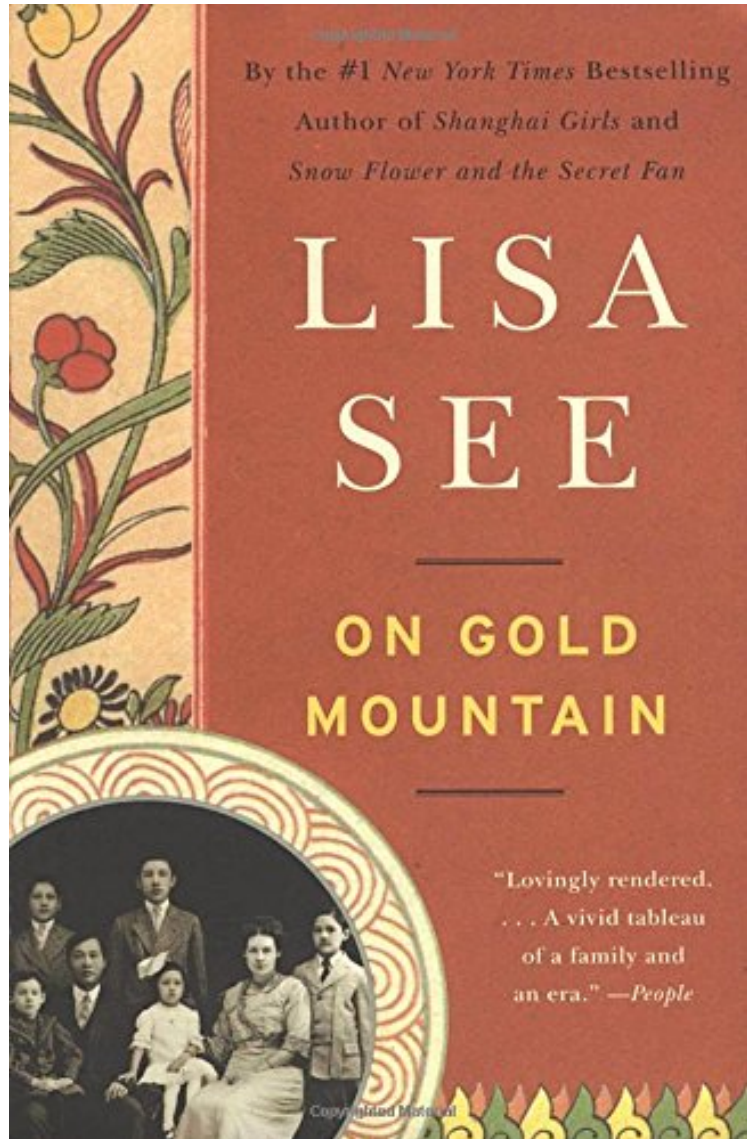


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On Gold Mountain

Lisa See

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Lisa See : On Gold Mountain before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised On Gold Mountain:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. For generations of Chinese, "Shangri La" was a place they called Gold MountainBy Old China BooksSuperior tale of Chinese and Chinese-Americans in California from late 1800s railroad-building through four generations of struggle to the present day - an engaging historical account rendered delightfully personal through the stories Lisa tells in On Gold Mountain of her family history and her great grandfather

Fong See and his journey to the West and sojourn on the gold mountain in Sacramento, San Francisco, and finally Los Angeles, where he founded a successful merchant dynasty and a family of many generations in and around mysterious Chinatown. Unique as a book written by one of several extraordinary "Caucasian" women who helped build businesses and make homes for their Chinese families. Many images of early Los Angeles and Hollywood linger after the final page - little Lisa retreating to her grandparents house in Chinatown, Anna Mae Wong holding court in the See family restaurant, antique furniture rented to the studios for films. Now when we watch those old black-and-white movies set in Chinatown from the 30s through the 40s we're on the lookout for sets created from the riches of the See family antique shops. We grew up visiting LA's Chinatown often but, after reading Lisa's book, it's no longer "just Chinatown, Jake," and is now a whole new marvelous place peopled with folks we now know much better, at least in memory.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. A sweeping history lesson! By Linda C. Wright
In 1867 Lisa See's great great grandfather arrived in America from China. As an herbalist, his services were in great demand by immigrant laborers. This is where her family history begins. Fong See, her great grandfather started making ladies underwear, married Ticie, a Caucasian woman before building a successful antique business. The family's story involves racism, romance, secret marriages and betrayals. Not only does *On Gold Mountain* tell the story of a family, it documents the history of America from the building of the railroads through the Great Depression into the post war boom of the fifties. That is a lot of territory to cover. The story is meticulously researched and Ms. See does a good job of keeping the reader's head focused on the family tree. There is a lot going on and people and places to keep track of. In some areas the story dragged on. I felt some parts were important to document for the family but maybe not so interesting to the average reader. I love Lisa See's fiction much more than this book, but I fully understand her desire to write it. In any event *On Gold Mountain* is a wide and sweeping history lesson in the people that help to make America the wonderful place it is. And I'm glad I read it. I learned so much.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. A must read book
By Camp Runamok
I had never heard of Lisa See, but just about everyone I've mentioned this book to seems to have read at least one of her novels. I had read a NY Times review for *Flower Net* - one of her more recent works, but what really intrigued me was the reference to this book, so I put it in my Kindle Q, and I'm so glad I did. *Gold Mountain* was the Chinese nickname for the US back in the 1800's. This book is a family history covering over hundred years, but done in a way I've not seen before, as she not only describes the events that defined the Fong See and Lettice Pruett legacy (her great grandparents), but she also puts herself directly in the mind of all her relatives and ancestors, which at times gives the book the feel of a novel. Lisa See looks like an Irish redhead (there were two redheads in her Chinese/American lineage), but she is 1/4 Chinese, and as a young woman, found solace in her extended and welcoming Chinese family, as her parents were somewhat dysfunctional while she was growing up. It's one reason I suspect that her novels mix Chinese and American cultural themes and characters. The book actually starts with her great-great grandfather, although he returns to China. However, his son, Fong See, comes and stays (moving from San Francisco to Sacramento to Los Angeles), although he travels extensively for his business. He marries a Caucasian woman, Lettice Pruett, which leads to many interesting and varied cultural and legal conflicts, both in the US and in China. While the US was actively discouraging Asian immigration after the completion of the transcontinental railroad, many were also fascinated with Asian furniture, art, and curios, which became the family business (check out the youtube video for the F. Suie One Company). This is truly an amazing work, and in the addendum, See describes what a work in progress a family history can be, trying to separate family mythology from fact. For anyone with Asian ancestors, Chinese in particular, this feels like a must read book, and for anyone who values what immigration has meant for the US, and the challenges immigrants have faced (and continue to face), this is also a must read book. Five stars from this reader.

In 1867, Lisa See's great-great-grandfather arrived in America, where he prescribed herbal remedies to immigrant laborers who were treated little better than slaves. His son Fong See later built a mercantile empire and married a Caucasian woman, in spite of laws prohibiting interracial marriage. Lisa herself grew up playing in her family's antiques store in Los Angeles's Chinatown, listening to stories of missionaries and prostitutes, movie stars and Chinese baseball teams. With these stories and her own years of research, Lisa See chronicles the one-hundred-year-odyssey of her Chinese-American family, a history that encompasses racism, romance, secret marriages, entrepreneurial genius, and much more, as two distinctly different cultures meet in a new world.

.com Lisa See, daughter of novelist Carolyn See, brings a novelist's skill to this sprawling ancestral history. Books tracing the roots of overseas Chinese writers are not uncommon these days, but See uncovered in her family tree a capsule history of the Sino-American diaspora: her great-grandfather, Fong See, founded a California business, married a Caucasian woman and fathered many offspring, and returned periodically to China to redistribute some of his wealth and launch another family. See, a Publishers Weekly writer, has conducted extensive interviews and drawn on family lore for an enthralling saga of ambition, prejudice, love, loyalty, and sorrow--social history at its best. From Publishers Weekly
The See family history is becoming public property. First mother Carolyn with *Dreaming* (Nonfiction Forecasts, Jan. 2) and now daughter Lisa?but with something far different in mind. Always aware of her

part-Chinese roots, she set out five years ago to learn about her far-flung and, as it turns out, famous paternal family. Her great-grandfather Fong See was an extraordinary figure. He established a business in Sacramento, Calif., and later in Los Angeles, when it was an unheard-of thing for a Chinese to do; married a Caucasian and fathered a large brood; returned to China on and off, spreading his wealth around in his tiny native village and creating another extensive family there too. Drawing on family legends and dredging up intimate history through countless interviews with uncles, aunts and cousins both in California and in China, See, PW's West Coast correspondent, has created a matchless portrait not only of a remarkable family but of a century's changing attitudes. The early anti-Chinese racism was horrific, and even 40 years ago it was hard for a Chinese to emigrate here, let alone become a citizen. The ambitions, fears, loves and sorrows of See's huge cast are set forth with the storytelling skills of a novelist?and a great, sprawling novel is what her book often resembles. There are times when it flags and the constant new names become tiresome, and a heartfelt but superfluous chapter on actress Anna May Wong disrupts the flow; but the book is a striking piece of social history made immediate and gripping. Photos. 60,000 first printing; Literary Guild alternate. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. From School Library Journal YA?In 1871, Fong See left his village in China to find his father and three older brothers, who had come to the U.S. years earlier. He found his father running an herbal emporium in Sacramento; when the man returned to China, Fong See remained, and his brothers followed him into a new business?manufacturing split underwear for prostitutes. An orphaned teen, red-headed Lettie Pruett, was determined to prove herself indispensable to Fong See in his work, especially in his dealings with whites. The story of Lettie and Suie becomes the major thread of this family history. The evolution of the F. See On Company, one of Los Angeles's major Asian art stores; the give and take of Lettie and Suie's marriage; the lives of their four children; their journeys back to China; their divorce; Lettie's single life; and Suie's new family enliven this saga. Teens are offered an intimate glimpse of these people and witness instance after instance of the discrimination they suffered.?Barbara Hawkins, Oakton High School, Fairfax, VACopyright 1996 Reed Business Information, Inc.