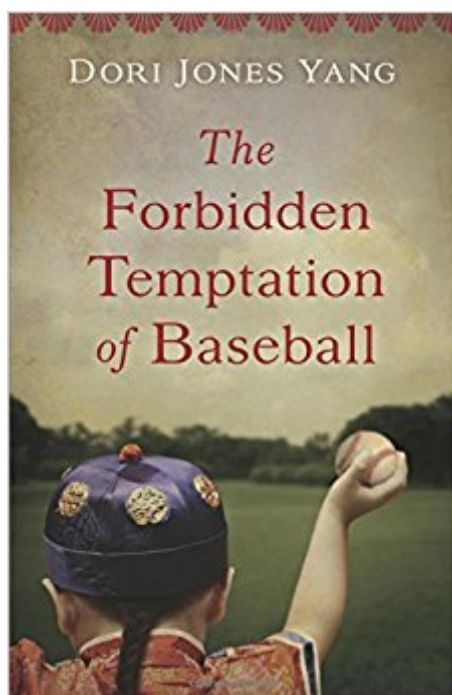


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# The Forbidden Temptation Of Baseball



## Synopsis

A Chinese boy struggles to adapt to American life and discovers baseball. Despite his impulsive and curious nature, twelve-year-old Leon is determined to follow the Emperor's rules to live with an American family, study hard, and return home to modernize China. But he also must keep the braid that shows his loyalty and resist such forbidden American temptations as baseball. As Leon overcomes teasing and makes friends, his elder brother becomes increasingly alienated. Eventually, Leon faces a tough decision, torn between his loyalty to his birth country and his growing love for his new home. *The Forbidden Temptation of Baseball* is a lively, poignant, and nuanced novel based on a little-known episode from history, when 120 boys were sent to New England by the Emperor of China in the 1870s. This story dramatizes both the rigid expectations and the wrenching alienation felt by many foreign children in America today and richly captures that tension between love and hate that is culture shock. It gives American readers a glimpse into what it feels like to be a foreigner in the United States and will spark thoughtful discussions.

## Book Information

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[Books > Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > 1800s](#)

Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 4 - 7

## Customer Reviews

"This well-written historical novel is filled with intriguing details about Chinese and American customs and lifestyles of the era. Through Leon's expectations and his confrontations with alien

customs, the reader learns about both pre-modern Chinese and Victorian-era American societies and technologies. The novel features several appendices, including a short bibliography, questions for discussion, and trivia for readers who will want to learn more. The boys' experiences are both timely and timeless in Yang's deft hands." VOYA Magazine "As I read this story, I was continually amazed about what those boys went through not only in traveling to the States but in adjusting to life, education, and customs here." Kirby Larson, author of Newbery Honor Book *Hattie Big Sky* "Through the eyes of the ever curious "Leon" (Woo Ka-Leong), America is a play of both dazzling light and layered shadows. The Forbidden Temptation of Baseball turns our assumptions of America, and the Chinese impact on our history, upside down. A riveting and revealing story for the ages." Conrad Wesselhoeft, author of *Dirt Bikes, Drones, and Other Ways to Fly* "A smart, authentic, and engaging look at the Chinese experience in America through the eyes of an adventurous and loyal boy who journeys into the sometimes welcoming, often hostile environment that was nineteenth-century America. You'll be drawn in by the absorbing history (which is little-known but true) but stay for the characters and the story that brings them to life." David Patneaude, author of *Thin Wood Walls* "Set against the backdrop of the true story of 120 Chinese students sent to New England by their government to study, Dori follows the lives of Woo Ka-Leong (Leon) and his brother Woo Ka-Sun (Carson), their time with the Swann family of Suffield, Connecticut, and their conquest of baseball in a thoroughly satisfying book that will teach young readers about the Chinese, and to see their own culture through foreign eyes." Scott D. Seligman, author of *Tong Wars and The First Chinese American* "The story shows what it feels like to move to a different country, and how frustrating it is when you have limited language skills. It illustrates the contrasts between the American and Chinese cultures and how conflicted you can feel when two cultures collide and you're caught in the middle." Anna X., age 11, Mercer Island, WA, descendant of one of the 120 scholars from the Chinese Educational Mission "The much-published Dori Jones Yang, in writing this novel, has drawn on historical accounts of the 1870's Chinese Educational Mission, as well as her own extended residence in China as a foreign correspondent. She knows whereof she writes." Edward Rhoads, author of *Stepping Forth into the World: The Chinese Educational Mission to the United States, 1872-81* "My great grandfather, Wen Bingzhong, was one of the 'First 100' and I often wondered about his experiences in America. This was a fascinating period in modern Chinese history, and Dori Jones Yang has written a story which describes how this group of young Chinese males might have felt." Martin Tang, retired chairman, Asia, Spencer Stuart & Associates "Although the book

takes place in 1876, the conflicts and issues raised are completely modern and relevant today as communities wrestle with the integration of traditional values and changes in technology, job requirements, and evolving social mores. As Dori Jones Yang brings these characters to life, they spark lots of thought-provoking questions "It's fantastic for school or home." Nancy Kennan, mother of a middle schooler, avid reader of historical fiction, and investment banker in New York City "It is 1875. Imagine you are an 11-year-old Chinese boy who has been sent to the United States by your government to gain an American education. You encounter strange customs, confusing values, and many new ways to get into trouble. In this powerful novel, Dori Jones Yang explores cultural differences and ways of responding to them. Her deep insights and the compelling plot make this a book students will enjoy and then recall as they face cross-cultural experiences of their own." Mary Hammond Bernson, Director, East Asia Resource Center, University of Washington "Dori Jones Yang takes a little-known piece of American history and brings it alive with wonderfully drawn, rich characters and evocative language. Highly recommended for readers of historical fiction or for readers of sports fiction." Patrick Fuller, Middle School Librarian, Oregon Episcopal School

"Do you understand English?" asked one boy in a polite tone. He stood apart from the group crowded around Leon. Leon was just about to answer, "A little," when he felt a tug at the back of his neck. He swung around. A boy named Johnny had Leon's braid in his hand. With his other hand, Johnny pushed Leon so he turned in a full circle. Leon's hands flew to his neck, his braid wrapped tightly around it. He gagged. "Aiyaya! 'Chinee boy no talkee,'" Johnny said in a mocking voice. "In this powerful novel, Dori Jones Yang explores cultural differences and ways of responding to them. Her deep insights and the compelling plot make this a book students will enjoy and then recall as they face cross-cultural experiences of their own." MARY HAMMOND BERNSON, Director, East Asia Resource Center, University of Washington

This historical fiction was captivating and will be appealing to upper elementary and middle school students. I really enjoyed the perspectives of the brothers in their views of America and how they adapted to their environment. I could not put down the book and really wanted to find out what happened at the end. The additional information at the end of the book made me want to learn more about the actual events.

A fascinating story based on the real boys who were sent to China to study in America in order to

bring American ingenuity back to modernize China, *The Forbidden Temptation of Baseball* is a delightful read. The tale is compelling, with well-realized characters, colorful description, and a plot that is a page-turner. Once again, Dori Jones Yang has brought her considerable writing skills to the task of bridging West and East, and we, her readers, are the beneficiaries. Eager to buy this for both my baseball-loving grandsons!

*The Forbidden Temptation of Baseball* follows two brothers, Woo Ka-Leong and Elder Brother Woo Ka-Sun, as they move from their village in Southern China to Suffield, Connecticut in 1875. They are part of a group of 120 boys that the Imperial Government of China is sending to the United States as part of the Chinese Educational Mission. Their task is to learn English, complete college degrees, and return home to help transform China to a strong, modern country. Ka-Leong (Leon) and Ka-Sun (Carson) are placed with the Swann family. During the boys' time in America, they are teased by children and adults for their braids and their clothing. They struggle to learn the English language and to continue their own Chinese studies after their lessons. They are stunned by aspects of American culture that they were unprepared for, in particular, the role and treatment of women. Author Dori Jones Yang has done a fantastic job identifying many ways in which the cultures of 1870s China and 1870s America differed. But even more impressive is her interpretation of how the Chinese boys might have responded to these disparities. Although Leon and Carson are brothers and come from the same home and upbringing, their reactions to life in America, and their willingness to adapt to this new life, are dissimilar. I was enamored with this tale of two brothers and could not put it down. I received an advance reader copy of this book in exchange for my unbiased review.

Excellent book. Great historical fiction based on the true story of the Chinese Education Mission, which sent 120 boys to the US in the 1870s so they could get a good education and help to modernize China. But it's also a very human story, focused on two brothers trying to adapt to a strange culture. It's aimed at young readers, ages 10 to 14, it's good for anyone interested in cross-cultural exchanges. Baseball fans may especially enjoy this book. It's also particularly poignant at a time when so many immigrants feel they are no longer welcome in this country.

*The Forbidden Temptation of Baseball* is a must read for anyone who (1) loves baseball (2) loves historical fiction and/or (3) is concerned about today's political climate as it relates to immigrants and 1st generation Americans. The story is moving and captivating, filled with engaging characters and

suspenseful interactions. I enjoyed every page and could not it down. I am looking forward to introducing The Forbidden Temptation of Baseball to middle school students in my community. Bravo Dori, for this great piece of literature.

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