

Fall 2019

2019-2020 Book-in-Common Teaching Guide

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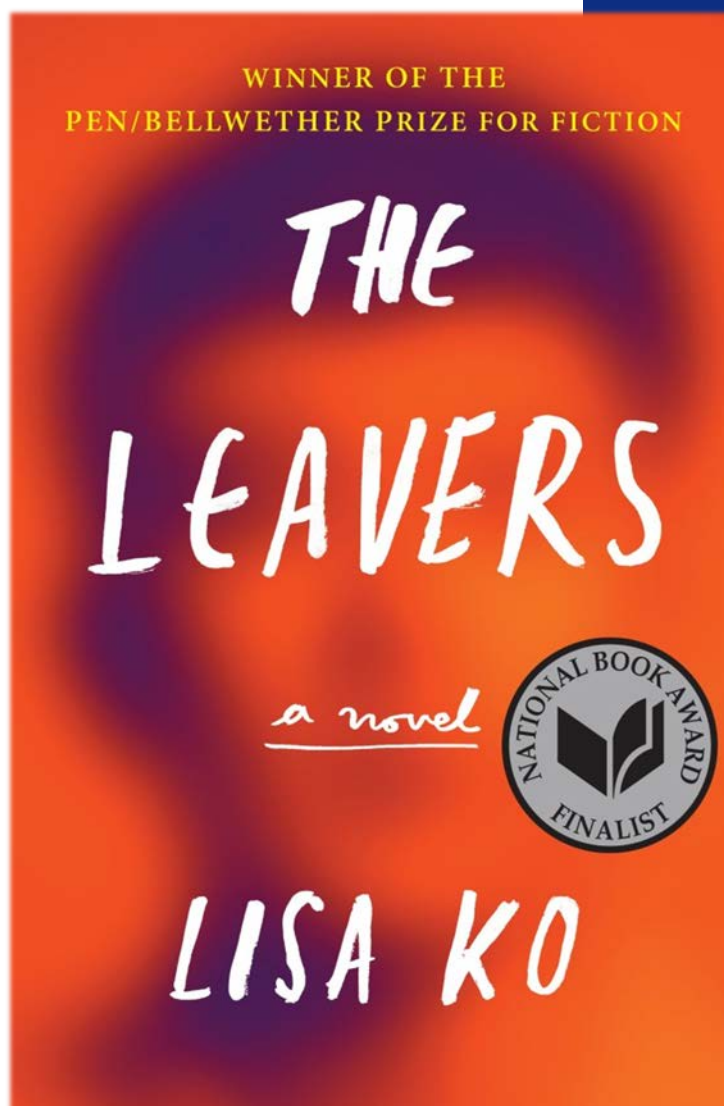
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BOOK-IN-COMMON TEACHING GUIDE

2019-2020

Collin College Book-in-Common Committee



2019-2020 BOOK-IN-COMMON

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EDITOR'S INTRODUCTION

Lisa Ko's *The Leavers* addresses themes which are both timely and timeless. This year's *Teaching Guide* can help us lead Collin's year-long exploration of adoption, identity, families, youth, parent-child relationships, immigration, crime, friendship, identity, race, courage, fate, morality, and agency.

As always, the *2019-2020 Teaching Guide* exemplifies the Collin College Book-in-Common Committee's commitment to the goal of college-wide engagement with an important book and its author. Highlights of this year's Guide include:

- Classroom and library resources
- Support for connecting with the musical themes in the book
- Reflections on the immigrant experience
- Connections with China and Chinese culture
- Perspectives from English, Humanities, Psychology, Criminology, Political Science, and Music
- Support for a variety of teaching modalities including class discussion, journaling and reflection, extended student research, essay and research paper assignments, annotated bibliographies, and creative assignments.

The materials contained here will deepen our thinking and strengthen our teaching. Please join me in thanking the contributors who have generously made this year's *Guide* a reality.

--Marta Moore

FROM THE PUBLISHER

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Lisa Ko is the author of *The Leavers*, which was a 2017 National Book Award for Fiction finalist, won the 2016 PEN/Bellwether Prize for Socially Engaged Fiction, and was a finalist for the 2018 PEN/Hemingway Award and the 2017 Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Writers Award. *The Leavers* was named a best book of the year by NPR, Entertainment Weekly, BuzzFeed, The Los Angeles Times, Electric Literature, and others. Her writing has appeared in Best American Short Stories 2016, The New York Times, BuzzFeed, O. Magazine, and elsewhere. She has been awarded fellowships from the New York Foundation for the Arts, the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council, and the MacDowell Colony, among others. Born in Queens and raised in Jersey, she lives in Brooklyn.



BOOK SUMMARY

One morning, Deming Guo's mother, an undocumented Chinese immigrant named Polly, goes to her job at the nail salon and never comes home. No one can find any trace of her.

With his mother gone, eleven-year-old Deming is left with no one to care for him. He is eventually adopted by two white college professors who move him from the Bronx to a small town upstate. They rename him Daniel Wilkinson in their efforts to make him over into their version of an "all-American boy." But far away from all he's ever known, Daniel struggles to reconcile his new life with his mother's disappearance and the memories of the family and community he left behind.

Set in New York and China, *The Leavers* is a vivid and moving examination of borders and belonging. It's the story of how one boy comes into his own when everything he's loved has been taken away - and how a mother learns to live with the mistakes of her past.

CREATIVE, CRITICAL, AND CONTEXT- SETTING RESPONSES

CASEY L. CARTER – A DIVERSE SOUNDTRACK

a diverse soundtrack

Casey L. Carter, Professor of Music

“After Deming showed Roland his Discman and headphones and played him Hendrix, Grand Theft Auto was abandoned. They spent a month of Sunday’s listening to a shoe box of cassette tapes that the deceased Roland Fuentes, Senior, had left behind. In Roland’s room, they rewound his father’s life on an old tape player, debated whether they’d rather sing or play guitar, and which was better, Ozzy solo or Black Sabbath.” (Ko, 2018)

Walk into a New York City neighborhood street, take a moment, stop and listen. You will hear the music of the world bouncing off the walls of the bodega, coffee shop and five story walk up. Ko writes, “The city had been a long song, vivid, endlessly shading, a massive dance mix of bus beats, train drums, and passing stereos.” The soundtrack of the world and varied eras color the years and chapters of Deming’s life. Ko paints the plight of the outsider struggling to assimilate, to drop the lilt of their native tongue, afraid to embrace the qualities that might be assumed as otherness by their neighbor. Through every shift of the journey, Ko provides the unique sounds of this America that flutter in the background of the shifting scene and dynamic of these lives.

Scan me



Are You Experienced
Jimi Hendrix

“He took out the record he had been looking at, Jimi Hendrix’s *Are You Experienced*, the words written in a psychedelic leer...Peter turned the volume knob up in one circular motion. The music filled the room with color...and they stood there basking in sound.” (Ko, 2018) No longer an outsider, Deming would begin to frame this new home and journey filling in the gaps of a broken heart as he struggled to make sense of a world and story filled with missing pieces. The sounds of transition, of this assimilation into a new life, moored Deming to a new life while the songs of yesterday would continue to beat in his heart.

The experience of the immigrant includes a varied soundtrack of language, rhythm and style. The pages of the text make it easy to imagine visiting a new country while trying to navigate a city in a different language you don’t know well, with markets full of food you aren’t sure of, and you long for nothing more than a bit of home. Seeking comfort, you put in your ear buds and open up a playlist on your smartphone.

What would happen if the music of your current soundtrack didn’t include singing in your first language? Take a moment and listen to the #2 song in China, Morocco, Spain and the USA today.

SPAIN



Scan me

Scan me



MOROCCO

CHINA



Scan me

United States



Reflection

1. Which song best reflects your mood today? Does the language being sung matter? Why? Why not?
2. What are the four songs that best representative of the soundtrack of your life today?



why can't we give love
givelovegivelovegivelove

Without music, the world was flattened, washed out, too obvious. Daniel cranked up the volume even more, until he was awash in colors and sound and there were only lights and possibility flying, the way it was when the guitar was translating his brain. (Ko, 2018)

do you see what I hear?
Casey L. Carter, Professor of Music

Throughout *The Leavers*, Deming's experiences are tied to a diverse musical soundtrack. Did you notice that along with the song titles that inform the reader of time and space, that the words on the page referring to music are often bathed in vivid colors? After the repetition of these powerful illustrations of music and colors time and again, I posit that Deming is one of four percent of humanity that possesses the unique ability to see music.

Synesthesia occurs when one sense is simultaneously perceived as if by one or more additional senses. In other words, some people with synesthesia see colors when they hear different musical notes. Chromesthesia is sound-to-color synesthesia and heard sounds automatically evoke an experience of color. Famous musicians throughout the centuries, such as Amy Beach, Olivier Messiaen, Franz Liszt, Mary J. Blige and Lorde, experienced music bathed in immediately perceived colors.

Deming's experiences of Chromesthesia are:

- Involuntary: the perception of color just happens
- Projected: instead of imagining a color, someone with synesthesia sees the color projected outside of the body in real time.
- Durable and generic: the perception is the same every time.
- Memorable: the secondary perception is often the stronger memory.
- Emotional: the perceptions often cause emotional reactions.

(Melissa Lee Phillips: Neuroscience for Kids - <https://faculty.washington.edu/chudler/syne.html>)

What might the experience of Chromesthesia be like? Take a look as Kaitlyn Hova - a composer, violinist and neuroscientist - shares the experience of hearing then seeing music real time on the 2016 TEDMED stage: <https://youtu.be/1LUbxfnpz4?t=292>

Reflection

1. Find four examples in *The Leavers* that the title of a song is tied to color. Imagine the experience of being bathed both in sound and color. How might those moments define time and experience for Deming differently?
2. Listen to Gershwin's famous Rhapsody in Blue: https://youtu.be/_-5vrQKWBg
3. How does Lorde see in color? <https://youtu.be/to-isrENxyk>
4. How might you respond to the world differently if you experienced a form of Synesthesia?

Watch the calendar for an exciting Spring 2020 Music and Art collaborative event
See The Music - Chromesthesia and The Leavers
with Professor Julie A. Shipp, Dr. Kimberly Harris and Professor Casey L. Carter
for a virtual experience you won't soon forget!

givelovegivelovegivelove

Casey L. Carter, Professor of Music

JULIE SEARS – A NATION OF LEAVERS IN SEARCH OF SELF: THE IMMIGRATION NARRATIVE IN AMERICAN LITERATURE

Lisa Ko's novel *The Leavers* joins a long line of American narratives that explore the immigrant experience. With the exception of the oral literature of the Native Americans, the earliest texts studied in American literature courses are those by immigrants to the North American landmass, immigrants who were not only exploring a place much different from their home countries but also attempting to reconcile who they were with where they were. Many of those who came to America did not do so by choice, as is the case with the Africans brought in slave ships. Of course their circumstances were extremely different, yet they too wrote of the difficulty of finding a sense of self, of establishing an identity in this, to them, "New World."

A major theme in *The Leavers* is the search for identity, in which both the mother and son engage. Most clearly in its depiction of Deming, the novel has elements of the *bildungsroman*, a genre which examines the coming into one's own through childhood, adolescence, and young adulthood. Ko uses Deming, who later becomes Daniel, to investigate the sense of confusion that immigrants and the children of immigrants face as they journey psychologically between their "home" selves, which are associated with their home countries and/or the families in which they grew up, and their nation selves, the selves forged to connect with the dominant culture which they must necessarily confront. Of course not all immigrants to America have felt themselves to be minorities, and many immigrants, much like Deming's mother, Polly or Peilan, were inspired by the promise of freedom and self-discovery that this country offered, but a common theme in the literature of immigration is alienation from the self and confusion as to what kind of person to be when the larger culture is quite foreign.

Cultural differences, therefore, become a main focus in the narratives of immigrants. Depending on the immigrants or children of immigrants' experiences, some differences are language-based, some based on unique cultural attitudes, some on religion, and some on familial status in the native country; for example, an immigrant may have been held in high regard in his or her home country, only to find him/herself at the bottom of the social hierarchy in America. In some cases the child of the immigrant, like Deming, grows up to realize that he feels most at home in the place where his home self and his nation self first came in contact, in his case, New York City. His decision is not so surprising given that NYC is strongly associated with the immigrant experience and exhibits the vibrancy of cultural mixing. This diverse city has also been

a haven to many who have felt like outsiders in other parts of America because of their differences, particularly artists and musicians, like Deming.

The desire to belong, to have a community in which one feels comfortable and accepted, is arguably a core need among humans. The conflict among selves that the immigrant and his or her children face puts this desire in the spotlight. The conflict can be intensified if the immigrant/immigrant's child returns to the country of origin. In Deming's rejections of one reality after another, one can not only see the adolescent tendency to try on new identities as if they were clothes, but also the immigrant's confusion as to where his or her loyalties lie. Is it wrong to speak one language rather than another (English or Fuzhounese)? To prefer one food over another (a slice of New York style pizza or noodle soup)? To fall in love with one person or another? To accept a different name or even a different family as one's own?

Another major theme in *The Leavers*, and one that is predominant in the story of immigration to America, is the promise of the American Dream. While variously interpreted, the American Dream can be described as a vision of what it means to become one's best self; the Dream promises that in America one will have the opportunities to create that best self. Both Polly and Deming are on this quest, but for them America reneges on its promise and hinders their quests.

As part of our quest to achieve "social responsibility," to better understand the impact of culture on each of us and, especially, the difficulties that cultural differences can manifest, we should read the narratives of the immigrants to America, from those who wrote during the years before the founding of the United States to those of newcomers, like Polly and Deming, who ask for their stories to be heard.

The following is a brief list in chronological order of immigration narratives (primarily novels) in American literature. The list gives the name of the author, the title of the text, the year of publication, and the nation or place from which one or several characters have immigrated. I only included texts I have read; given my reading habits, these tend to be more contemporary. I mention some basic aspects of the texts. When there are similarities that I have noticed between the text and *The Leavers*, I provide an explanation.

Phyllis Wheatley's poem "On Being Brought from Africa to America" (1773): in what is today Senegal or Gambia. Phyllis Wheatley was an African-American slave. Not unlike Deming/Daniel, Wheatley, although a slave, was raised within in a white, Anglo family. This poem references her life in Africa and contrasts it with her life in America; the poem is also a plea for inclusion for Africans.

Olaudah Equiano's memoir *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano* (1789): a region in what is today Nigeria. This is considered the first slave narrative in American literature. Like Deming, Olaudah is given different names; in his case, he is named by his masters. His narrative is also a bildungsroman; he discovers his talents, tries to fit in, and develops his identity as an adult. To a great degree, Equiano "assimilates," becoming a model of American ingenuity, resilience, and hard work, but he reminds his readers that even a free black can be enslaved, once more losing all of his or her rights. This is not unlike the situation of immigrants like Polly, who can be suddenly scooped up in an immigration raid and deprived of everything.

J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur's narrative essays in *Letters from an American Farmer* (1782): French. This work is famous for examining "this new man," the American. Crèvecoeur adopts the persona of an American-born farmer to communicate with Europeans about America prior to the American Revolution. He initially embraces many aspects of American life and describes the American Dream, not unlike Polly, who has great hopes for herself in the United States; however, he shows some of the ugly sides of America, such as slavery, and becomes alienated from the country due to the developing Revolution. As a result, he decides to escape the hostilities and live with Native Americans.

Rebecca Harding Davis's short story "Life in the Iron Mills" (1861): Welsh. This story focuses on the plight of working-class immigrants, who, similar to Polly, struggle to survive. The difficulty of achieving the American Dream for a working-class immigrant is clearly conveyed in this story. The protagonist is depicted as having an artistic quality; his desire for beauty makes his deprivation even more disheartening.

Emma Lazarus's sonnet "The New Colossus" (1883): all nations. Lazarus, a Jewish American who was well aware of the pogroms in the Russian Empire that were terrorizing Jewish communities, wrote this poem to contrast the Old World with its proud allegiance to pageantry to the New with its warm welcome to those seeking refuge in America. The poem emphasizes that America is a haven for the world's poor and downtrodden, offering them hope for a better life.

Abraham Cahan's short story "The Imported Bridegroom" (1898): Poland. This story is about a father and daughter who face conflict due to cultural differences; the father has become more Orthodox in his Judaism as he has aged and yearns for his home country, which he visits and from which he brings a groom home for his daughter. The daughter, who is very much of an American, initially rejects her father's choice of husband. The scenes in which the father visits his village in Poland and notices how it

has changed since he left are similar to Polly's experience in Fuzhou province, especially when she visits her village.

Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle* (1906): Lithuania. This novel, better known for spurring a change in food production, was intended to halt the exploitation of working-class immigrants and advocate a socialist message. This is another narrative that demonstrates how difficult it was for poor immigrants to survive in America, to achieve an American Dream, and how environmental forces can turn a decent person into a criminal.

Willa Cather's novel *O Pioneers!* (1913): Sweden. The protagonist, Alexandra Bergson, is the daughter of a Swedish immigrant who, contrary to tradition, inherits her father's failing farm and manages to turn seemingly hostile prairie into a flourishing business. While Alexandra is able to achieve this part of her American Dream, she waits many years before she is able to marry, this in spite of her brothers' disapproval. Alexandra, similar to Polly, is a strong, enterprising woman who makes many sacrifices.

Willa Cather's novel *My Antonia* (1918): Bohemia. This novel, like *O Pioneers!* and *The Leavers*, demonstrates the power and dignity of working immigrant women. The novel also addresses questions about identity and the immense hold that one's past has on one's present.

Eugene O'Neill's play *Long Day's Journey into Night* (1956): Ireland. O'Neill's play, which is largely autobiographical, dramatizes conflicts among members of the Tyrone family, and several of these are related to the differences between the father, who is from the "old country" and idealizes Ireland, and his two adult sons who, in disparate ways, do not belong in America yet scoff at or question their father's sentimental views of Ireland. The younger son wants to be a poet; in this way he is similar to Deming.

Maxine Hong Kingston's memoir *The Woman Warrior* (1975): China. This memoir focuses on the fictionalized relationship between Kingston and her mother. The mother represents the more traditional Chinese perspective while the daughter (Kingston) attempts to understand who she is and who her mom is. The importance of grasping one's social context and establishing one's identity resonates with *The Leavers*. As a seminal text by a Chinese-American, *The Woman Warrior* can be viewed as an influence on other works by Chinese-American authors.

Amy Tan's novel *The Joy Luck Club* (1989): China. This is another well-known Chinese-American text which features relationships and conflicts between immigrant mothers

and their American-born daughters. This novel is evenly divided between stories of the children and stories of the mothers.

Bharati Mukherjee's novel *Jasmine* (1989): India. The protagonist, a young woman, faces numerous difficulties in America after fleeing India; an undocumented immigrant, moving frequently and undergoing name changes multiple times, Jasmine is like Polly and Deming, a person searching for her best self. For a time she takes work as an au pair for a white family in New York, making her situation similar to Deming's; she also has a hard time comprehending their customs and is surprised by the amenities available to her in a comfortable household.

Jamaica Kincaid's novel *Lucy* (1990): West Indies. The protagonist, based on the author, is a young woman of color who is conflicted about her relationship to her mother, her home country, and her new country. Like Deming, she lives with a wealthy white family for whom she is an au pair. A child of colonialism, Lucy is much more aware of differences in power based on race, class, and gender than the Americans she meets. This is also a bildungsroman as Lucy attempts to forge her own identity separate from her mother.

Sandra Cisneros's short story collection *Woman Hollering Creek and Other Stories* (1991): Mexico. The title story is about a young woman who leaves Mexico for the United States with her husband. An undocumented immigrant, she is isolated and vulnerable in a small Texas town; eventually she returns to Mexico to escape her husband's physical abuse and her impending feelings of madness.

Christina García's novel *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992): Cuba. García examines the experience of three generations: Cubans, Cuban-American immigrants, and their Cuban-American children. In addition to dealing with the experiences of immigrants and generational conflict, the novel examines the history of Cuba both before and after the Cuban revolution and the differing politics of the family members.

Jhumpa Lahiri's short story collection *Interpreter of Maladies* (1999): India. Through these short stories Lahiri shows the lives of Indians and Pakistanis, of immigrants to America, and of second-generation Americans. The title story, about an Indian-American family that visits India, highlights differences between this Americanized family and their Indian driver; this bears some resemblance to Deming's experience as an outsider in China.

Michael Chabon's novel *The Amazing Adventures of Kavalier and Clay* (2000): Czechoslovakia. This novel shows how two Jewish cousins, one living in Brooklyn and

the other fleeing the Holocaust in Czechoslovakia, create a superhero comic book, a distinctly American genre. Some of the differences between the two cousins indicate how much identity is shaped by one's background.

Jeffrey Eugenides' novel *Middlesex* (2002): Greece. The title of this coming-of-age novel captures its interest in exploring hybrid identities; in this case, the main character is an intersex young person—Cal/Calliope—and a Greek-American. The novel reveals the protagonist's family's complex tale of immigration and migration within the United States and addresses racial tensions.

Khaled Hosseini's novel *The Kite Runner* (2003): Afghanistan. This novel follows the troubled childhood of Amir, who eventually flees Afghanistan with his father to America. Many years later, he returns to Afghanistan to attempt to right a wrong he committed in the past. Relationships between fathers and sons and the significance of class/ethnic differences are major elements in the novel.

Dave Eggers' novel *What Is the What* (2006): Sudan. Eggers wrote this novel in conjunction with Valentino Achak Deng, one of the "Lost Boys" of Sudan, refugees of war. After many harrowing experiences in refugee camps in various places in Africa, he immigrates to the United States, where he is robbed and assaulted.

Junot Díaz's novel *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* (2007): Dominican Republic. The main character is a Dominican-American young man who grows up in New Jersey. While he seems typically American (Oscar loves sci-fi, fantasy, and comic books), his life is shadowed by the curse of colonialism brought by Columbus to the Dominican Republic (known then as Hispaniola). One of the narrators of the novel uses a combination of various types of English and Spanish, emphasizing the complicated identities of immigrants. Both *The Leavers* and *The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao* capture the experiences of young adult immigrant males in contemporary America.

Colm Tóibín's novel *Brooklyn* (2009): Ireland. A young Irish woman, Ellis, immigrates to Brooklyn to find work in the 1950s and lives a divided life, having two romantic relationships; she gets married to an Italian-American in the States, but, during a return visit to Ireland, falls in love with a local man. Ultimately, she leaves her new love and returns to America. Like Polly, who loves Leon but marries Yong, she faces choices about whom her life partner will be. Ellis's decision also determines which country she will inhabit. Polly's two departures from China are hastened by her desire to begin a new life away from a particular man.

LINDA SEARS -- *THE LEAVERS* AND A BRIEF BACKGROUND ON CHINESE BELIEFS

China is a large, modern nation state with many differing geographic areas, and Chinese people speak multiple languages and regional dialects, making it very difficult to declare what it means to be Chinese. Nevertheless, since identity is an important theme in Lisa Ko's novel *The Leavers*, I will provide a brief examination of several major influences on China's cultural history to aid in understanding the sociocultural environment the characters are responding to. Questions at the end of this essay relate this brief background to Ko's novel.

The three major philosophical and religious forces of Ancient China were Daoism, Confucianism, and Buddhism. These three systems of belief tended to be associated with political or religious elites. Chinese folk religion, which came from the experiences of rural peasants, infused the history of China and still has a presence in Chinese life and Chinese immigrant communities today. The mingling of elements of the three systems of beliefs with aspects of folk religion has shaped China to create a rich heritage. Along with considering Deming/Daniel's relationship to Chinese food and language, looking at this heritage can help in untangling his feelings about what it means to be Chinese.

Daoism (or Taoism) is the oldest of the three major belief systems. Daoist works reveal that one should live simply in harmony with natural forces. Central to Daoism is the concept of qi (chi), the underlying universal energy or breath from which all life flows. The *Dao De Jing* (The Way and its Powers) most likely written in the third century BCE and believed to have been composed by the sage Lao Tzu who lived three centuries earlier, outlines in often paradoxical language how to live the way (Sayre 106-107). Rather than fighting against the universal energy, one should act in accordance with its way or Dao:

Can you coax your mind from its wandering

and keep to the original oneness?

Can you let your body become

supple as a newborn child's?

Can you cleanse your inner vision

until you see nothing but the light?

Can you love people and lead them

without imposing your will?

Can you deal with the most vital matters

by letting events take their course?

Can you step back from you own mind

and thus understand all things?

Giving birth and nourishing,

having without possessing,

acting with no expectations,

leading and not trying to control:

this is the supreme virtue.

Chapter 10 of Dao De Jing, Translated by Stephen Mitchell

Worshipping ancestors and using the concept known as the Yin/Yang to divine what will happen were earlier Chinese folk practices that influenced Daoism. The Yin/Yang concept explains change and the origins of the universe through the belief that two opposing energies in constant interaction create universal balance. Yin represents the energies of darkness, wetness, softness and slowness, and the Yang represents the energies of lightness, dryness, hardness, and quickness. Yang is associated with the masculine and yin with the feminine. Life is optimal when the two are in balance. When there is too much of one, suffering occurs (Sayre 107).

Confucianism, the next influential philosophy, began when Kong Fuzi, known as Confucius in the West, taught in 6th century BCE during a troubled period of the Zhou dynasty. Confucius instructed his students to adopt traditional values with the conviction that an individual's virtuous actions will influence others, bettering the whole community and ending political unrest. Rather than being a religion, Confucianism is an ethical system that emphasizes having respect for one's older family members, practicing self-restraint, and being honorable in one's behavior. Confucius also stressed the importance of education and argued that educated men must read the classic Chinese texts. Many followers of Confucius asserted that humans are innately good but must practice arts to improve themselves. The arts of a gentleman include calligraphy, poetry, painting and music (Sayre 107-108). Equally important, the gentleman should not boast or display his arts in a showy manner. Instead, he should have humility. In its emphasis on self-improvement and bettering others, Confucianism is a humanist philosophy ("Confucius"). A distinctly Confucian idea that shaped Chinese government is that of the merit-based bureaucracy or meritocracy. Even a common man who educated himself could become a gentleman, in the Confucian sense of the word, and serve the state (Livaccari; Sayre 107-108).

Confucianism appealed to rulers because it embraced the importance of reverence for one's elders and authority in addition to its emphasis on individual ethical behavior. Under the Han Dynasty (206 BCE-220 CE), Confucianism became the official state philosophy. Later in the Tang era (618-907 CE), the widespread imperial examination system made a merit-based bureaucracy a reality (Sayre 109, 176-177). For centuries this meritocracy of civil servants was unique in the world, demonstrating the profound influence of Confucius on China as well as the significance of education for males as a Chinese aspirational value.

Buddhism's history began in India, in the modern-day area that includes Nepal. Siddhartha Gautama, a member of the princely Hindu caste, became aware of human suffering caused by old age, sickness, and death. He searched for enlightenment, first by becoming an ascetic and then by meditating under a bo tree. After meditating he realized that desire and attachment to material things is the cause of suffering. He then became known as the Buddha (enlightened one). The Buddha rejected divinities of any kind, believing that each individual person could come to enlightenment by recognizing the four noble truths and following the eightfold path.

The Four Noble Truths:

1. Pain is universal

2. Desire (ignorance) causes all pain
3. Ceasing desire relieves pain
4. Right conduct provides escape from pain

The Eightfold Path is the way to end suffering: right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness, and right concentration (Sayre 116).

Buddhist teachings spread to China via the Silk Road in the first and second centuries CE. Several types of Buddhism emerged because differing texts and Buddhist monks came to China with varying interpretations. Buddhism also altered to become more palatable to the traders and caravan leaders whose livelihoods depended on a more materialistic view of existence than the more austere one Buddhism promoted. The Buddha, rather than being an enlightened human, became a deity who could be appealed to for help. Similarly, a form of Buddhism known as Mahayana Buddhism taught that compassionate, enlightened spiritual beings, called bodhisattvas, would selflessly save the devotee from his/her suffering (Liu 52-53). Anyone who vowed to live a selfless life could become a bodhisattva. A Mahayana Buddhist monk from Kucha (modern day far western China) successfully translated Buddhist Sanskrit scriptures into Chinese in the early fifth century CE, making Mahayana Buddhism more prevalent in China (Hansen 105-109). Even more successful was Pure Land Buddhism, which developed out of Mahayana Buddhism. Its adherents believe that one can depart from endless suffering by entering the Pure Land, a paradise-like place that is a step before Nirvana (O'Brien, "Pure Land"). Pure Land Buddhism eventually found purchase in China in the fifth and sixth centuries when common folk began to practice it. People who could afford to bought statues of Buddha to worship or donated money to monasteries to receive blessings (Liu 79). Later, Chan Buddhism developed in the Song era (960-1279 CE). This form of Buddhism focuses on practicing meditation as the way to enlightenment and appears to have been influenced by Daoism's emphasis on merging one's self with the power of the Dao (Sayre 147, 178).

Although different in their aims and practices, over time the three major belief systems began to coexist and were viewed as the "The Three Teachings." A new form of Confucianism, termed Neo-Confucianism flourished in the Song era and continues to have influence, Neo-Confucianism absorbs some of the metaphysical aspects of Daoism and Buddhism ("Confucius") Both Buddhism and Confucianism emphasize right

behavior. Chan Buddhism and Daoism emphasize becoming one with the spiritual. All three belief systems highlight balance between the human and natural worlds, an emphasis on a harmonious family life and hospitality towards guests, and humility and modesty in one's actions (Livaccari; "Sanjiao").

Existing simultaneously and often coinciding with the "Three Teachings" is Chinese folk religion, which includes shamanism (belief in people with healing powers), worshipping local deities and household gods, animism (belief in natural forces), belief in spirits, ghosts, demons, and dragons, who represent good luck and power, ancestor worship, practicing acupuncture and herbal medicine, marking seasonal changes with festivals, predicting through astrology and other fortune-telling practices, celebrating the Chinese New Year and 12-year zodiac as well as showing concern for auspicious or inauspicious signs, symbols, activities and events ("Folk Religions").

Several important traditional practices and concepts pervade Chinese culture. The ancient Chinese practice known as Feng Shui is a method for determining how to build a house or even a city that allows for the qi to flow freely. Care is taken to arrange a space to accord with the dictates of Feng Shui to maximize prosperity, good fortune, and health. In architecture this means that respect is paid to the four cardinal directions as well as natural landmarks so that the orderly design reflects cosmic order (Sayre 176). In addition, universal phenomenon are categorized into five elements (fire, water, earth, wood, metal) that each have colors, seasons, directions, animals, emotions, bodily organs, auspicious numbers, and other characteristics associated with them ("Folk Religions"). Finally, the concept known as the mandate of heaven, which argues that the heavens favor those who are in power and that power is lost when the rulers upset the heavens, can be considered a traditional Chinese belief because of its early origins when the Zhou replaced the Shang Dynasty in 1027 BCE (Sayre 107).

Quite a few of these folk beliefs are also found in the "Three Teachings," for example, in practice and rituals demonstrated in the martial arts, creating an eclectic cultural inheritance for modern Chinese. Another good example of cultural mixing are the jovial statues of the laughing, fat, bald figure that many falsely think represents the Buddha. In fact, he is a Chinese folk character from the tenth century who is often found sitting nearby Buddhist temples (O'Brien, "The Laughing Buddha"). Today, many aspects of folk religion are associated with rural village life. Under the communist regime, folk religious beliefs, as well as the "Three Teachings," were disdained as backwards superstition; however, these practices have maintained their importance for many Chinese despite the repression they have faced.

Note: This summary does not include two other religious influences on China: Islam and Christianity. Shortly after Prophet Muhammed's death in 632 CE, Islam began to influence the Western part of China through contact along the silk routes. A significant period of Islamic importance began when the Mongols controlled China in the late thirteenth and fourteenth centuries because the Mongols relied heavily upon Muslims from Central Asia for administrative support (Hammond; Liu 115-117). An Eastern form of Christianity arrived in China in the seventh century, but Christianity was not really established until Jesuit missionaries arrived in the sixteenth century as part of the European maritime trade with China (Hansen 442-43; Liu 90; Sayre 394).

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QUESTIONS:

1. Do any of the characters in *The Leavers* illustrate characteristics of these belief systems? Who puts emphasis on education? Who "goes with the flow?" Who emphasizes loyalty? Who shows compassion? Who puts their faith in good fortune?
2. Given the importance of family in Chinese culture, how do the characters react to family separations? Do the characters ultimately reject traditional Chinese ways, or do they adapt them to their new circumstances? How or how not?
3. Would you say that Deming/Daniel struggles with his identity as an American and a Chinese? What stereotypical Chinese associations does Deming/Daniel face when he lives in a white American world?
4. How does Peilan/Polly go against gender norms in China? Is she more Yang than Yin?
5. In what way does modern capitalist life threaten traditional Chinese values? How is Fuzhou, China like New York City? How is Minjiang more like Ridgeborough? How are they different?

GARY WILSON - EXAMINING FAMILIAL LOVE, HEROISM, SELF-AWARENESS AND MORALITY: A LESSON GUIDE

Since its publication in 2016, Lisa Ko's *The Leavers* has received numerous awards and high praise from critics. In less than three years, Ko's novel has generated a readership through those segments to which it appeals—literary, social science, psychology, political, legal, academic, and the general reading public.

Clearly, adoption and immigration are foregrounded as major themes in the novel. Lisa Ko does not offer solutions or political and legislative requirements for this contentious situation affecting our nation. Her novel, like most good fiction, dramatizes how people live and react to the pressures of not only societal issues, but those more central to how people react and make decisions about life's experiences. Child abandonment, adoption, and immigration laws strongly affect the human psyche. At the imaginative and human levels, the author's artistic vision portrays the complexities and the morality of families caught up in these situations.

As teachers, we should guide our students to appreciate the toll that abandonment, foster parenting, adoption, and attempted reunification with a biological parent takes on the human psyche.

I have offered some teaching and learning strategies below to help our students engage in appreciating how institutions, laws, and our universal humanity evoke imaginative situations that convey the complicated conflicts of love, morality, and laws. How can we as students and teachers approach the complexity of this issue without falling into the easy learning traps of only asking students to summarize characters or write short essays about the novel's themes? In what ways should we engage students so that we can move beyond surface level story appreciation and help them critique (think and emotionally appreciate) the story? What specific relevance might our students find in this fictionalized account, and how might the story's literary creations cause them to think and judge meaningfully about situations in their own lives and cultures?

While life's experiences teach great lessons, our learning from literature's vicarious portrayals is also instructive. Human behavior is very complicated. The quandary presented by Deming and his mom's relationship makes us aware that the morality inherent in human relationships does not always produce happy-ever-after relationships.

Discovery Groups: Peer Engagement is Vital!

Following are some proposed collaborative discovery strategies that empower students to critique the actions of characters and share how such portrayals are relevant and applicable to their own field of experiences. First, appoint a student group facilitator for each group who can keep things on track, take notes, foster everyone's participation and archive the group's discussion. Instructor evaluation of members in the group can be based on assigning a group grade and an individual grade.

☐ Group Discussion Prompt 1: What relevance, if any, does *The Leavers* contribute to the immigration issues dividing much of the world today? What are your opinions regarding immigration? Did this book's fictional portrayals alter those opinions or confirm them?

☐ Group Discussion Prompt 2: On several occasions, Polly Guo (Deming's mother) either attempts to abandon Deming or does abandon him by giving him to be raised by others. Compare the rationales and consequences of these actions related in Deming's third-person narrative and Polly's first-person narrative. What are the specific reasons causing the similarities and differences? Assess what they did and how those things they learned affected their relationship.

☐ Discussion Prompt 3: Discuss what role dreams occupies in the lives of the major characters (Deming and Polly Guo and other characters as well). Do these characters attain their dreams? Were these dreams worthwhile? How did their pursuit of their dreams affect their relationships?

☐ Discussion Prompt 4: To what degree do the characters create their own fates or are victimized by institutional systems and laws?

☐ Discussion Prompt 5: Compare/contrast the phases of Deming's and Polly's search for self-identity and self-affirmation. Based on your examination of chapters in the novel, do you believe they truly find what it is they are searching for?

☐ Discussion Prompt 6: How do you see the concept of love functioning in the novel? Reconciliation at the end? Happy ever after?

Preparing Critical Thinkers and Writers Through Critical Essays (3-4 pages)

☐ Argue about incidences that seem to portray genuine and sincere human emotion or pathos in the novel. Do these incidences of pathos convey any truths about how people live and experience life? Critique several specific situations in the story and intext cite them. Include a Works Cited page.

☐ Argue what aspects of Deming's character act as impediments to his finding happiness and fulfillment. Cite the novel in at least 3-4 places to back up your claims (arguments) relating to his behaviors. Include a Works Cited page.

☐ Write a character analysis of Deming. Be certain to include what kind of a child he was growing up, problems he faced in dysfunctional family settings, and how those problems were solved or not solved. Trace the journey Deming went through to make his way back through the despair of his childhood. Argue if foster parenting and his reunion with his mother helped him or did not help him become a resilient and self-actualizing human being. Cite the novel in at least 3-4 places to back up your claims (arguments) relating to his personal development in several family environments. Include a Works Cited page.

☐ Compassion for others is often rooted in understanding and acceptance, and a good story like *The Leavers* brings us into the inner world of its characters so that we can understand them. In Ko's novel, the author peels away the layers of her characters' histories piece by piece like an onion until we see into their core and understand what drives them. They may still do hurtful things to each other, but the author Ko portrays why they do the things that they do, and we learn that we shouldn't judge others until we understand their pasts. Their stories are often sad and painful, and we learn to love even those that reject us, hurt us, and even abandon us for a time. We may even learn that those who might reject us are the ones who need our love the most. Argue in an essay of three or more pages in length if you agree or disagree with the above statements. Intext cite lines or passages in the novel at least four times to validate the credibility of your claims (arguments).

☐ Argue if you believe that Deming's adoptive parents, Kay and Peter Wilkerson, play a central role in his personal quest for acquiring a sense of purpose and better understanding who he is. What kind of love and environment do they provide Deming? In what ways do you believe the story conveys the fundamental aspects of this relationship? Cite the novel in at least 3-4 places to back up your claims (arguments) relating to Deming's adoptive parents. Include a Works Cited page.

6. Compare Deming's growing-up period with his mother and makeshift Chinese family with his later adolescent years living with his adoptive parents. As you read Deming's

narratives, do you believe he learned anything in retrospect about the two situations. Do you believe he has learned and is applying the love and support of his family experiences so that he can lead a productive and happy adult life?

Fanning the Fire of Class Discussions: Encouraging Critical Thinking and Collaborative Learning

- What are the reasons that Deming continues to pursue his mom Polly?
- Given the way the novelists portrays Deming's relationship with the Wilkinsons, do you believe Deming treats his adoptive parents fairly?
- Is it fair to say that Deming loves his biological mom and his adoptive parents? How is this love similar and different?
- Eugenics is not a term that Lisa Ko expressly uses in her novel. In practice, does population control occur in China? What is your moral reaction to this practice?
- What aspects of Polly's character would you characterize as heroic? Argue you feel this way.
- How does the author Ko portray the institutions, laws, and cultural norms dealing with adopted children in the U.S. and China?
- After reading this novel, do you believe federal immigration laws should be more restrictive or less restrictive? Give reasons.
- The author creates tension in her novel between people and governmental institutions. What are some forms of tensions that are portrayed in the novel?
- What are the positives and negatives of alternating the points of view in the narration of the novel between Polly Guo and Deming's accounts?
- Do you think Deming's character finds what he has been looking for or needing for most of his life? Be specific. Give reasons.

Research on the relationship between immigrants and crime is consistent across the board. Here is a representative example:

<https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10940-012-9176-8>

[Journal of Quantitative Criminology](#)

June 2013, Volume 29, [Issue 2](#), pp 191–215 | [Cite as](#)

The Effects of Immigrant Concentration on Changes in Neighborhood Crime Rates

Authors

[Authors and affiliations](#)

John M. MacDonald , John R. Hipp, Charlotte Gill

Abstract

Objectives

This study investigated the extent to which immigrant concentration is associated with reductions in neighborhood crime rates in the City of Los Angeles.

Results

The results indicate that greater predicted concentrations of immigrants in neighborhoods are linked to significant reductions in crime. The results are robust to a number of different model specifications.

Conclusions

The findings challenge traditional ecological perspectives that link immigrant settlement to higher rates of crime. Immigration settlement patterns appear to be associated with reducing the social burden of crime. Study conclusions are limited by the potential for omitted variables that may bias the observed relationship between immigrant concentration and neighborhood crime rates, and the use of only official crime data which may under report crimes committed against immigrants. Understanding whether immigrant concentration is an important dynamic of changing neighborhood patterns of crime outside Los Angeles will require replication with data from other U.S. cities.

LUBNA JAWEED--UNDERSTANDING TEXT STRUCTURES

Text structures are patterns writers use to organize information within a text. Understanding how to compose various text structures provides a framework to organize and develop ideas and present information in a coherent manner.

Text Structures:

1. Description
2. Sequence
3. Compare and contrast
4. Cause and effect
5. Problem and solution

Descriptive Writing Text Structure

Prompt: Place yourself in eleven-year-old Deming Guo's shoes when he loses his mother. Not knowing where she vanished to and not having any other family, Deming is suddenly ripped from his home and placed in the care of the State. Write a descriptive essay describing one specific event in Deming Guo's journey: losing his mother, being adopted, struggling to find his identity as a young adult, re-connecting with his mother.

Guidelines:

- Your writing should be clear and concise following MLA format.
- Visiting the Writing Center is highly recommended!
- This is a descriptive essay, so explain Deming's emotions and his journey using the five senses.

Sight	Smell	Hear	Touch	Taste	Emotions

Sequence Text Structure Part One

Part One: Sequencing is a form of text structure that organizes information according to a particular order: time, process, or narration. Use the graphic organizer to organize in sequence the major events from *The Leavers*.

Sequence Order

Topic: _____ Name: _____ Date: _____

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graph TD; A[ ] --> B[ ]; B --> C[ ]; C --> D[ ]; D --> E[ ]; E --> F[ ]; F --> G[ ]; G --> H[ ]; H --> I[ ]
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Sequence Text Structure Part Two

Part Two: Using the graphic organizer from part one, write a concise paragraph discussing the sequence of events in the novel.

Transition Words: first, next, then, last, before, after, consequently, as a result of, eventually, meanwhile, later, in the end, suddenly, the next day, over time, afterward, in the beginning, after this, finally, subsequently

Guidelines: Your writing should be clear and concise following MLA format. Visiting the Writing Center is highly recommended!

Compare and Contrast Text Structure

Assignment: *The Leavers* narrates Deming Guo's separation from his mother when she is arrested and eventually deported. Discuss the similarities and differences between Deming's experience of separation from his mother with that discussed in the article "What it's like to be a foster parent for separated migrant kids" <https://www.michiganradio.org/post/what-its-be-foster-parent-separated-migrant-kids>.

Guidelines:

- Your writing should be clear and concise following MLA format. Visiting the Writing Center is highly recommended!
- Discuss one similarity and one difference supported with textual evidence from both texts.

Contrast Transition Words: but, however, unlike, conversely, in spite of, on the other hand, otherwise, nevertheless, alternatively, even though, rather, instead, because of, on the contrary,

Comparison Transition Words: similarly, equally, comparable, in the same way, also, in the same manner

Cause and Effect Text Structure

Assignment: *The Leavers* narrates Deming Guo's struggle with identity and cultural barriers. In a well-developed academic essay, discuss one cause and one effect of Deming's struggle with identity and belonging.

Guidelines:

- Your writing should be clear and concise following MLA format. Visiting the Writing Center is highly recommended!
- Discuss one cause and one effect supported with textual evidence.
- Remember to develop your discussion with reasons and evidence.

Cause Transition Words: because, since, the first cause, due to, in order to

Effect Transition Words: consequently, therefore, as a result, therefore, that is why, hence, accordingly

Cause	Effect

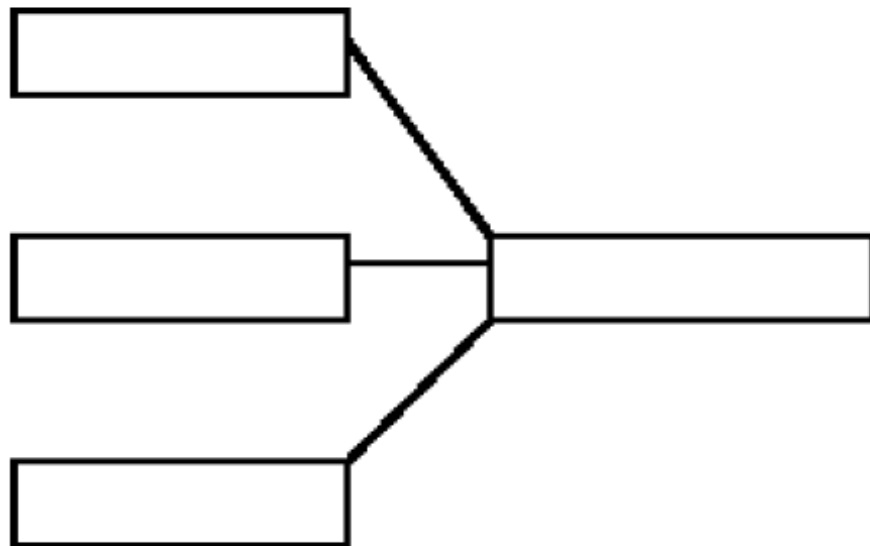
Problem and Solution Text Structure

Assignment: Problem and solution is a text structure that provides information about an issue and then discusses the resolution. A problem can be between individuals, with the world or community, or internally with one's self. Deming and Polly face several problems with the individuals in their life, with the world around them, and through internal conflicts with themselves. Select one character to discuss a problem they face: Deming or Polly. Then, discuss how they resolved this problem in the novel, if at all.

Guidelines:

- Your writing should be clear and concise following MLA format. Visiting the Writing Center is highly recommended!
- Discuss one problem and one solution using textual evidence.
- Remember to develop your discussion with reasons and evidence.

Transition Words: in order to, accordingly, because of, for this reason, although, in order to, therefore, another, as a result, consequently, thereby, leads to, resolve



ASSIGNMENTS, PROMPTS, AND QUIZES

DEBRA ST. JOHN – POLITICAL SCIENCE OR GOVERNMENT ASSIGNMENT

RESEARCH PAPER:

A. Research the different sides of the debate regarding Immigration. Compare the policy views and how and why they differ between Democrats and Republicans over the issues of asylum seekers, illegal immigrants, the actions of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and deportation and separation of parents and children that are occurring under the Trump Administration. Note both sides' view of the political, economic and social arguments in today's political climate regarding how to address immigration issues. Identify the efforts or lack thereof to address U.S. immigration policies.

B. Next, in *The Leavers*, Deming (Daniel) spends a great amount of his emotional energy trying to understand why his mother deserted him, put him up for adoption and seemingly never attempted to contact him. His sense of not fitting in to society led him to certain choices that served to reinforce his lack of worth. As the story develops, Deming learns the truth about his mother's capture by during a raid by the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), imprisonment and deportation back to China with the opportunity to notify family in America. Unfolding political debate over the use of ICE raids, child separation and parental deportation dominating the media today. As you read of the impact the separation of Deming from his mother had on both of their lives, review the use of such government actions on today's Hispanic children and their parents. Note both the pro and con side of the use of such action to deter or solve the immigration along the U.S. southern border. What data is used to manipulate the "facts?" That is, what are the pro and con arguments?

C. Finally, compare the similarities and differences between the political, economic and social perspectives and concerns in the book and currently in the United States regarding immigration. Do you find the reasoning used compelling, If so how? Do you think data regarding the economic and social dangers and problems of Hispanic immigration are being concealed or re-interpreted to benefit our current approach? What are the major forces driving resistance to putting forth a comprehensive immigration policy? What do you think should be done to address the current issues raised over asylum seekers and illegal immigrants?

REQUIREMENTS:

Cover sheet

Work Cited page (minimum of five scholarly sources)

You may use MLA or APA

12 pt. font and 1-inch margins

The paper should be a minimum of five pages.

WILLIAM BRANNON -- ASSORTED WRITING PROMPTS

MUSIC

What similarities or differences do you hear between the music your parents or older friends listen to and the music you choose? Discuss using specific types of music with specific messages to illustrate. (250+ words)

FAMILY

Compose a brief narrative about a memorable experience you have had that changed your opinion of either a member of your family or an event involving members of your family. Provide a context for the experience. Convey how the experience had a significant impact on you. Include relevant details and examples. (250+ words)

GENDER

Consider the depiction of gender in *The Leavers*. How does the depiction of gender in Ko's novel compare to other narratives read in class? (250+ words)

COLLEGE LIFE

A college education is a costly investment and as a college student you may have certain expectations about college life and how college will benefit you in the future. What benefits do you expect to derive from your college education? What kinds of factors did you take into consideration in your decision to come to college? What stories that you've heard about college education do you find appealing or intimidating? Why? (250+ words)

WILLIAM BRANNON -- EXTRA CREDIT

Compose a letter written to a younger version of yourself focusing on an important event involving your family. (250+ words)

GERALD SULLIVAN – ESSAY PROMPT

Professor of Cultural Studies Ien Ang's work suggests an interpretative framework for approaching Lisa Ko's novel, *The Leavers*. In her book, *On Not Speaking Chinese: Living between Asia and the West*, Ang states that she is Chinese by descent, but only sometimes by consent. She was born in Indonesia, grew up in the Netherlands and now teaches in Australia. Although her parents both speak one or another version of those languages we identify as Chinese, they never taught their daughter. As such Ang finds herself part of what is often taken to be a Chinese diasporic community spread out across the world often with at best nostalgic attachments to a putative homeland which they themselves do not know. She also has lived in a series of what she calls world cities, referring to places with large and diverse populations which come into contact with one another yielding fluid patterns of shifting identity. As such, Ang addresses the questions of who is Chinese for whom, in what contexts and upon what bases?

You are to treat this all to brief description of Ang's work as both adequate and correct. In no less than three full pages and no more than five full pages, use this framework to analyze Ko's novel. If you think Ang mistaken, you must explain why using Ko's novel. You should address matters of food, language and family as Ko develops these. You must provide proper citations and bibliography (or works cited) as required by your Professor, showing where in Ko's novel you are finding materials in support of your analysis.

Assignments which not only make proper and insightful use of the concepts used by your Professor to discuss the novel but also display an understanding of the relevant portions of Ko's novel will receive high marks; those which show little understanding of the concepts and the novel will receive few points.

Between these two extremes lie four possibilities. Some may show an understanding of the concepts but not of the novel. Others might display a grasp of the novel but show a confusion concerning the ideas. Some may show confusion about both the novel and the ideas, but in ways that are interesting, subtle or insightful. Finally, others may accurately use both the novel and concepts, but in ways that are trivial. Work displaying any of these latter four qualities will be awarded points depending upon the relative degrees of error and insight.

KAY MIZELL—ESSAY AND SHORT ESSAY PROMPTS

ESSAY PROMPTS:

The themes include: identity, the American dream, motherhood, adoption, foster care, music, family, immigration, working class cultural differences, gender, race, college life, friendship, and parenthood. Pick one theme and using textual support show the development of that ideational unity in four or five areas.

1. The theme of identity permeates the novel. Discuss the variables that constitute the main character's identity, such as his names Deming Gao and Daniel Wilkinson (173); his languages of Fuzhounese, Mandarin Chinese, and English (49, 52, 89, 108, 171-72, 216, 260); his birthplace in Manhattan Chinatown, his childhood home in Fuzhou China, and his hometown of Ridgeborough in New York City; his ethnic heritage as a Chinese child and his cultural upbringing from eleven to adulthood raised by upper middle class Caucasians. Not only does Deming feel the tension of his identities, but when adoptive mother Kay tells the principle that Daniel is originally from New York City, Principal Chester asks, "But originally?" (52-53) as if not satisfied that he was from in America. Chapter Five contrasts Deming and Daniel admitting, "Deming was a hairball tumor jammed deep in Daniel's gut. Or Deming had never left Rutgers Street; he'd been here all along" (96). He thought he had been "ghosted by his own mother, or Peter and Kay, . . . or Angel" (164), meaning his true identity have been taken away. Discuss the variables that most affect Deming/Daniel's sense of identity. What variables most significantly affect your identity?

2. The ambiguity of Deming's identity is so profound that he believes he is living a duality with the life of Daniel being the false one. "The old fear bucked up that he'd be exposed, called out, exiled. You're a fake. What's your real name? Where are you really from?" (14). He felt like he didn't really belong, that he couldn't trust himself, that he was not malleable enough to fit in each place, watching others to decide what to say. He believed that "Nobody wanted him" (47). He asks Kay Wilkinson, "Why am I here?" wondering why they are fostering him (54). Peter Wilkinson asserts, "We'll take care of him. That's all that matters, and he knows that" (57), but he believed he had to be what they wanted him to be. Polly, his birth mother, criticizes the white adoptive family for changing his name, erasing any trace of her, and wanting him so badly that she would "take another woman's son" (222, 223, 225). Where does he find his security, his footing, his balance? What role do Michael, Roland, and Angel play for him?

3. A pertinent theme for many, as it is for Deming, is the question of who is his mother: 1) the birth and biological mother who sacrificed for him by sending him back to China to his grandfather, or 2) his adoptive mother who loved, cared for him, and wanted the best for him? (27). Adoption is a significant social response today affecting many homes. Discuss what the Wilkinsons offered Daniel. What sacrifices did they make? Kay tells Deming, "We were so afraid of doing something wrong. We thought it would be better if you changed your name so you would feel like you belonged with us, with our family. That you had a family" (256). Why was he not content and always searching for his birth mom? Do some adopted children rest in their new family and express gratitude or is it a part of adoption to wonder and to search? Can it be both? In many cases do the adoptive families become the real families, the "forever families" (91)? Daniel remains cautious and afraid to let down his guard because "these people were strangers" (74) and because he is "not the kind of kid they want (100), but he considers both women his mom (170) even though Polly pretends he doesn't exist (176. 275) and Leon's cousin tells Polly, "He forgot his own mother" (183). On Deming's return from living with his grandfather in China, she insists Deming has to obey her, "I'm your mother. You have to go with me" (215); yet, Polly calls the Wilkinsons Deming's parents (288). Leon identifies her relationship, however, telling her, "A mother is supposed to sacrifice for her son, not the other way around" (217). Discuss motherhood in this novel. If you have experienced the question of who is my mother, share insights into your findings.

4. Foster care is also treated as Vivian is entrusted with Deming but turns him over to the agency because she can provide for only her son Michael (44-46, 56, 64 case worker, accommodations for foster parents 75-76, discussion with Angel Hennings 85-87). Deming researches the difference between adoption and foster child determining that one is temporary and one permanent. While initially fostering Daniel, the Wilkinsons officially adopted him (105), but he told Michael at their reunion, "But I lost my whole family" (105) because he was adopted. His foster parents, however, petitioned for termination of mother's parental rights on grounds of abandonment" (260). After Deming learns Polly's story of being deported, he explains the circumstances to his adoptive mom (256) who gives him the adoption petition so he can understand the process. Discuss the complexity of the foster child's life.

5. Although much more subtle than the search for his "mother," Deming's search for his father or father figure, "his real Yi Ba" (39), underlies the story as it does in many contemporary works. How does this quest figure into the plot? He tells Roland, his musician friend, about "the guy I'd grown up with," meaning Leon (30, 188, 196, 203, 217), but Leon slips out, returns to China, and subsequently marries someone else abandoning Deming as well (43). Deming peeks at the foster agency's records that

document that he was abandoned by his “putative father” (79), his mother’s neighbor Haifeng Li in her hometown of Fuzhou who never knew she was pregnant. Therefore, his own father perhaps does not know he has a son. While back in China, his mother marries the widower and “self-made business man Yong, but she doesn’t tell him about Deming. Deming asks, “Who is my father?” (175). Although Deming does not meet his biological father until he is older and doesn’t learn his name until his return to China (287), Leon becomes his surrogate father, his Yi Ba, one whom he admires, loves, and desires to emulate. However, he gives a Father’s Day card to Peter Wilkinson and signs it “Love, Daniel” (255). What are a few words that would describe your own relationship with your father? If you don’t remember your father, was there anyone that took a strong role in your life? What qualities did he have?

6. What do you think is important about Daniel’s descriptions of moments of pain, confusion, and despair? Deming/Daniel has an acute sense of abandonment first from his mother sending him to live with his grandfather Yi Gong in Minjiang, China from the ages of one to six and subsequently from the ten years’ separation from her when she is picked up as an illegal and deported back to China when he was eleven. Examine episodes of his dealing with this sense of loss, “He didn’t want her to be dead, never ever, but it seemed preferable, . . . to having her leave without a goodbye” (11). Even seeing a Chinese woman in Chinatown illicit a “deep cavernous loneliness” in him (21). He says her being gone was no secret but “was a car alarm cutting through an empty street in the middle of the night” (37). In spite of the Wilkinson’s attempts to give him security, at school he notices that everyone is the same color except him (58) and that “he had been imported from another planet” and classifies himself as a leftover “crumb” (59), and playground kids called him a “Chinese retard” (61). Discuss the sense of loss, isolation, or loneliness some young people experience today.

7. A love of music manifests itself in Deming’s life at an early age and then becomes his outlet and his passion. Discuss the way music shaped his life and affected the major choices he made. Support your points with text, such as, “Deming chased after music with a hunger that bordered on desperation” (72). “Without music, the world was flattened, washed out, too obvious” (236). Other passages include those on pages 26, 67, 71-73, 162-69, 236, 248. Discuss the role of music for Deming, his style, his development of the talent, and/or the escape it gives him.

PROMPTS FOR SHORT ESSAYS

8. When Deming and his mother are reunited after the five year separation, they are described as “doppelgängers” (32, 34), because of the complexity of their relationship. In spite of her promise not to, he fears that she will leave him again, but felt that for that brief time, “she had belonged to him alone” 37). Discuss the relationship of trust

between parents and a child and what the loss and attempt to regain it entails. What are some ways you have felt rejected by those who you should have been able to count on?

9. The novel explores the dogged pursuit of the American Dream through the eyes of a mother, Peilan, and through those of her son, Deming. Characterize the American Dream that set the novel in motion and the cost of pursuing it for Peilan and Deming. In addition, consider the reality of the American Dream today and give an example of individuals or groups that have passionately sought it as well as the consequences for them. If that pursuit has been part of your life, explain the lure (5, 181).

10. Deming's mother taught him an ethical code, for example, "Always be prepared," and "Never rely on anyone else to give you things you could get for yourself" (5). "Always be strong" (66). How does he inculcate her philosophy into his modus operandum? (74). Does his early childhood with his birth mother affect his ethics, does he take on his adoptive family's code, or does he create his own? Discuss the ways we acquire a moral code.

10. Although highly educated with Kay being a political science professor and Peter an economic professor, the Wilkisons express racism, according to Daniel, since they are white and upper class (76). They studied Mandarin to prepare for fostering to adopt a Chinese child and understand cultural differences. At times, they appeal open to everyone. Yet, they are often presented as trying to save Deming and transform him. Did Ko need to make them appear as racists since they were white or is it reverse racism to do so? Discuss racism as an actual phenomenon. What does labeling most behaviors as "racist" because someone is white do to the recognition of actual racism?

11. Explain how Daniel acquires a gambling addiction, what alterations occur in his life, and the outcome of this propensity. What effect did it have on his relationship with Angel? (98-100). What role did it play in his final relationship with the Wilkinsons? (263). Leon also was lured by gambling and made irrational choices (210-11) as well as their friend Quan (214). Is this an addiction that affects very many today? Why do we repeat the same mistakes and reap the same issues from those mistakes?

13. Deming feels that he can't tell others his real feelings because of what they might do with the possible exception of Michael and later Angel until his choices ruin the relationship. What kind of issues seem hardest to open up and tell others about. Why is that?

14. Lisa Ko's style includes vivid descriptions using primarily colors and sounds, a significant portion of dialogue, figurative language ("Snow fell like clots of wet laundry " 3), and events that set a chain of events in motion, such as Polly's deportation, or Vivian's taking Deming to a foster care agency. She also braids together the stories of Deming, Peilan, and Danile after he finds his mother in China into the three parts of the book. Choose one element of her style and give examples of the effectiveness of it in honing her way of writing.

BARBARA STERN – PSYCHOLOGY ASSIGNMENTS

1. Psychologists and sociologists argue that all human beings – regardless of the culture they grow up in – are shaped and molded by their immediate surroundings and the people they encounter. To demonstrate this, they focus on the processes of socialization. What is most important here is the recognition that although the actual content of each culture that is being learned – the cultural beliefs, values, attitudes, norms, customs and traditions – might be different, the processes through which this learning occur are fundamentally the same. Illustrate this main point by examining the portrayal of Deming, as he develops from middle childhood, adolescence, young adulthood. Through an analysis of the experiences of Deming, indicate how the process of socialization he experienced is no different from that which you have experienced. To guide your analysis of the socialization process, include such concepts as role models, significant others, and reference groups.

2. All people develop a sense of self. To specify the process through which this typically occurs, Charles Horton Cooley introduced the term looking-glass self. Cooley was working to develop a theory of self as essentially social, and he used the image of a mirror to capture the idea of people imagining what they look like to others, then incorporating what they imagine into their own self-concept. This concept of self as a product of the individual's interaction with environment, along with and his/her interpretations of those interactions, has come to occupy a pivotal role in both psychology and sociology. Discuss how Deming's evolving sense of self reflects this idea. In addition, include a description of the development of your own self-concept as it relates to Cooley's theory.

LINDA KAPOCSI— DISCUSSION AND WRITING PROMPTS

STUDY GUIDE DISCUSSION/WRITING PROMPTS:

1. p. 7: "...sometimes people looked at them like their language had come out of the drain." Have you had any experience with what might be inferred as a "hierarchy" of language, that is, a "more preferable" language vs. a "less preferable" language? Has your experience been that being bilingual or trilingual was advantageous, or that one particular language "rules"?
2. P. 16: "Daniel was malleable, everyone and no one, a collector of moods, a careful observer of the right thing to say. He watched other people's reactions before deciding on his own; he could be fun or serious or whatever was most strategic, whoever you wanted him to be." Why do you think many people, like Daniel, are conformists? What causes conformity?
3. P. 16: "If only he had the right clothes, knew the right references, he would finally become the person he was meant to be...Deserving of love, blameless. But no matter how many albums he acquired or playlists he artfully compiled, the real him remained stubbornly out there like a fat cruise ship on the horizon, visible but out of reach, and whenever he got closer it drifted further away. " Why do you think that Daniel felt that he was wasn't deserving of love? What other situations can cause this feeling of inferiority?

VIDEO DISCUSSION AND WRITING PROMPTS:

Video: "Eight Adoption Stories that Will Give you The Feels" (ABC News Remix- 8 Awesome Adoption Stories) 13 minutes total- can be watched in segments

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CFpCr9zVDxs>

Video "Eight Adoption Stories..." Segments and Specific Topics-

- a. "Petition for Adoption" (first story) AND "Holiday Adoption" (min. 6 min 10 sec from start)- Families come in all shapes and sizes and can be formed with biological ties or by other means. Tell/write about a family whose members chose each other.

b. "Four Brothers" (1 min. 30 sec. start time)– The women friends in this story adopted four siblings so that the brothers could grow up knowing each other. Tell/write about a time that a friend went above and beyond to help each other or to help others.

c. "The Couple Surprised Friends and Family with a New Adopted Baby" (3 min. 11 sec. start time) - Describe the best surprise you ever received.

d. "832 Days" (4 min. 57 sec. start time)– Tell/write about a circumstance when someone overcame the odds and achieved a dream. What does the number 832 represent- numerically, physically, and figuratively? Do you have a number that is very meaningful to you as well? Why?

e. "Lemonade Stand Adoption" (7 min. 9 sec. start time) – What could people in the North Texas area do to support foster families and adoptive families? (Ex: emotional support/respite support/financial support, etc.) See the following website for more ideas to support adoption and fostering: <https://embrace texas.org/> Is there a Service Learning project that could align with the mission of Embrace Texas?

f. "Pulpit Plea" (8 min. 23 sec. start time) – Describe a scenario when someone truly became a self-starter or self-initiator out of necessity. What characteristics make someone successful in self-advocacy? How are those characteristics demonstrative of strength rather than weakness?

g. "Adoption Knockout" (10 min. start time) - Share a situation when some noticed something was terribly wrong and did something to fix the situation.

ADOPTION AND FOSTER CARE STATISTICS AND DISCUSSION:

1. Graphs on American foster children and adoption statistics, surprising statistics, and waiting children:

https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Doing_Business/Regional_Statistics/default.asp

<https://adoptionnetwork.com/adoption-statistics>

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/research-data-technology/statistics-research/afcars>

<https://www.adoptioncouncil.org/blog/2019/03/fy2018-intercountry-adoption-report-released>

<https://texascasa.org/new-federal-foster-care-funding-changes/>

- a. How many children in the U.S. are officially part of the foster care program?
 - b. How common are closed adoptions? Open adoptions?
 - c. How many Americans were adopted?
 - d. How many adoptions are there each year in the U.S.?
 - e. What surprises you about federal foster care funding?
 - f. How would you compare or contrast foster care in the U.S. with that in Texas alone?
-
2. If you are from another country, what are the views there on adoption? Foster care? Are there foster and adoption processes in your native country? How is adoption in America similar or different?

LISA HULL FORRESTER – STUDENT RESEARCH ASSIGNMENT

This assignment provides a curriculum outline that can be used to facilitate student research related to *The Leavers*, a novel by Lisa Ko. The goal of the research is to create an individual or panel presentation to propose the 2020 Collin College Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Student Research Conference.

The outline of the assignment is flexible to allow professors to remove or rearrange steps to fit a variety of disciplines, genres, and presentation styles. The timeline of the assignment is also up to the professor and might be dependent upon the course length, depth of research required, and the amount of time needed to teach each aspect of the assignment.

Each step has a supplemental online link to enhance textbook readings or lectures. The links are embedded into the steps but can also be found at the end of the assignment as urls.

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Each spring Collin College hosts an Undergraduate Interdisciplinary Student Research Conference. The following list, taken from the 2019 Conference webpage, defines the different types of student research the conference showcases:

- Panel Presentation (speakers present to an audience. Ends with Q & A)
- Individual (accepted students are placed in an existing panel based on research subject)
- Collaborative (accepted collaborative works are placed in a panel together)
- Collin College Health Science Academy (Only students enrolled in the Collin College Health Science Academy present in this format)
- Roundtable (accepted student(s) lead the audience through an interactive discussion of their research)
- Performance (accepted student(s) present their research to an audience in the form of a rehearsed performance)
- Poster boards (accepted student(s) present their research to hallway passersby in the form of designed poster boards. This is similar in style to a Science Fair presentation)



## ASSIGNMENT OUTLINE

### I. START HERE—Read the book

A. Annotate the book as you are reading to make note of anything you find interesting or confusing. Some ideas for annotation are terms that need to be defined or remembered; confusing concepts which require extra reading or research; familial relationships between characters; cultural backgrounds of the characters; issues of citizenship, deportation, and integration; countries and cities lived in or visited; languages spoken; music and foods mentioned; educational topics and schools; time settings; and major plot themes and movements.

B. Rewrite your annotations on a separate file or paper to see if the annotations you have made can be placed in some form of meaning-making lists like graphic organizers. Look for patterns or commonalities like definitions, places characters live, or characters' name shifts.

II. Begin doing research into a few of the most interesting categories or groupings. Some examples might be to do research in the library databases on international adoption during the time period covered by the book, the languages of China which are mentioned in the book, or fluid identities as they are used in its various forms in the book.

A. Choose 2 or 3 of the research paths you took that seem most promising, interesting, and tied to the book in an important way. Try to begin to form an argument about the 2 or 3 research topics/issues or look for avenues of historical analysis and deeper research which might produce engaging presentations.

B. Look over the topics you've been focusing on to narrow research into 1 of the topics. Base this decision on your interests, the amount of research you are finding, and which topic would be most engaging when presented to an audience.

III. Create an Annotated Bibliography for your research. If it is helpful, separate the research sources by topic or some type of categories. Your annotated bibliography should include all or most of your research related to your topic although all of your research will not necessarily end up in your final presentation. For the purpose of this assignment, the annotated bibliography should have at least 8 sources, each with three

annotation paragraphs: brief summary, assessment or critique of source, and a reflection paragraph which explains how the source fits into your research goals.

IV. Create a series of visuals related to your topic which might benefit your research presentation such as images of landscapes the characters visited, maps related to travel in the book, or pictures of foods eaten in the book. Upload at least 6 visuals to a file which includes documentation information for the visual's original source.

V. Begin to work the text-based and image-based research into a PowerPoint or Prezi as an argumentative or informative presentation about your topic from the book.

VI. Using the presentation as an outline, begin to a 5-8 page essay, argumentative or informative, to explore the topic or issue more fully integrating the research and images into the essay as support.

VII. Create a list of the research sources you use in your essay to form a reference page. Your annotated bibliography should be your guide for the proper citations style for your sources.

VIII. Share your work with others in the class to see if any obvious panels can be formed based on similar topics or issues from the book. Look at the sources used by others and reference their annotated bibliographies to see if you could benefit from using any of their sources in your presentation. Academic writing is based on acknowledging the conversations that came before your research, so it is important to know what others have said and published on your topic. To avoid plagiarism, always credit the original source of any borrowed the material—through summary, quotations, and paraphrases.

IX. Create an abstract for your presentation that includes the general and specific plan you have for the presentation and submit it to the conference when the Call for Papers opens.

X. Practice your presentation before the conference so you can be confident presenting your work.

## REFERENCES LINKED IN THE ASSIGNMENT—

Undergraduate conference information

<https://www.collin.edu/conference/studentresearch/index.html>

Annotation resources <https://guides.library.harvard.edu/sixreadinghabits>

Graphic organizer examples <https://www.uakron.edu/etrain/pedagogy/graphic-organizers.dot>

Database tutorials through Cougarweb <http://collin.libguides.com/tutorials>

Argument essay writing information

[https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general\\_writing/academic\\_writing/essay\\_writing/argumentative\\_essays.html](https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/general_writing/academic_writing/essay_writing/argumentative_essays.html)

Historical Analysis essay writing information

<https://www.umt.edu/writingcenter/docs/Analytical%20and%20Interpretive%20Essays%20in%20History.pdf>

Contents of a good presentation

<https://www2.le.ac.uk/offices/ld/resources/presentations/planning-presentation>



## LINDSAY MOORE – QUIZES AND KEYS

### PART ONE – QUIZ

MATCH THE FOLLOWING CHARACTERS WITH THEIR DESCRIPTIONS.

- |                            |                                                                  |
|----------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| _____ 1. Kay Wilkinson     | A. attends Gamblers Anonymous meetings                           |
| _____ 2. Michael Chen      | B. Economics professor at Carlough College                       |
| _____ 3. Vivian Chen Zheng | C. a therapist once called her “hostile”                         |
| _____ 4. Polly Guo         | D. sacrificed her career for her husband’s career                |
| _____ 5. Leon Chen         | E. attends Columbia University                                   |
| _____ 6. Peter Wilkinson   | F. bullies Daniel                                                |
| _____ 7. Angel Hennings    | G. the other member of Psychic Hearts                            |
| _____ 8. Roland Fuentes    | H. signed the Surrender Form for Daniel to be adopted            |
| _____ 9. Cody Campbell     | I. the first girl in her village to go to the provincial capital |
| _____ 10. Daniel Wilkinson | J. works at a slaughterhouse                                     |

### MULTIPLE CHOICE

\_\_\_\_\_ 11. On the day before Deming sees his mother for the last time, he gets detention for which of the following reasons?

- A. Cutting up in class with Michael
- B. Passing a note to April Hawkins
- C. Tripping Travis Bhopa
- D. Throwing a paper airplane in Science
- E. Not finishing his homework

\_\_\_\_\_ 12. **True/ False:** Deming was excited to move to Florida with his mother and Leon.

\_\_\_\_\_13. Which of the following characters paid Polly's debt (loans)?

- A. Leon
- B. Peter and Kay Wilkinson
- C. Vivian
- D. Michael
- E. Deming

\_\_\_\_\_14. Kay and Peter Wilkinsons' birthday celebration tradition includes which of the following?

- A. Waking up early to eat a special cake
- B. A treasure hunt for gifts
- C. Having dinner at Carmine's in NYC
- D. Attending a concert
- E. Staying up late watching movies

\_\_\_\_\_15. Daniel describes himself as a \_\_\_\_\_ in the social structure at school in Ridgeborough.

- A. A nerd
- B. An athlete
- C. Band geek
- D. A crumb
- E. A popular kid

\_\_\_\_\_16. Which of the following items from his mother does Deming keep with him when he leaves NYC?

- A. A blue button
- B. A cat for decorating a cell phone antennae
- C. Her keys
- D. Her winter hat
- E. Her purple coffee mug

\_\_\_\_\_17. Deming says that Vivian never checked his homework because

- A. Vivian did not care about schoolwork
- B. The language barrier was too great, and she was embarrassed
- C. She hated the idea of homework and wanted him to learn at school
- D. Leon always checked it
- E. Michael was a good student and did his homework

\_\_\_\_\_18. Which of the following is NOT true of Kay and Peter's plan for Daniel in the upcoming summer?

- A. He will attend Carlough College
- B. He will major in Music at Carlough College
- C. He will live at home
- D. He will write a Statement of Purpose essay
- E. He will attend meetings

\_\_\_\_\_19. From the ages of 1- to 6- years old, Deming lived in

- A. Chinatown with his mom
- B. The Bronx with his mom
- C. Manhattan with the Hennings
- D. Fuzhou with his grandfather
- E. Ridgeborough with the Wilkinsons

\_\_\_\_\_20. Which of the following characters is no longer speaking to Daniel?

- A. Angel Hennings
- B. Kay Wilkinson
- C. Peter Wilkinson
- D. Roland Fuentes
- E. Cody Calderon



## PART ONE – ANSWER KEY

Match the following characters with their descriptions.

- |                              |                                                                  |
|------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
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| ___A___ 10. Daniel Wilkinson | J. works at a slaughterhouse                                     |

Multiple Choice.

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- A. Angel Hennings
  - B. Kay Wilkinson
  - C. Peter Wilkinson
  - D. Roland Fuentes
  - E. Cody Calderon

## PART TWO – READING QUIZ

For each of the following quotations from Part II, write the name of the character who is speaking, describe the scene in which the quote is spoken, and the significance of the quote for the novel to this point.

1. "The men had been tougher than they looked. He'd known early on that he was in over his head, but kept playing despite their suppressed excitement. They thought he would lose so much he would break down, and they were waiting for the big show, his inevitable unraveling, but each loss felt like shucking off another weight and removing an uncomfortable article of clothing...He felt a savage euphoria...It felt great to be himself again."

Speaker:

Scene:

Significance:

2. *"I am good. New York is where I live. Leon your number gave me. Leon I found, Michael found me. You are good? I would like to talk to you."* [original text is also in italics]

Speaker:

Scene:

Significance:

3. "If I told Haifeng I was pregnant, he would act like marriage was inevitable. He would expect me to be happy, or worse, grateful. I saw it written to the end, all the years of my life: village, 3 Alley, babies, me..."

Speaker:

Scene:

Significance:

4. "*Send him back. It's the only way.* You kicked me like you wanted to be freed. I don't want to tell you what I did. Fast now, before I could change my mind, looking around to make sure no one could see me, I set the bag on the pavement under the bench and lowered you inside. The bag was taller than you, its sides a stiff, insulated plastic. When I got up, I was lighter, relieved. Then, I ran."

Speaker:

Scene:

Significance:

5. "An Incredible American returned to Minjiang and had a party. He hadn't been born an Incredible American but a mere villager like the rest of us, but had become an American by taking a train to Kunming, walking through the Burmese mountains, flying from Thailand to America, where he landed a job in a restaurant in Los Angeles, married an American—she was Chinese but had legit papers—and gotten naturalized, saved enough to pay off his debt and finally come home for a visit. His family was throwing a party at the mansion he built for them."

Speaker:

Scene:

Significance:

## PART TWO - KEY

For each of the following quotations from Part II, write the name of the character who is speaking, describe the scene in which the quote is spoken, and the significance of the quote for the novel to this point.

1. "The men had been tougher than they looked. He'd known early on that he was in over his head, but kept playing despite their suppressed excitement. They thought he would lose so much he would break down, and they were waiting for the big show, his inevitable unraveling, but each loss felt like shucking off another weight and removing an uncomfortable article of clothing...He felt a savage euphoria...It felt great to be himself again."

Speaker: **Daniel**

Scene: **at the end of his rope where he plays poker and loses all of the rest of his money, in the "present day" part of the novel**

Significance: **This shows how desperate Daniel has become in his life. Prior to this, he gets fired from the band and finds out that Peter is no longer speaking to him. He relapses into his gambling addiction to lose everything. This scene is the rock bottom for Daniel. His feeling of euphoria may be because he has now completely failed at being "Daniel" and feels ready to explore Deming.**

2. "I am good. New York is where I live. Leon your number gave me. Leon I found, Michael found me. You are good? I would like to talk to you." [original text is also in italics]

Speaker: **Daniel**

Scene: **first message he leaves on Polly's answering machine**

Significance: **This quote is significant because it is the first time that Daniel and Polly connect. The language in the quote is also significant as the broken language shows how disconnected he has become to his heritage. The broken language is one of the first things Polly comments on after she listens to it.**

3. "If I told Haifeng I was pregnant, he would act like marriage was inevitable. He would expect me to be happy, or worse, grateful. I saw it written to the end, all the years of my life: village, 3 Alley, babies, me..."

Speaker: **Peilan/ Polly**

Scene: **She is still in China at this point, working in the factory. Because unwed pregnancy is outlawed, and couples have to register to obtain a pregnancy license, Polly is trying to decide what to do.**

Significance: **This quote shows the kind of "nontraditional" ideas about love and marriage that Polly demonstrates throughout the novel. Her relationship with Haifeng almost seems like an amusing distraction to her, something is not serious about long-term. She doesn't want to marry him and settle down because she has bigger dreams and wants to see the world. The conflict between love/marriage and being herself is something she struggles with in all of her relationships.**

4. “Send him back. It’s the only way.

You kicked me like you wanted to be freed. I don’t want to tell you what I did. Fast now, before I could change my mind, looking around to make sure no one could see me, I set the bag on the pavement under the bench and lowered you inside. The bag was taller than you, its sides a stiff, insulated plastic. When I got up, I was lighter, relieved. Then, I ran.”

Speaker: Polly

Scene: Polly is living in NYC and struggling to work and take care of her child while living in extreme poverty. Though she goes back to get him, it is right after this that she sends Deming to Fuzhou to live with her father.

Significance: The significance of this has several layers: the struggles of a single woman with a baby living in poverty and the difficult choices they have to make. It also demonstrates that Polly can leave Deming. Because readers don’t know what happened to Polly later, it provides an avenue for us to question whether she simply abandoned Deming. In the inverse, it might also foreshadow that she would always return.

5. “An Incredible American returned to Minjiang and had a party. He hadn’t been born an Incredible American but a mere villager like the rest of us, but had become an American by taking a train to Kunming, walking through the Burmese mountains, flying from Thailand to America, where he landed a job in a restaurant in Los Angeles, married an American—she was Chinese but had legit papers—and gotten naturalized, saved enough to pay off his debt and finally come home for a visit. His family was throwing a party at the mansion he built for them.”

Speaker: Polly

Scene: Polly and Yi Gong go the party for Minjiang/ Jing/John

Significance: Polly is able to see firsthand an example of someone who was able to go to America and become successful. Minjiang also introduces her to the woman who arranges for her passage to America. Because of Minjiang’s experience, Polly is not afraid of the debt she will owe or the illegal immigrant status because it all worked out so well for Minjiang. She talks about him several more times after she arrives in NYC, wondering how long it actually took him to pay off his debt and how much his American wife paid as well. Minjiang’s example is also significant because Polly ultimately doesn’t want to marry Leon because he is also illegal and cannot help grant her legal status.

## PARTS III AND IV READING QUIZ

For each of the following quotations from Parts III-IV, write the name of the character who is speaking, describe the scene in which the quote is spoken, and the significance of the quote for the novel to this point.

1. "All right. That's enough now."

Speaker:

Scene:

Significance

2. "It's not every day Number One Son comes to visit from America...You can stay as long as you want"

Speaker:

Scene:

Significance:

3. "Later, I'd feel certain that the number was 435-8586. In the tent, there was a single telephone that hung from the wall, but it had no dial tone. Each morning, for the next four hundred and twenty-four days, I would pick up the phone in hope that there would be one...But there never was. That damn phone never worked."

Speaker:

Scene:

SIGNIFICANCE:

4. "Just say the word and I'll let Thad know and you can put this out. No one else is doing stuff like this."

Speaker:

Scene:

Significance

5. "The white sheep comes home to roost"

Speaker:

Scene:

Significance:



## PARTS III AND IV READING QUIZ KEY

1. "All right. That's enough now."

Speaker: **Peter Wilkinson**

Scene: **The night before the fall semester is supposed to begin, Daniel gets on an online poker site and relapses into gambling. Peter walks in and finds him. Simultaneously, Kay receives an email from Elaine Hennings and learns that Daniel borrowed (or stole) the \$10,000.00 from Angel and has been lying to her.**

Significance: **This is the turning point for Daniel. He has finally brought Peter and Kay to the turning point where they allow him to walk out of their lives and find his own way. He uses the money from the poker winnings to book a flight to Fuzhou and find his mother.**

2. "It's not every day Number One Son comes to visit from America... You can stay as long as you want"

Speaker: **Leon**

Scene: **Daniel has arrived in Fuzhou and visits Leon. Leon welcomes him back and invites Daniel to stay with his family as his son.**

Significance: **Leon becomes Daniel's guide in Fuzhou and pushes him to continue searching for Polly. They go out searching and finally find Polly's husband, Yong—and eventually Polly. Also, Leon embraces Daniel as his son, and Daniel connects with Leon's entire family, including Yimei, his daughter.**

3. "Later, I'd feel certain that the number was 435-8586. In the tent, there was a single telephone that hung from the wall, but it had no dial tone. Each morning, for the next four hundred and twenty-four days, I would pick up the phone in hope that there would be one... But there never was. That damn phone never worked."

Speaker: **Polly**

Scene: **detention center in New York City**

Significance: **Polly is finally telling Daniel what happened when she disappeared from his life. She was taken to a immigrant detention center and eventually deported. She was unable to call or communicate with Leon and Vivian as she did not have access to a phone. Moreover, even if**

she could have communicated with them, it would have been dangerous for them to have tried to help her since they were illegal as well.

4. “Just say the word and I’ll let Thad know and you can put this out. No one else is doing stuff like this.”

Speaker: **Roland**

Scene: **Roland hears Daniel play his solo music for the first time**

Significance: **Daniel is finally comfortable enough with his identity to put his own music out there and to do what he loves without compromising his vision. He also gets confirmation from Roland that his sound is good.**

5. “The white sheep comes home to roost” – A

Speaker: **Angel**

Scene: **text message Daniel receives from Angel after he has paid down his debt**

Significance: **the white sheep was Daniel and Angel’s private joke. Though they would be considered “black sheep” in their families, they call themselves white sheep because Angel believes “black sheep” is a racist metaphor. By recalling their old joke, Angel is telling Daniel that their relationship will survive, and they will always be friends. Angel is also able to see that Daniel has turned his life around.**

## STUDY GUIDES AND QUESTIONS

## JOAN KENNEDY – STUDY GUIDE

### A CLOSE READING

1. Describe Deming Guo's environment. Who is his best friend? Who are Leon and Vivian? What is Deming's relationship with his mother Polly? What is his reaction to her disappearance? (Ch. 1)
2. As the plot shifts to ten years later, how does Deming Guo become Daniel Wilkinson? Describe Daniel's self-image. Who is Roland Fuentes? How does the author Ko depict Peter and Kay Wilkinson? What are the goals that the Wilkinsons have for Daniel? Do they differ from the goals that Polly has for Deming? (Ch. 2)
3. Who are "the leavers" in this chapter? What are the circumstances? (Ch. 3)
4. Describe Daniel's first weeks at Ridgeborough. What does he learn about his birth parents? Foster care? Adoption? (Ch. 4)
5. Discuss the dual personalities of Deming Guo and Daniel Wilkinson. How does Deming/Daniel juggle his perspective on his life? How does Daniel respond to his meeting with Vivian and Michael? What is the result of this encounter? (Ch. 5)
6. What is Polly's explanation for leaving Deming? Describe her attitude. What is her viewpoint on her life with Yong? (Ch. 6)
7. Describe Peilan's (Polly) life when she was young. What type of personality did she have? What is urban hukou? What are the cultural implications of her unwanted pregnancy? Why does she leave for New York? Describe her journey to America. Why does Polly send Deming back to China (Fuzhou)? (Ch. 7)
8. What is Deming's reaction to Vivian placing him for adoption? Who is Angel Henning? Why does Daniel connect with her? Why does Daniel become addicted to gambling? What is his self-image? (Ch. 8)
9. What meaning does Deming's phone conversations with his birth mother have for him? What does he learn? (Ch. 9)

10. Why does Deming return to New York when he is six years old? Describe his time with his mother Polly. What does Florida represent to Polly? Why does Polly disappear? What type of life does she have at Ardsleyville? (Ch. 10)
11. Describe Polly's life with Yong in Fuzhou. How does it differ from her previous environments? (Ch. 11)
12. What is Daniel's attitude toward music? Who are the Psychic Hearts? (Ch. 12)
13. What is Daniel's attitude toward his classes at the college in Ridgeborough? (Ch. 13)
14. Why does Daniel have to leave Peter and Kay's home in Ridgeborough? (Ch. 14)
15. Describe Deming's reunion with his birth mother in China. (Ch. 15-19)
16. How does Peilan (Polly) Guo finally "find herself"? Where does she go? (Ch. 20)
17. Why does Daniel choose to live with Michael? What is his self-image? (Ch. 21)

### **REFLECTIONS ON THE TEXT:**

Explain how the title *The Leavers* reflects the characters and events in the novel.

Examine the author Ko's narrative style. How does she introduce characters, setting, and plot. What types of descriptive details does she include in the narrative?

Discuss the importance of self-image/personal identity that emerges with the characters Polly and Deming. What events contribute to this image?

Explore the challenges that immigrants face when leaving one culture and adapting to another.

Describe the conflicts that adoptive parents face when accepting a child from another culture.

Explain the role that education plays in the novel. Why is it important? What are the implications for the novel's characters?

Belonging to a family becomes central to the psychological well-being of Deming. How does he struggle with this? What is the result?

The novel explores the bond between a mother and child. What conflicts arise in the novel that disrupt this?

## GLORIA COCKERELL –STUDY GUIDE QUESTIONS

NOTE: Questions in each category may be assigned all together or taken separately.

### MUSIC AND LOCATION

#### MUSIC

Roland Fuentes

Peter Wilkinson

Daniel/Deming

#### LOCATION

New York

Ridgeborough

Fuzhou

Deming discovers a love of music that extends from his simply listening to music that he enjoys, through his learning to play guitar, and on through his actually playing onstage in a group and, at times, onstage individually.

1.How does Deming's/Daniel's love of music help him to make personal connections with other people that he would not otherwise have made?

2.How does Deming's/Daniel's love of music create or change his connection with Roland? With Peter? With Michael?

3.How does Deming's/Daniel's love of music help him to connect with his own inner self?

4.How does Deming's love of music affect his life and his perspective of who he is while he is in New York and while he is in Ridgeborough? In what ways does the effect on Deming's life from his love of music differ during the separate times that he lives in New York and the separate times when he lives in Ridgeborough? Why are his interactions with music different from one time in a location until the next time that he is in that same location?

## NAMES

How do the names of Peilan/Polly and Deming/Daniel change in various situations or discussions, and why do those shifts occur:

1. when Deming/Daniel or Peilan/Polly think or speak of themselves?
2. when other characters think or speak of Deming/Daniel or Peilan/Polly?
3. when the narrator presents information about Deming/Daniel or Peilan/Polly?

Other than obvious uses of names, such as Deming's being called Daniel while in Ridgeborough, in what instances, locations, or sorts of situations are Deming and Peilan referred to by their Chinese names and in what sorts of instances, locations, or sorts of situations are they known by their American names, and why?

Be sure to give examples of when such name shifts occur and to explain why they do occur. Do the shifts in names indicate other types of shifts? Explain.

What is the significance of the "doppelganger game" that Deming and Polly play in relationship to the name shifts of the mother and son?

## MOVING FROM PLACE TO PLACE

The novel is titled, *The Leavers*, and we see characters leaving various places for various reasons. Are they, however, always moving to "leave"? Focus on at least three characters from the novel and discuss the significant relocations of their lives and the changes that those relocations render for each of the characters.

Be sure to explain in each instance whether the character is moving in order to "leave" a location/situation or moving for some other purpose, what that purpose is, and who controls the decision to move.

Also discuss who leaves and why, and who can be categorized as "non leavers."



## **ONLINE GAMBLING**

What does Deming's participation in online gambling show about his personality? Does it show anything about his character? Is Deming's addiction related to his age? If so, in what ways? How does his gambling online affect his relationships with other people and with what consequences?

Are Deming's problems indicative of problems that other people have with online gambling?

Write a discussion in which you present the two sides of the argument about online gambling: for and against. Be sure to support each point that you make with facts, NOT simply your opinion.

## DALLIE CLARK – HUMANITIES QUESTIONS AND VIDEO RESOURCES

### SUGGESTED QUESTIONS:

1. At what point in the novel do we learn about the impact of music on Deming's life? Provide examples of people and/or events that contributed to his initial love of music and his later musical skills.
2. Throughout the novel, Ko provides clues about Deming's "synesthesia." Review the neurological aspects of this term, and then discuss several examples in the novel when Deming (or as Daniel) demonstrates this ability.
3. Discuss one artist or musician, living or deceased, who shares the same synesthetic ability as Ko's character. (See video resource.)
4. Ko provides descriptions of the physical spaces and items in the apartment in which Deming and his extended family live in New York City. After Deming is adopted and is now called "Daniel," his physical surroundings and geographical location change. Provide an example of how Ko uses physical space to help us understand Deming's (and Daniel's) inner dialogue about "home." Eventually, where does Daniel call his "best home"?
5. Compare Daniel's experience as a transracial adopted child with that of his friend Angel's experience. What is your opinion about the way Ko presents Kay and Peter as his adoptive parents?
6. Do you see indications in Ko's novel that Daniel contemplates his own spirituality? Why or why not?

7. Strong relational connections between Ko's characters are prevalent throughout the novel. Discuss at least two examples when Ko's characters lose or sever these connections and how they are re-established.

8. Imagine that Ko has written a second novel describing Daniel's life fifteen years later. What career do you imagine Daniel in, where is he living, and what will his relationship with both Polly and his adoptive parents, Kay and Peter, entail? Does he call himself Deming or Daniel – or both?

**SUGGESTED VIDEO RESOURCE:**

About Wassily Kandinsky and Synesthesia:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2xDnxkzQtdI>

## LINDSAY MOORE -- DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The phrase *white savior complex* is often used to refer to a white person (or people) who acts to help non-white people, but in a context, which can be perceived as self-serving. For instance, when white celebrities pose with an African child and praise him or her for being 'brave' and 'beautiful', there is an element at play of in which the white person assumes that their lives are inherently better and/or a question of whether the white person is exploiting the African child.

Do you believe that the Wilkinsons and/or the Hennings display characteristics of a white savior complex? Why? Give specific examples from the text.

In the inverse, do you believe that the Wilkinsons and/Hennings complicate the idea of the white savior complex? How? Give specific examples from the text.

2. The concept of motherhood threads through the text. We are privy to controversial thoughts and conversations of and about Kay Wilkinson and Polly Guo. How would you describe each of them as mothers? In what ways are they similar and dissimilar? How would you characterize the relationship between each of them and Deming/Daniel? Because we know some the darkest moments and thoughts of each woman, how do they confirm and/or complicate the idea of motherhood for you?
3. How would you characterize Polly's relationships with Haifeng, Leon, and Yong? What do Polly's romantic relationships tell us about her feelings toward love and marriage?
4. In the novel, we are introduced to several sibling relationships and relationships that are described as being "like brothers" or "like a sister": Deming and Michael, Yimei and Daniel, Angel and Daniel, Leon and Vivian, Polly and Didi, Vivian and Polly, Roland and Daniel. How would you characterize these relationships? For those that are not familial, what impact do these characters have on one another? Why do you think the author chooses to specifically label them as "like" siblings? What extra responsibility or connection does that hold for them? What does that hold for us as readers?

5. Describe the working conditions for undocumented immigrants in this novel. Do you think these conditions are accurate, inaccurate? Why?
6. As of September 2019, U.S. Immigration and Customs lists that there are 30 ICE Detention Centers located in Texas. Among those are "tent cities," which have been erected in El Paso and the Rio Grande Valley. Conduct some research on any of these facilities and compare and contrast your research with Polly's description of (and experience in) Ardsleyville.
7. Explain the significance of loans and gambling in this novel. What do you think the author is trying to say about one or both? Think about the following as you consider your answer:
  - Daniel's gambling addiction
  - Leon and Polly in Atlantic City
  - Angel's loan
  - Polly's loans
  - Peter Wilkinson, Professor of Economics
8. This novel goes back and forth between Deming/Daniel's point-of-view (written as 3<sup>rd</sup> person) and Polly's point-of-view (written as first-person). What were your feelings about this? Did you find it interesting, cool, confusing, frustrating? Is it necessary for us as readers to hear both of their points-of-view? Why/ why not?
9. In hearing the points-of-view of Deming/Daniel and Polly, we are given a limited view of the whole picture. How do you imagine the novel would change if we had heard the point-of-view of the Wilkinsons? Vivian? Michael? Leon? Haifeng?
10. What role does education play in the novel? What kinds of education are presented? What is the significance of education for Peter and Kay Wilkinson? For Polly? For Deming/ Daniel?

11. How would you describe the role of music the novel? Refer to at least 2 of these in your answer:

- Michael and Roland's band(s)
- Michael's synesthesia (ability to see colors with sounds)
- The sounds of the Bronx, Chinatown, Ridgeborough, Fuzhou
- The Wilkinsons' record player
- The (solo) music Michael writes and performs
- The Wilkinsons' attitude about music

12. Deming/ Daniel lives in several places throughout the novel—Chinatown with his mother; the Bronx with his mother, Leon, Michael, and Vivian; Fuzhou with his grandfather; Ridgeborough with the Wilkinsons; NYC on Roland's couch; Fuzhou with his mother and Yong, etc.—yet, he says several times that he considers New York City home. Why do you think this is?

13. How is transracial adoption portrayed in this novel? Use specific instances from the novel in your answer.

14. Describe how at least 3 of the characters in this novel wrestle with understanding their identity and/or creating a new identity. How would you define the word identity? What constitutes a person's identity?

15. Would you describe any of the characters in this novel as static? If so, who? Why?

## RYAN FLETCHER - A QUESTIONNAIRE

1. The novel begins with Deming's perspective as a young boy. How does this affect the story?
2. In the beginning the reader is just as perplexed as Deming. What do you predict will happen in the end? Why?
3. How would you characterize Vivian?
4. Compare and contrast Vivian and Polly. How are they similar/different?
5. Deming's adoptive parents mean well, but they have trouble communicating. Why? In what ways are they different?
6. How does changing Deming's name affect him and how he understands himself?
7. How would you describe Polly in the story?
8. What role does friendship play in Deming's life?
9. In the end, how does Polly's story affect the reader?
10. Do Polly and Deming change in the end? In what ways?
11. Analyze the title, *The Leavers*. How does the title connect to the story?

## DULCE DE CASTRO – STUDY QUESTIONS

1. What is the significance of the epigraph and what purposes and functions does it serve? The epigraph comes from Li-Young Lee's poem "The City in Which I Love You." If you had to select a different stanza from this poem as an epigraph for *The Leavers* which one would you choose and why?

2. In an interview with Barbara Kingsolver, Lisa Ko says that we need to "decenter the narrative of transracial adoption away from that of the adoptive parents." "Instead," she says, "we need to privilege the voices of adoptees, who are often missing from the conversation or dismissed as being bitter if they're honest or critical about their experiences" (*The Leavers* 342). Do you think that Ko's decision to tell Deming's story in the third person while telling Polly's story in the first person privileges the birth mother's point of view and agency rather than the adoptee's voice?

3. Watch the New York Times short documentary "Given Away: Korean Adoptees Share Their Stories" (see the link below). Compare the representation of transracial and transcultural adoption in *The Leavers* and the short documentary.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/07/23/opinion/korean-adoptees.html>

4. Language plays an important role in *The Leavers*. How does the novel's portrayal of language reflect cultural reality, social and personal identity, social class, the hierarchical view of language and dialect, and the manipulative powers of language?

5. How does the following quote from Deming's first night with the Wilkinsons, his adoptive parents, illustrate the interconnection between language loss and loss of cultural identity and familial bonds?

"One week later, tucked into a double bed sheathed with red flannel, Deming Guo awoke with the crumbs of dialect on his tongue, smudges and smears of dissolving syllables, nouns and verbs washed out to sea. One language had outseeped another; New York City had provided him with an arsenal of new words. He'd bled English vowels and watched his mother's face fall" (*The Leavers* 48).

6. Peter and Kay Wilkinson, two well-educated college professors, made no effort to ensure that Deming would keep his ties to his cultural and linguistic background. How would you explain their seeming failure to recognize the educational value of



multilingualism and intercultural competence? Consider the following quote in your answer:

“He recalled how she and Peter had insisted on English, his new name, the right education. How better and more hinged on their ideas of success, their plans. Mama, Chinese, the Bronx, Deming: they had never been enough. He shivered, and for a brief, horrible moment, he could see himself the way he realized they saw him—as someone who needed to be saved” (The Leavers 332)

7. Explain the role that English plays in Polly’s life in the United States and in her transformation and reinvention when she goes back to China.

8. Deming did not feel at home in China despite his knowledge of Mandarin and Fuzhounese, but he felt he did not belong in Ridgeborough either (The Leavers 333). Why was New York City his “best home” (The Leavers 335)?

9. Listen to “A Chinese Boy, His Lost Mother, And His New White Parents,” an interview with Lisa Ko on NPR’s Think with Krys Boyd (see the link below). How does this interview deepen your understanding of the narrative structure of *The Leavers* and the main themes of the novel?

<https://think.kera.org/2018/05/09/a-chinese-boy-his-lost-mother-and-his-new-white-parents/>

## LATOYA WATKINS – EXAM QUESTIONS

Here are six questions for a BIC exam to accompany the book. Dr. Watkins uses this assignment as an alternative to a 7-page essay exam.

**PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING IN AT LEAST 1 FULL PARAGRAPH (3-5 SENTENCES LONG).**

What happened to Deming's mother? Discuss how her fate affected Deming and the people they lived with. Use specific examples from the text.

**PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING IN AT LEAST 2 FULL PARAGRAPHS (3-5 SENTENCES EACH).**

When Deming goes to live with the Wilkinson's, there is a certain level of assimilation that takes place in order for him to fit in with his family. What does this assimilation, which was encouraged by his new family, say about Kay and Peter Wilkinson? Use specific examples of his assimilation and make sure you reference the text.

**PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING IN AT LEAST 1 FULL PARAGRAPH (3-5 SENTENCES LONG). RESPOND TO EACH PART.**

Deming seems to switch cultures several times throughout the story. Often it feels that he becomes who those around him need him to be in order that they may be comfortable or happy. List two instances in which Deming changes to fit his environment. Identify one thing (not a person) that he finds and holds onto as his own throughout the text.

**PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING IN AT LEAST 2 FULL PARAGRAPHS (3-5 SENTENCES EACH). RESPOND TO EACH PART OF THE FOLLOWING FOR FULL CREDIT. USE EXAMPLES FROM THE TEXT TO SUPPORT YOUR CLAIM.**

Think about the final part and ending of Ko's novel. Is there resolve in Deming's various relationships? Discuss the fate of two of those relationships. Do the characters get what they deserve from them?

PLEASE RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING IN 2-3 COMPLETE PARAGRAPHS. EACH PARAGRAPH SHOULD BE AT LEAST 3-5 SENTENCES LONG. ANSWER EACH PART. USE EXAMPLES FROM THE TEXT TO SUPPORT YOUR CLAIM.

What role do Deming's music and his gambling play; how do they help assuage his pain? At one point, after a performance with his band, Deming slips out, thinking to himself, "It felt good being the one making the excuse to get away." What does he mean?

THIS IS YOUR ESSAY PROMPT. PLEASE RESPOND IN 4-5 PARAGRAPHS OR 300 WORDS.

The text for this class, *Everything's an Argument with Readings*, explores many different ways of approaching argument. Ko makes several different arguments in *The Leavers*. Identify one and discuss it in detail, using the text to support your claim.

Note: Do NOT write a rhetorical analysis. Choose an argument that the author might be making and discuss how (based on evidence from the text) you think the author is making that argument.

# RESOURCES

## RYAN FLETCHER --RESOURCES FOR THE CLASSROOM

### ARTICLES:

"ICE Arrests 284 Workers in Allen in Largest Workplace Immigration Raid in a Decade"

<https://www.kut.org/post/ice-arrests-280-workers-immigration-raid-technology-company-allen>

"After an Immigration Raid in Texas, Educators Try to Help Children Cope with Trauma"

<https://www.keranews.org/post/after-immigration-raid-texas-educators-try-help-children-cope-trauma>

### BOOK:

*Becoming American : Why Immigration Is Good for Our Nation's Future* by Fariborz Ghadar

### DVD:

*Becoming American: The Chinese Experience* (2003)

## BETH ADKINS -- INTERVIEW WITH KO

<https://think.kera.org/2018/07/06/a-chinese-boy-his-lost-mother-and-his-new-white-parents-2/>

## MELISSA JOHNSON—CLASSROOM RESOURCES

“Chinese Heritage”

National Archives Resources

<https://www.archives.gov/research/chinese-americans>

“Immigration and Citizenship in the United States, 1865-1924”

The Newberry Library

<https://dcc.newberry.org/collections/immigration-and-citizenship>

Melissa Hung, “*The Leavers* Novelist Found Success Through Massive Failure,” NBC News, 1 May 2017, <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/asian-america/leavers-novelist-lisa-ko-found-success-through-massive-failure-n750811>.

“Becoming American: The Chinese Experience”

PBS

<http://www.pbs.org/becomingamerican/index.html>

An Interview with Lisa Ko

PBS Books

<https://youtu.be/GVT8Hj90I9A>

"The History of US Immigration Laws"

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

<https://www.gilderlehrman.org/history-now/2018-10/history-us-immigration-laws>

"Angel Island: Immigrant Gateway to America"

Erika Lee, University of Minnesota

The Gilder Lehrman Institute of American History

<https://vimeo.com/45977538>

## MELISSA BLACKMORE – LIBRARY RESOURCES

*Some links may require a CougarWeb username and password. When possible links to Collin College-subscribed databases have been provided for articles since many publications have limits on how many articles users can view without a subscription*

### LIBRARY RESEARCH GUIDE

All sources listed below and additional links will be accessible from the SCC Book in Common 2019-2020 Library Research Guide

<http://collin.libguides.com/bic2020>

### ADDITIONAL WRITING BY LISA KO

"Dead Darlings: The Cockfight Cut from The Leavers by Lisa Ko" from *Epiphany: A Literary Journal*, June 18, 2018

<http://epiphanyzine.com/features/2018/6/18/dead-darlings-the-cockfight-cut-from-the-leavers-by-lisa-ko>

"Why I Wrote the Leavers" by Lisa Ko

<http://lisa-ko.com/why-i-wrote-the-leavers/>

The three articles below are cited in Ko's essay "Why I Wrote the Leavers"

"After Losing Freedom, Some Immigrants Face Loss of Custody of Their Children." *New York Times*, April 23, 2009

<http://library.collin.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1030635853?accountid=7969>

"Chinese and American Cultures Clash in Custody Battle for Girl, 5."

*New York Times*,

March 2, 2004

<http://library.collin.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/92755516?accountid=7969>.

"For a Mentally Ill Immigrant, a Path Clears Out of the Dark Maze of Detention." *New York Times*, September 11, 2009

<http://library.collin.edu/login?url=https://search.proquest.com/docview/1030645847?accountid=7969>.

"The Leavers Mixtape"

<http://lisa-ko.com/the-leavers-mixtape/>

-sampler and explanation, full songs only available on Spotify

“Book Notes – Lisa Ko ‘The Leavers’” from Largehearted Boy

[http://www.largeheartedboy.com/blog/archive/2017/09/book\\_notes\\_lisa\\_13.html](http://www.largeheartedboy.com/blog/archive/2017/09/book_notes_lisa_13.html)

-sampler and explanation, full songs only available on Spotify

-similar music playlist to above with a few additional selections,

“A Better Life: An Essay by Lisa Ko”

<http://lisa-ko.com/wp-content/uploads/2016/06/Ko-essay-THE-LEAVERS.pdf>

“Other Writing” section of Lisa Ko’s website

<http://lisa-ko.com/other-writing/>

“The Myth of the Interchangeable Asian” from *The New York Times*, October 14, 2018

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A558076648/STND?u=txshracd2497&sid=STND&xid=fb76e2d8>

“My Smiling Boycott” from *The New York Times*, April 22, 2018

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A535687725/STND?u=txshracd2497&sid=STND&xid=733054ee>

“Seeking the Comfort of an Old Flame: Solitude” from *The New York Times*, July 2, 2017

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A497526786/STND?u=txshracd2497&sid=STND&xid=70677839>

“To Feel Really American, Try Some Velveeta” from *The New York Times*, April 9, 2017

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A488844688/STND?u=txshracd2497&sid=STND&xid=db0be020>

“Pat + Sam” short story by Lisa Ko

<http://copper-nickel.org/pat-sam/>

-Also available in the Library in *The Best American Short Stories 2016* - PS648.S5 B4 2016 (SCC/Plano)



## INTERVIEWS WITH LISA KO AND REVIEWS OF *THE LEAVERS*

Interviews with Lisa Ko and reviews of *The Leavers*

<http://lisa-ko.com/press/>

“Spotlight | Lisa Ko - LibraryReads: The Top Ten Books that Librarians Across the Country Love”

<http://library.collin.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=123211255&site=ehost-live>

“‘The Leavers,’ inspired by a real story, confronts transracial adoption.”  
From *Christian Science Monitor*

<http://library.collin.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=122801095&site=ehost-live>

“Lisa Ko Will Discuss ‘The Leavers,’ Her Lauded Novel about Immigration, Adoption and More”

<https://www.dallasnews.com/arts/books/2018/07/05/lisa-ko-will-discuss-leavers-lauded-novel-immigration-adoption>

“Unmoored,” Review in *The New York Times Book Review*, May 21, 2017

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A492335130/GLS?u=txshracd2497&sid=GLS&xid=8c63ea22>

“The Leavers Is a Wrenching Tale of Parenthood” Review in *The Atlantic*, May 14, 2017

<https://www.theatlantic.com/entertainment/archive/2017/05/lisa-ko-the-leavers-book-review/526179/>

Review of *The Leavers* in *ForeWord*, April 27, 2017

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A490947757/GLS?u=txshracd2497&sid=GLS&xid=769956fd>

“Difficult Choices” – Review in *Women’s Review of Books*, May 1, 2017

“A Chinese Boy, His Lost Mother, And His New White Parents”

<https://think.kera.org/2018/05/09/a-chinese-boy-his-lost-mother-and-his-new-white-parents/>

(Audio - 49 minutes) KERA Think discussion with Lissa Ko

Interview with Emily Raboteau in *Poets & Writers Magazine*, July-August 2017

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A494442903/GLS?u=txshracd2497&sid=GLS&xid=7246f7b6>

## BOOKS

*Everyday Illegal: When Policies Undermine Immigrant Families* by  
Joanna Dreby  
JV6483 .D74 2015 (CPC & SCC)

*Forgotten Citizens: Deportation, Children, and the Making of American Exiles and Orphans*, by Luis H. Zayas, JV6483 .Z39 2015 (PRC, SCC & e-book)

<http://library.collin.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=960016&site=ehost-live>

*Reframing Transracial Adoption: Adopted Koreans, White Parents and the Politics of Kinship* by Kristi Brian, e-book only

<http://library.collin.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=452379&site=ehost-live>

*Children and the Politics of Cultural Belonging*, by Alice Hearst

<http://library.collin.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=480313&site=ehost-live>

*Of Many Colors: Portraits of Multiracial Families*, by Gigi Kaeser and Peggy Gillespie

HQ1031 .K33 1997 (PRC & e-book)

<http://library.collin.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=13864&site=ehost-live>

*Living Together, Living Apart: Mixed Status Families and US Immigration Policy*, e-book only

<http://library.collin.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1064067&site=ehost-live>

*Immigrant Children and Youth: Psychological Challenges*

JV6475 .I46 2015 (CPC & e-book)

<http://library.collin.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1005237&site=ehost-live>

*Lives in Limbo: Undocumented and Coming of Age in America* by

Roberto G. Gonzales,

JV6600 .G66 2016 (all campuses)

*The Death and Life of Aida Hernandez: A Border Story*, by Aaron  
Bobrow-Strain  
E184.M5 B58 2019 (CPC & SCC)

*When I Walk Through that Door, I Am: An Immigrant Mother's Quest*, by  
Jimmy Santiago Baca  
PS3552.A254 W48 2019 (SCC & e-book) – an epic narrative poem  
<http://library.collin.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=nlebk&AN=1901937&site=ehost-live>

*Enrique's Journey*, by Sonia Nazario  
E184.H66 N397 2014 (SCC)

*In the Country We Love: My Family Divided* by Diane Guerrero  
PN2287.G7455 A3 2016 (SCC)

*Immigrants Raising Citizens: Undocumented Parents and Their Children*,  
by Hirokazu Yoshikawa  
JV6600 .Y67 2012 (SCC)

*Illegal Encounters: The Effect of Detention and Deportation on Young  
People*,  
JV6600 .I55 2019 (SCC)

*Dear America: Notes of an Undocumented Citizen* by Jose Antonio  
Vargas  
PN4874.V37 A3 2018 (CPC & SCC)

*This Land Is Our Land: An Immigrant's Manifesto* by Suketu Mehta  
SCC, check at library for call number

*Sacrificing Families: Navigating Laws, Labor, and Love Across Borders* by  
Leisy J. Abrego  
E184.S15 A27 2014 (SCC)

*Deported Americans: Life after Deportation to Mexico* by Beth C.  
Caldwell,  
KF4848.M48 C35 2019 (SCC)

#### **DVDs**

*Frontline: Marcos Doesn't Live Here Anymore*  
JV6201 .F76 2019 dvd (SCC Circulating)  
Follows the efforts of Elizabeth Perez, a decorated United States Marine

veteran, to reunite her family after the deportation of her husband, an undocumented worker from Mexico. Her struggle begins to challenge her assumptions about justice and fairness in the nation for which she fought.

*Separated: Children at the Border*

JV6456 .S47 2018 dvd (SCC Circulating)

Examines immigration policy under both the Trump and Obama administrations, investigates the origins of zero tolerance, and reveals the journeys and voices of children who were separated from their parents.

*Dalya's Other Country*

E184.M88 D35 2017 dvd (SCC Classroom)

The story of members of a family displaced by the Syrian conflict who are remaking themselves after the parents separate. Effervescent teen Dalya goes to Catholic high school and her mother, Rudayna, enrolls in college as they both walk the line between their Muslim values and the new world in which they find themselves.

*Documented: A Film by an Undocumented American*

JV6456 .D63 2014 dvd (SCC Circulating)

In 2011, Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist Jose Antonio Vargas outed himself as an undocumented immigrant in an essay published in the New York Times Magazine. Documented chronicles his journey to America from the Philippines as a child; his journey through America as an immigration reform activist; and his journey inward as he re-connects with his mother, whom he hasn't seen in person in over 20 years.

*Somewhere Between*

HV875.58.C6 S663 2013 dvd (CPC & SCC Circulating)

Presents the experiences of four teenage girls of Chinese birth adopted by families in the U.S. Examines questions of race and identity of the adoptees. The young women profiled investigate their origins.

*Becoming American: The Chinese Experience*

E184.C5 B436 2013 dvd (CPC Circulating)

Bill Moyers tells the remarkable history of Chinese Americans, from the first wave of immigration in the 1850s to the present day. Through

personal narratives and interviews with historians, Moyers recounts how they ventured, suffered, endured, and eventually prevailed.

*I Learn America*

LC3726 .I15 2013 dvd (SCC Classroom)

At the International High School at Lafayette, a Brooklyn public high school dedicated to newly arrived immigrants from all over the world, five teenagers strive to master English, adapt to families they haven't seen in years, and create a future of their own while coming of age in a new land.

*Sin País*

F869.S39 G827 2010 dvd (SCC Classroom)

Sin País (Without Country) explores one family's experience as they are separated by deportation with the parents deported to Guatemala as the children say in California.

*Which Way Home*

JV6344 .W55 2009 dvd (CPC & SCC, Classroom & Circulating)

A feature documentary that follows unaccompanied child migrants on their journey through Mexico as they try to reach the United States.

*Children in No Man's Land*

JV6465 .C45 2008 dvd (PRC & SCC Classroom)

A documentary that uncovers the current plight of the 100,000 unaccompanied minors entering the United States every year.

## ARTICLES

Dreams Detained, In Her Words: The Effects of Detention and Deportation on Southeast Asian American Women and Families  
[https://www.napawf.org/uploads/1/1/4/9/114909119/dreams\\_detained\\_in\\_her\\_words\\_report.pdf](https://www.napawf.org/uploads/1/1/4/9/114909119/dreams_detained_in_her_words_report.pdf)

Additional reports and articles from the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum – Immigrant Rights  
<https://www.napawf.org/immigrantrights.html>

"Chinese American 'Satellite Babies,' Raised Between Two Cultures" by Leslie K. Wang in *Contexts*, Fall 2018  
<http://library.collin.edu/login?url=https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/1536504218812865>

Separation and Reunification: Mental Health of Chinese Children Affected by Parental Migration” by Chenyue Zhao, et al. in *Pediatrics*, September 2018.

<http://library.collin.edu/login?url=https://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/142/3/e20180313.full>

“Prolonged Separation and Reunification among Chinese Immigrant Children and Families: An Exploratory Study” by Kenny Kwong and Qing Yu in *Journal of Child & Family Studies*, September 2017

<http://library.collin.edu/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=124656076&site=ehost-live>

“Family Separation Isn’t New: U.S. Immigration Policy Has Traumatized Migrant Children and Parents for Nearly a Century” by Natalie Escobar in *The Atlantic*, August 14, 2018

<https://www.theatlantic.com/family/archive/2018/08/us-immigration-policy-has-traumatized-children-for-nearly-100-years/567479/>

"Outlaw" by Jose Antonio Vargas, *The New York Times Magazine*, June 26, 2011

<https://link.gale.com/apps/doc/A259776369/GLS?u=txshracd2497&sid=GLS&xid=5c675ead>.

Detention Watch Network: The Issues

<https://www.detentionwatchnetwork.org/issues>

-referred to by Lisa Ko in her essay [“Why I Wrote The Leavers”](#)