



# Supplemental Resources

## *The Magnolia Sword: A Ballad of Mulan* by Sherry Thomas

Lee & Low Books, 2019

Fiction, set in China

2019 Of Note, Freeman Book Award for Young Adult/Middle School Literature

**TITLE & GRADE:** Fact and Fable: Mulan & Ancient China - Seventh Grade - Approximately 65 minutes

**SUBJECT AREA(S):** English Language Arts, Social Studies Connection

**MATERIALS:** ["Ode to Mulan" poem translated into English](#); [The Magnolia Sword: A Ballad of Mulan text by Sherry Thomas](#), [clips from Disney's Mulan](#), chart paper

### CONTENT STANDARDS

A-C.3.1.1 Compare and contrast a fictional portrayal of a time, place, or character and a historical account of the same period as a means of understanding how authors of fiction use or alter history.

### ESSENTIAL QUESTION

How and why do authors write about history? How does this affect our understanding of the world?

### OBJECTIVE

I can compare and contrast a popular film to a historical poem.

I can make generalizations about how literature and media can impact our understanding of history.

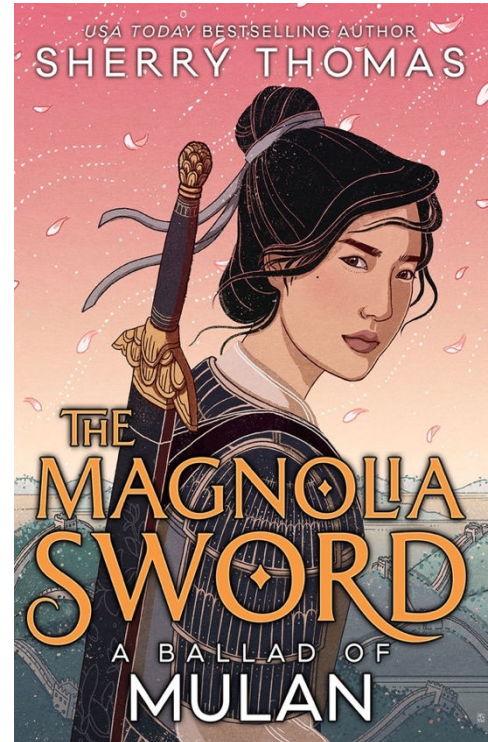
### IMPLEMENTATION OUTLINE

#### Introduction (3 minutes)

- Activate background knowledge.
  - What do you know about early China? Have you seen Mulan? Is it a true story? etc.
- Briefly introduce the historical context of China during early Imperial China.
  - Include warfare, gender roles, societal expectations

#### Reading and Analysis (15 minutes)

- Read "Ode to Mulan" together and annotate accordingly.
  - Emphasize cultural and historical context
  - Determine key themes: familial obligation, tradition, patriotism



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#### Modern Movie (7 minutes)

- Show selected clips from the live action and/or cartoon Mulan movies.
  - Include clips that depict the setting, Mulan's character, and major events
  - Discuss each clip in terms of changes made by Disney to create a bigger story
  - Determine key themes: love, honor, family values, sacrifice

#### Reading and Analysis (15 minutes)

- Read excerpts from *The Magnolia Sword: A Ballad of Mulan* together (focusing on motivations, the duel, and her disguise) and annotate accordingly.
  - Emphasize cultural and historical context
  - Determine key themes: war, sexism, adventure

#### Group Work (15 minutes)

- On chart paper in small groups, students can create a Venn diagram to compare and contrast the poem, the movie, and the novel.
  - Use color coding for fact vs. fiction.

#### Discussion (15+ minutes)

- Guiding questions: Given what we've discussed about early China, do you believe Mulan existed? Why or why not?
- What modifications did Disney make to this original tale? Why? How does that change our perception of China?
- What are some things that the movie conveys better than the poem or novel? Vice versa?
- Who is telling these stories? For what purpose? \*Focus here on the historical fiction connection with the novel

#### Optional Extension

- Have copies of *The Magnolia Sword* on hand for students to borrow; encourage an exploration of how authors blend historical facts with fiction to create richer storylines.
- Encourage students to further explore historical figures and events and compare their portrayal in historical accounts to fictional representations.

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