



TeachersFirst READING TREKS

Hotel on the Corner of Bitter and Sweet

Teacher Guide

Grade Level & Content Areas

Access Reading
Trek Map

Ages: 14–18

Grades: 9–12

Reading Level: 5.7

Lexile Measure: 850L

Guided Reading Level: U

Developmental Reading

Assessment (DRA): 44

Content Areas: English/language arts, reading, literature, social justice, and social studies (including individual development, identity, and geography).

Synopsis of Book

Jamie Ford's historical fiction novel depicts two important periods in the life of Henry Lee, an American-born Chinese American living in Seattle, Washington. Set in the mid-1980s with flashbacks to the early years of World War II, the story sheds light on a devastating national betrayal and the power of a selfless friendship that rises past prejudices common to that time. As a 12-year-old child, Henry is bullied by classmates at the American school he attends and ostracized by his former peers from his elementary school in the Chinatown community. When he meets Keiko, also American by birth but of Japanese descent, they develop a deep friendship. In February 1942, a federal mandate ordered all Japanese Americans to relocate to internment camps, stripping them of their rights, forcing them from their homes and professions, and robbing them of most of their prized possessions. Despite their forced separation, Henry and Keiko maintain their friendship for some time. As an adult, newly-widowed Henry struggles to maintain a relationship with his son—just as he had struggled to connect with his own father. One fateful day in 1986, Henry passes the Panama Hotel during an announcement that a large number of personal items that belonged to some of the Seattle families sent away to the internment camps have been discovered. The objects, stored there for safekeeping, now offer a glimpse into lives long-forgotten—and a reminder of Henry's dearest friend.

Standards

Common Core State Standards for 6–12

Reading: Literature

- Key Ideas and Details
- Craft and Structure
- Integration of Knowledge and Ideas

Writing

- Text Types and Purposes
- Research to Build and Present Knowledge

National Curriculum Standards for Social Studies

- Theme 1: CULTURE
- Theme 2: TIME, CONTINUITY, AND CHANGE
- Theme 3: PEOPLE, PLACES, AND ENVIRONMENTS

National Core Arts Standards for Visual Arts

- CREATING

Social Justice Standards

- Identity
- Diversity
- Justice
- Action

National Core Music Standards

- Responding

Using a TeachersFirst® Reading Trek to Explore This Book

TeachersFirst Reading Treks create a virtual field trip of resources about a piece of literature or a text using the My Maps feature of Google Maps. To motivate and enrich student reading, teachers and students can reference this visual collection of web resources and images as they relate to the contents of a book.

TeachersFirst has done the hard work for you! Use the activities in this teacher guide and the accompanying [Reading Trek map](#) as you and your students explore this book. And, if you feel inspired, you (or your students) can create your own Reading Trek about this or another book!

Using This Reading Trek in Class

Below is a list of ideas for how to use this Reading Trek in your educational setting.



Working with the Map:

1. Introduce the book to the class on an interactive whiteboard using the [Reading Trek map](#), highlighting its layers.
2. Keiko's family encourages her to see herself as American first and to put her Japanese heritage second. This is just one component of an individual's *given identity*—physical traits, birthplace or nationality, race, and other aspects that cannot be readily altered. Her *core identity* (values and behaviors) and *chosen identity* (talents, skills, profession, and social status) reflect that mindset. Individuals also maintain a *personal identity*—how one views oneself and the roles they play, such as being a younger sibling—and a *social identity*—how others view them, such as their socioeconomic status or membership in a group. Using a “Who I Am” table with five columns headed with one of the identities named above, have students add single words or phrases about themselves.
3. For a simpler audience-response activity, generate word clouds for each class member using Poll Everywhere ([TeachersFirst review](#)). The instructor creates a poll for each student, titled with that student's name, and then invites students to enter a word or phrase related to that student's social identity.
4. After discussing the differences between peer pressure and peer rejection, students can write and perform skits offering suggestions about how to best deal with these situations. The activities found in “Seven Easy Activities That Encourage Students to Open Up about Identity and Privilege” ([TeachersFirst review](#)) will offer ideas and insights for students' scripts. These skits can be recorded and shared with younger students using Vmaker ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
5. Create a board of the secrets kept in the story using Stickies ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Periodically revisit these and discuss the potential or perceived benefits and the repercussions. Students can propose various scenarios of events that could have happened had the secrets not been kept.
6. Have students create a character profile sketch about one of the characters in the story. (Note that there should be two different character sketches for Henry as a child and as an adult). Generate an avatar using [Pixton](#) to merge the context clues and the reader's imagination. Start with age, then select other identifying features and download the finished product as a PNG. Put the avatar at the center of a Popplet ([TeachersFirst review](#)) template surrounded by statements about that character gleaned from the text.
7. Ask students to reflect on who they'll be and how they'll see themselves in a given time period, such as 10 years from now, then have them create a vision board using a Canva template ([TeachersFirst review](#)). As part of their vision board, students can draft a five-line poem called a cinquain, which has one word in the first line, two in the second, and so forth; it may be helpful to use Poem Generator ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to view an example of a didactic cinquain. Students can upload and share the poem and images supporting their vision of the future via a URL, or save them as a PDF.

Extension Activities:

1. After considering the many locations identified in the story, students can use Image FX ([TeachersFirst review](#)), an AI image generator, to create an illustration of that location by entering descriptive words.

2. Compare and contrast breakfast and school lunch meals served during the 1940's and today. Student groups can compare the nutritional values of select meals as described in the text using the Food Search tab in MyNetDiary ([TeachersFirst review](#)), including calories and grams of carbs, fats, and protein, and then present their findings in an infographic using Flourish ([TeachersFirst review](#)).
3. Watch [A Challenge to Democracy](#) and other documentaries about life in the internment camps to learn how people's lives changed. Other suggestions include "[Japanese Internment during WWII](#)" and "[Racism and America's Concentration Camps](#)." Compare and contrast life in various internment camps and the implications of the reality of the situation and the perceived threat during that time. As a follow-up activity, students can write 3–5 diary entries from different individuals at different times that reflect their experience of life in the camp.
4. Investigate various jazz musicians who were part of the Great Migration, beginning with their biographies on the [Jazz Migrants](#) and Jazz Resources tabs of Jazz in America ([TeachersFirst review](#)). Students can work individually or in small groups to create video presentations about one of these musicians using Adobe Express Video Maker ([TeachersFirst review](#)), including at least one song.
5. Consider Mrs. Beatty's faceted personality. Use Story Map JS ([TeachersFirst review](#)) to create a map about her, including how her childhood may have shaped the adult she became and what made her different from many other women of that time.
6. Write a new chapter to end the story about how Henry and Keiko's lives would change after reuniting after so many years. Consider what details may have been shared about their lives and those omitted.

Helpful Resources

From TeachersFirst:

- [TeachersFirst CurriConnects Book List - Maps](#)
- [TeachersFirst Review of Google My Maps](#)
- [OK2Ask: Building Background Knowledge with Reading Treks](#)
- [OK2Ask: No Passport Required: Cross-Curricular Learning Journeys with Google My Maps](#)
- [Resources to Develop a Positive Self-Identity](#)
- [Critical Media Project](#)
- [Pearl Harbor and World War II Resources](#)
- [Uprooted! Japanese Americans During WWII YouTube Playlist](#)
- [Interactive Roots of Jazz](#)

Other Resources:

- [Jamie Ford](#)
- [Teacher Guide by Random House](#)
- [Panama Hotel History](#)
- [Chinatown Walk \(Self Guided\)](#)

- [One Street: Chinatown International District, Seattle](#)
- [Seattle Now & Then: Seattle's First Chinatown](#)
- [Seattle Chinatown Historic District](#)
- [World War II: The U.S. Home Front](#)
- [Glossary of Terms Related to Japanese American Confinement](#)
- [Japanese American National Museum](#)
- [American Friends Service Committee](#)
- [Wing Luke Museum](#)
- [Jazz and the Great Migration](#)
- [Jazz Standards–1940-1942](#)