely use it again in an educational setting, but I'm not sure I would recommend it for pure reading enjoyment.

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### **Tino T says**

Eih it was ok. It was a good plot but hard to want to read consistency.

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