



About the Book

In the valley of Fruitless Mountain, a young girl named Minli lives in a ramshackle hut with her parents. In the evenings, her father regales her with old folktales of the Jade Dragon and the Old Man of the Moon, who knows the answers to all of life's questions. Inspired by these stories, Minli sets off on an extraordinary journey to find the Old Man of the Moon to ask him how she can change her family's fortune. She encounters an assorted cast of characters and magical creatures along the way, including a dragon who accompanies her on her quest for the ultimate answer.

About the Author

Grace Lin grew up in Upstate New York with her parents and two sisters. While the other sisters became scientists, Grace became an artist. Surprisingly enough, being an artist was not Grace's first choice. She first dreamed of being a champion ice skater and drew many pictures of herself twirling and dancing on the ice. Unfortunately, Grace had neither the talent nor coordination to make it to skating stardom. However, the pictures she drew of herself held much promise and quickly became Grace's career focus.

After attending the Rhode Island School of Design, Grace quickly set out to achieve her dream of creating children's books. Her first book, *THE UGLY VEGETABLES*, was published in 1999 and was quickly heralded. Grace followed that success with the publication of over a dozen more books, including *DIM SUM FOR EVERYONE!* and *LISSEY'S FRIENDS*. Grace's first children's novel, *THE YEAR OF THE DOG* was released to glowing praise in 2006 and nominated to the TX Bluebonnet list, which she followed with *THE YEAR OF THE RAT*.

Her novel *WHERE THE MOUNTAIN MEETS THE MOON* was awarded the 2010 Newbery Honor, chosen for Al Roker's Today Show Kid's Book Club and was a NY Times Bestseller. Grace's early reader *LING & TING* was awarded with the Theodor Geisel Honor in 2011 and her picture book *A BOOK MOONCAKE FOR LITTLE STAR* was awarded the 2019 Caldecott Honor.

As well as occasionally reviewing for the NYTimes, Grace has become an advocate for diversity. She is a commentator for New England Public Radio and created the [video essay](#), "What to do when you realize classic books from your childhood are racist?" for PBSNewHour.

Grace also delivered the popular [TED talk](#), "The Windows and Mirrors of Your Child's Bookshelf." Grace continued to voice her opinions on the podcast: [kidlitwomen*](#) and currently hosts two podcasts: [Book Friends Forever](#) and [Kids Ask Authors](#). She truly believes, "Books erase bias, they make the uncommon everyday, and the mundane exotic. A book makes all cultures universal."

About the Playwright

Min Kahng (he/him) is an award-winning playwright, composer, lyricist and creative coach whose works include *The Adventures of Honey & Leon*, *The Four Immigrants: An American Musical Manga* (Bay Area Theatre Critics Circle Award, Theatre Bay Area Award, Edgerton New Play Award, NAMT Production Grant), *GOLD: The Midas Musical* (Theatre Bay Area Award), *Iris Lee's Audio Odyssey* (published by Playscripts), *Inside Out & Back Again*, *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon: A Musical Adaptation*, *Bad Kitty On Stage!*, *The Song of the Nightingale* and *Tales of Olympus*. Kahng also wrote the NEA-funded project *Story Explorers*, an original musical for young audiences with autism. Kahng is an alumnus of MacDowell, Playwrights Foundation Resident Initiative, Berkeley Rep's Ground Floor, Djerassi, Willapa Bay AiR, and the TheatreWorks New Works Festival. He has been invited as a Guest Lecturer/Artist at Harvard University, Stanford University, UC Berkeley, San Jose State University and The San Francisco Conservatory of Music. Kahng is a Jonathan Larson Grant Finalist, a Richard Rodgers Award Finalist, and a Dramatists Guild committee member.



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Before the Show Reflection Questions:

Reading a book is like taking a journey. Some of the things that happen do not make sense until the journey is over or the book is finished. The book *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* is like the Old Man of the Moon's connection of red threads—many things are connected that do not seem to be at first glance. Here are some questions you might ask yourself or other people who have read the book to help see those many connections:

Minli's name means "quick thinking." As the book opens, she wishes her name meant "gold" or "fortune." Do you think her name suits her? How do the other names also suit her in the end? (Page 3)

Ma thinks her family has a "poor fortune" because they have plenty of stories, but not plenty of food. How do stories turn to fortune? (Pages 9-10)

Where does the inkstone that the painter used to create the dragon come from? Does the origin of the inkstone have anything to do with the dragon coming to life or the Fruitless Mountain coming back to life? (Pages 53 and 90)

Ba says that Minli is like the Paper of Happiness. If the Paper of Happiness says "Thankfulness," how is it like Minli?

The buffalo boy's friend is only a weaver. How would she know where to find the king and why does she look toward the moon as she considers the question? (Page 112-114)

Why do you think the buffalo boy refuses Minli's coin, as he is obviously poor? What does that teach Minli? (Pages 120 and 159)

How are A-Fu and Da-Fu able to trick the tiger? How is the tiger the opposite of the villagers? (Pages 168-174)

Why does Minli choose to ask Dragon's question above all the other questions she has? (Pages 246-250)

In the end, Ma is also a storyteller and tells her own story. How are her story and what she learns similar to what Minli learns? (Pages 252-255)

What happens because Minli's family decides to give away the dragon pearl and not keep those riches for themselves? (Pages 271-278)

Page to Stage!

If your class has not yet read the book you can share some excerpts to the left to help them prepare.

Many books have been turned into movies, TV shows, and Plays just like this one. These are called adaptations. Min Kahng adapted Grace Linn's Book into the play you're about to see. As you watch the play, pay careful attention. You'll notice that some things are very different where others have stayed the same. Some "scenes" may even have been either because it would be difficult or take too long to show on stage or because the playwright wanted to tell the story a different way. This is sometimes called "artistic" or creative license.

As you watch the play, see if you can notice the differences between the story we've read and the story you see on stage. One thing you'll notice is that the story we're about to see is a musical where music and singing are used to help tell the story. As you watch see if you can notice how the music helps tell the story. We'll talk more about this after the show.

Big Ideas:

The value of gratitude

The power of stories

Believing in the impossible

Keywords:

Thankfulness

Fortune



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The Power of Stories

“What kept Minli from becoming dull and brown like the rest of the village were the stories her family told her every night at dinner.”

In this collaborative story telling game students create a story together. Tell students we’re going to break out into groups and write a story together. Each group is going to work together to create their own story with each person adding their part of the story. Most stories, including “where the mountain meets the moon” follow a simple structure.

Ask the class “How do most stories start?” Someone will inevitably say “once upon a time”. Then introduce the 7-line story structure on the attached worksheet. You can try it as an entire class asking students to raise their hands to share a line.

Once upon a time...(this is where we introduce our main character)

And everyday...(This is where we find out what their everyday life is like)

Until one day...(something different has to happen that sets them on their journey)

Because of that...(This new event sets of a chain of other events)

Because of that...(what happens next builds us to the climax of the story)

Until finally (the big moment of truth where our hero faces their final challenge)

And ever since then (our new everyday reality. What has changed because of our hero’s journey)

Bring your story to life

Tell students now that they’ve have written their own stories, we can bring them to life. Each group should now have a 7-line story. For every line of your story, you’re going to create a tableau or “frozen picture” to help tell your story. For example, if the first line was “once upon a time there was a dragon named “Bob” who lived in a forest,” one or two people could be the dragon and the other students could be the forest by pretending to be trees.

Give each group 5-10 minutes to work together to cast their story. Then rehearse and present it to the rest of the class.



Notes:

One student will need to be the narrator to tell the story while the other students make the frozen pictures.

As students are working go around and remind students that these are “frozen pictures” and pictures don’t move.

You can also have students bring other stories to life. Try using one of Grace Lin’s [other books](#).



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Finding Your Way to Never-Ending Mountain (or anywhere!)

SUPPLIES:

- Bowl filled 3/4 full with water
- A bowl with a flat bottom and that is more than 5 inches across works the best.
- Something that floats.
- Minli uses bamboo, but you can use a cork cut in half the long way or a piece of foam cut from a food container.
- Magnet (Minli uses a stone that is probably an iron ore called magnetite or lodestone, but you can use a strong refrigerator magnet or a magnet from your science supplies. Flat, flexible magnets usually do not work.)
- Needle



Minli starts her journey to the Never-Ending Mountain by using what appears to be magic to point the way. Using only a bowl, some water, a needle, a few rocks and bamboo, Minli finds her way.

You can use this same “magic” to find North, South, East, and West. Using the same tools as Minli, you can make a working compass.

Stroke all the way along the needle with the magnet 5-6 times in the same direction.

Cut a piece of foam large enough for the needle to sit on comfortably or split a cork the long way.

Fill the bowl with enough water that there is plenty of space for the foam or cork to float without touching the sides.

Place the needle in the center of the foam and float it in the bowl.

The float should start to turn all on its own and then settle and stop. Which direction is it pointing in?

What Could Happen:

One end of the needle should be pointing North and the other South. You just need to mark which end is pointing North and you will have built a working compass.

Why This Works:

Magnets are attracted to each other on their opposite ends. This means one magnet's North end is attracted to another magnet's South end. The earth is a giant magnet. The small weak magnet that you have created is attracted to the very strong magnetic pull of the earth. Your magnetic needle will get in line with the earth's North and South magnet ends (otherwise known as the North and South Poles). Minli was indeed using a type of magic, but one that is also available to you.

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Drawing Dragons Into Life

Minli's dear friend, Dragon, began as a drawing so lifelike that when his eyes were painted he burst off the paper and ran into the forest. Can you use what details you have read in *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* to draw a dragon of your own? (Do not be disappointed if your dragon does not come to life immediately. You may need a special inkstone that has been lost to history and legend.)

Here are the words used to describe Minli's friend, Dragon. You can read them yourself in further detail on pages 46, 51-57, and 70 of the book.

- Brilliant red (the color of a lucky lantern)
- Emerald-green whiskers and horns
- Dull stone-colored ball like the moon on his head and the size of a melon
- As long as a street in Minli's village
- Tall as a bird's nest in a tree

And you do not need to draw the dragon from the story, but can create your own from the claws up.

If you like you can even use this [printable dragon mask](#) to color in your own pre-drawn dragon and see if it comes to life!





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After the Show: Discussion Questions

As we mentioned before the play, Min Kahng adapted Grace Lin's book for the stage. Some scenes had to be changed or even cut completely to make the story work for the stage. For example, the way Minli meets Dragon is very different in the play than in the book. What other changes differences did you notice? Why do you think the playwright made those changes?

The following questions work whether your class has read the book or not:

Sometimes movies and plays will use music to help tell the story. How do you think the music in *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* helps tell the story?

Minli lived on "Fruitless mountain." How did it become fruitless mountain? Why did they call it that?

The Goldfish man told Minli that the goldfish would bring her fortune. Do you think that turned out to be true? Why or why not?

Why did they call the prideful magistrate "Magistrate Tiger"?

Later he turned into Green Tiger. How or why did this happen?

What did the prideful magistrate learn from the old man of the moon?

Painter Chen painted Dragon as blind and flightless. What message was he trying to send to the magistrate?

What do you think the book of fortune means by "You only lose what you cling to"?

Both Minli and Dragon think they found a "borrowed line". Which one of them is right? How did their borrowed lines help them find their way to Never-Ending Mountain?

How did Minli trick Green Tiger?

In the beginning, Ma doesn't seem to like Ba's stories and calls them foolish. Later she shares a story of her own. What do you think changed?

Minli decides to ask Dragon's question instead of her own. Why do you think she does this?

In the end, Fruitless Mountain becomes Fruitful Mountain. How do you think this happened?



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Follow the Red Threads and Map Your Connections

It is said that the Old Man of the Moon connects us all by tying red threads between all of our ancestors and all the people we will meet. Can you map your own life in a web of red threads like the Old Man of the Moon does?

Gather These Things:

- Pictures of your family (photos or drawings)
- Large piece of paper
- Transparent tape Red thread or a red marker

Try These Steps:

- Gather up pictures of your friends and family and one picture of yourself.
- Get a large piece of paper and place your picture in the middle.
- Lay your friends and family out around your picture.
- Using the red thread with tape or marker, connect your picture to all your friends and family.
- Now connect the people on your page to each other.

What Could Happen:

You should see when you are done what an important person you are. You are tied to many people, and each of those people is tied to more people. Reread pages 246-250 of *Where the Mountain Meets the Moon* and think about the complex web of threads in the room of the Old Man of the Moon

Does one person live with another? Is one person the relative of another? Is one friend friends with another? You can also do this activity with members of your family or with friends. Try making those connections across each other's papers. Are you possibly connected to everyone in the world? Even to those whom you have not met?

Something Else to Try:

There are many connections between the characters in the story, the characters and events in the legends, and the things that happen along Minli's journey. Can you create a special red thread map of the story?

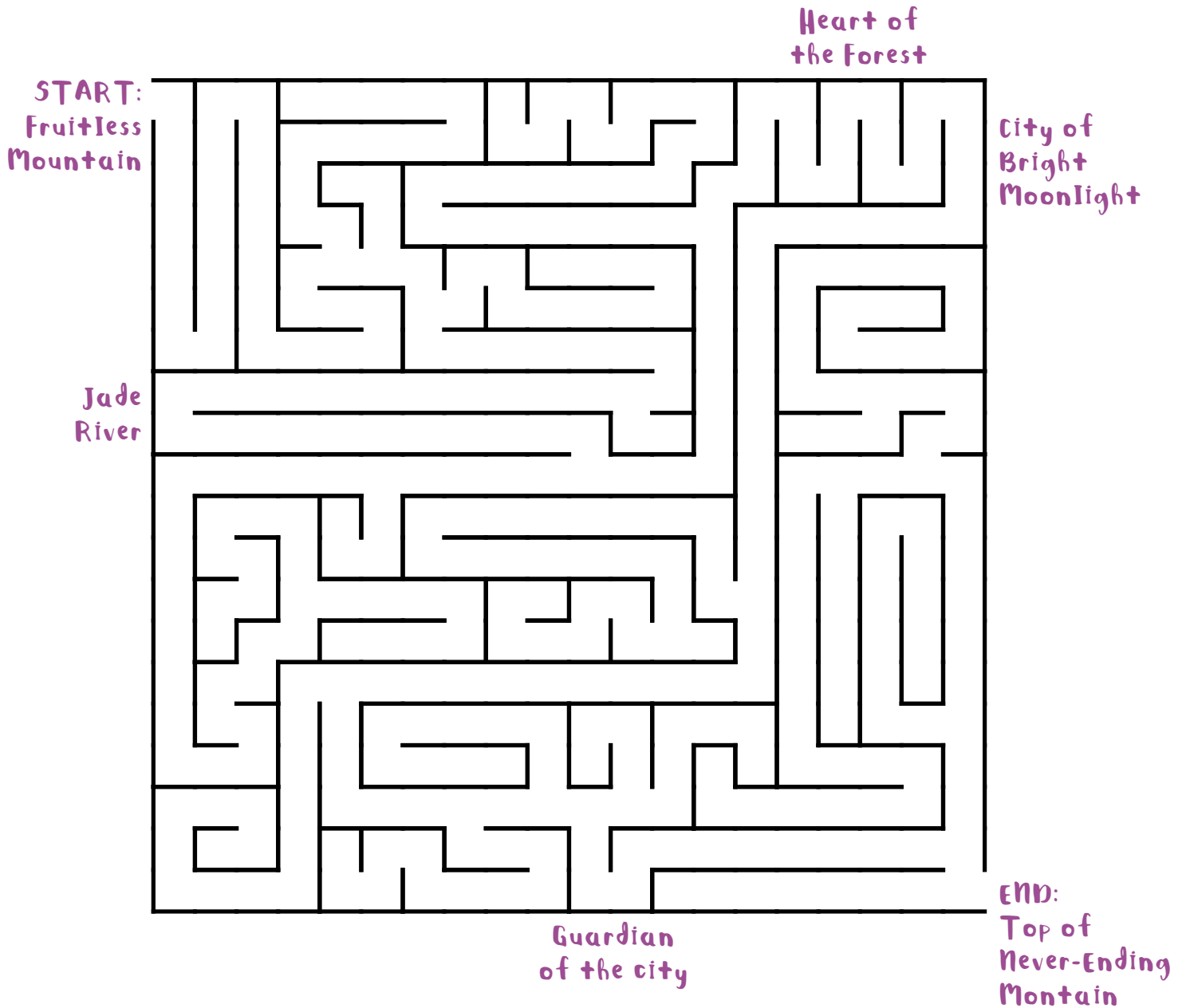


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Journey to Never-Ending Mountain

Help Minli on her quest to find her way to find the Guardian of the City to ask for a borrowed line.



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Chinese Culture in Portland

[Portland Chinatown Museum](#)

Portland has a rich history of Chinese American culture and vibrant Chinese-American community. You and your class can learn more about the history, life, art, and current events by visiting the Portland, Chinatown museum. Their exhibit "[Beyond the Gate](#)" tells a powerful story of Oregon's early Chinese immigrants who built the second largest Chinatown in America, despite six decades of Chinese Exclusion.

[The Northwest China Council](#)

The Northwest China Council was established in 1980 with a grant from the Asia Society. Jane Larson was the founding Executive Director. The NWCC was one of twelve regional Councils established to help educate the American public about Chinese history, culture, politics, and US-China relations; after nearly 50 years of isolation.

[Lan Su Chinese Garden](#)

The mission of Lan Su Chinese Garden is to cultivate an oasis of tranquil beauty and harmony to inspire, engage and educate our global community in the appreciation of a richly authentic Chinese culture.

Opening in September 2000, Lan Su Chinese Garden is one of Portland's greatest treasures and most interesting sites to see while visiting Portland. A result of a collaboration between the cities of Portland and Suzhou, our sister city in China's Jiangsu province that's famous for its beautiful Ming dynasty gardens, Lan Su was built by Chinese artisans from Suzhou and is one the most authentic Chinese gardens outside of China.

Learn more about Lan Su Chinese Garden and opportunities for your class or school group here: <https://lansugarden.org/visit/tours/school-group-tours>





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Anti-Racism Resources

[Helping your kids understand and cope with anti-Asian racism](#)

[How To Start Conversations About Anti-Asian Racism With Your Family](#)

Learn more about Grace Lin

Watch [Grace Lin's Ted Talk](#) and answer the following discussion questions.

What does she mean by:

“a book can show you the world?”

“a book can also show you a reflection of yourself.”

In which books or stories do you see a reflection of yourself?

Which books show you the world?

Have you ever pretended you were someone other than yourself?

Have you ever felt like you were nobody?

Why do you think didn't Grace want to learn Chinese?

What do you think she meant by being ashamed for the right reasons?

Why is it important for our bookshelves to have both mirrors and windows?



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Write to Oregon Children's Theatre!

We love hearing student feedback and responses to our shows!
Please feel free to share any comments from students with us.

Oregon Children's Theatre
1631 NE Broadway St., PMB 620
Portland, OR 97232

This guide was curated by Oregon Children's Theatre
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Additional Resources:

[Activity Book, Event Kit, Board Game](#)

[Chapter by Chapter Reading Guide](#)

[Essay Questions](#)

[Study Guide](#)

[Original Cast Album](#)

Some activities in this guide have been adapted
from other educational guides.



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