

Teacher's Guide

RED COMET PRESS
Redcometpress.com



Genre: Juvenile Nonfiction / Asian-American History

Interest Level:
Ages 6-10
Grades 1-5

Guided Reading: L

Lexile Level: 860L

Themes:
Cultural Exchange and Adaptation / Immigration and Identity / Resilience in the Face of Injustice / Family and Storytelling / History in Everyday Things



Fortune Cookies for Everyone

By MIA WENJEN
Illustrated by COLLEEN KONG-SAVAGE
Published by Red Comet Press

About The Book

Fortune Cookies for Everyone! weaves together history, culture, and personal storytelling to reveal the surprising origins of the fortune cookie and its journey through immigrant communities in America. Through the voice of Grandma Miyako, readers learn about the Japanese American roots of the cookie, its transformation, and the impact of World War II on families, traditions, and businesses. This book provides an engaging entry point into discussions about cultural exchange, food history, immigration, and resilience.

Learning Objectives

Students will:

- Identify the cultural origins and historical journey of the fortune cookie.
- Explain how immigration and cultural exchange shape food traditions.
- Describe the impact of WWII Japanese American incarceration on individuals and communities.
- Analyze primary and secondary sources for historical understanding.
- Connect personal family traditions with larger historical and cultural narratives.

Pre-Reading Activities

- **Picture Walk Prediction:**
  Flip through the illustrations, noting recurring motifs and asking students to predict the story's content.
- **Fortune Cookie Brainstorm:**
  Share a fortune cookie with each student. Before opening predict what their fortune might say. Discuss experiences with Chinese restaurants and fortune cookies.
- **Background Knowledge Activation:**
  Introduce key vocabulary from the book (see glossary section) and locate Golden Gate Park and San Francisco's Japantown on a map.





During Reading Discussion Questions

- What role does Grandma Miyako play in connecting her grandchildren to history?
- How did the flavor of the fortune cookie change to appeal to Americans?
- What happened to Japanese American businesses during WWII?
- How did Chinese American restaurants help popularize fortune cookies?
- Why was there a dispute between Los Angeles and San Francisco over the invention of the cookie?
- How do the author's and illustrator's notes add to your understanding of the story?

Post Reading Activities

Literacy & Social Studies

- **Timeline Creation:** Students create a visual timeline tracing the fortune cookie's journey from Japan to modern U.S. restaurants.
- **Compare & Contrast:** Compare Japanese tsujiura senbei with American fortune cookies (appearance, flavor, purpose).
- **Mock Debate:** Reenact the 1983 mock trial between San Francisco and Los Angeles. Assign roles (witnesses, judges, lawyers) and present evidence.

Art & Culture

- **Design a Fortune:** Students create their own fortune slips and design a paper fortune cookie.
- **Pattern Exploration:** Research the Kikko and Tatewaku patterns mentioned by the illustrator and create art inspired by these motifs.

Math Connection

- **Probability Fun:** If each fortune cookie slip has a different number, calculate the probability of drawing certain fortunes or lottery numbers.

Cross-Curricular Extensions

- **History:** Study Executive Order 9066 and its effects on Japanese American communities.
- **Geography:** Map the movement of the fortune cookie from Kyoto to San Francisco to nationwide.
- **Language Arts:** Write a personal narrative about a family tradition involving food.



Key Vocabulary to Explore

- Golden Gate Park
- Japanese Concentration Camp / Executive Order 9066
- Kata (cookie mold)
- Makoto Hagiwara
- Miso
- Omikuji

Assessment Ideas

- **Exit Ticket:** "One new thing I learned about fortune cookies today..."
- **Project-Based:** Create a mini scrapbook page (like Grandma Miyako's) blending text, images, and artifacts to tell a food-related cultural story.
- **Presentation:** Students present their findings from the mock debate or timeline activity.

Additional Resources

- Smithsonian Asian Pacific American Center educational materials (www.apa.si.edu)
- Japanese American National Museum archives on WWII incarceration (www.janm.org)
- Oral histories from Asian American elders



Student Activity Sheet – Fortune Cookies for Everyone!

Name: _____ Date: _____

Before You Read

1. Predict the Story: Look at the cover. What do you think this book will be about?

_____

_____

2. Fortune Fun: If you had a fortune cookie right now, what would your fortune say?

_____

_____

While You Read

Circle or write the answer.

1. Who ran the Japanese Tea Garden and served fortune cookies?

   a) Suyeichi Okamura b) Makoto Hagiwara c) Yukiko

2. What flavor did Yukiko's father change the cookie to? _____

3. During World War II, what happened to many Japanese American families?

_____

4. Which two cities claimed to have invented the fortune cookie?

_____

After You Read

1. Draw It: On a sheet of paper, draw a picture of a fortune cookie and write your own fortune inside.

2. Think & Share: How is the Japanese tsujiura senbei similar to or different from an American fortune cookie?

_____

_____

3. Family Connection: Ask a family member if they have a favorite food tradition. Write or draw it here.

_____

_____

Word Bank

Golden Gate Park • Kata • Miso • Senbei • Omikuji • Makoto Hagiwara