



Gold Mountain

Betty G. Yee

Carolrhoda Lab (Apr 5, 2022)

Hardcover \$18.99 (288pp)

978-1-72841-582-6

In Betty G. Yee's historical novel *Gold Mountain*, a young Chinese girl poses as her brother, going to work on a US railroad in his place.

Ling Fan's father is in prison for a crime he did not commit, and her aunt is plotting Ling Fan's marriage to the ne'er-do-well son of a neighbor. Her twin, Jing Fan, had a contract with the Central Pacific Railroad; he's been counted upon to make the family's fortune. When Jing Fan dies of influenza, Ling Fan is unwilling to accept her family's change of fates.

Ling Fan binds her breasts, dons her brother's clothes, grabs Jing Fan's contract, and sails to America to work for the railroad and earn the money that her family needs. She survives a tunnel collapse, malfunctioning equipment, explosions, an avalanche, and betrayal, all with one goal in mind: freeing her father. All the while, she worries that she's not strong enough, brave enough, and that someone will find out that she's a girl. Still, Ling Fan proves herself to be capable and heroic: she twice saves the life of the very boy who threatened to reveal her secret.

Ling Fan's story honors the many Chinese workers who came to the US to build the transcontinental railway in the late nineteenth century. They blasted tunnels through the Sierra Nevada Mountains using dynamite and nitroglycerin, sometimes in baskets suspended on ropes over cliffs hundreds of feet above raging rivers. Many were injured, and many died. Ling Fan's story helps to bring awareness of this dark chapter in American history to younger readers.

Gold Mountain is the historical tale of a courageous daughter whose determination helps to change the face of America, as well as her Chinese family's fortunes.

RANDI HACKER (May / June 2022)

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