**Junior Honors Summer Project 2015-2016**



**Part I. Graphic Novel Study/Response**

**Part II. Personal History Project**

**Welcome to the American Experience!**



First of all, thank you for signing up for this course. We are glad that you have decided to become a part of the first group of Merrimack High School students to take the journey into the American Experience. In a sense, you are all pioneers for this class. That said, the theme for the summer project this year is based on the idea of *self-discovery*.

The project will be **due** on the **FIRST** day of school which is **September 8th, 2015.**

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| **PROJECT OVERVIEW** |
| **Part One** of this project will utilize the graphic novel *American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang. Copies of this novel will be signed out to you by your teacher.  Over the summer you will need to:   1. **Read** *American Born Chinese*. A reference guide for reading graphic novels is included in this handout.   **2. Read** and **highlight** the literary criticism provided about the novel.   1. **Write** an essay on the role of transformation as seen in *American Born Chinese* and in your own life. The prompt is included at the end of the literary criticism.   **Part Two** of this project will be centered on *your* historical narrative. You will research historical/personal events and compile a detailed portfolio to chronicle the history of your life and your own transformations.  **Rubrics** – Clear expectations for each task are included in the summer project materials on the last three pages. |

All materials will also be available on:

* MHS Social Studies Department Website:

<http://mrhuckins.yolasite.com/mhs-social-studies-department.php>

* MHS English Department Website: <http://www.merrimack.k12.nh.us/webpages/menglish/index.cfm?subpage=766974>

**The American Experience Part One: *American Born Chinese* Study/Response**

**Step One:** If you are unfamiliar with the graphic novel genre, please read the supplemental material titled “Some Graphic Novel Basics”. This material is included in your Summer Project Packet or, for a color version visit the following online source: [www.get**graphic**.org/resources/HowtoReada**GraphicNovel**.pdf](http://www.getgraphic.org/resources/HowtoReadaGraphicNovel.pdf)

**Step Two:** Read *American Born Chinese* with the following concepts in mind. Please note, you do not have to answer these questions directly, but they will eventually form the basis for your analysis essay.

1. How do the characters struggle with defining their identities?
2. What role does stereotyping play in the search for identity?
3. Where does acceptance come from? From others? From self?
4. What role does culture play with the story lines?

**Step Three:** After reading the novel, read the criticism provided by April Dawn Paris. You are **required** to highlight key concepts within Paris’s work. You may also take notes within the margins as you read. Reading Paris’s analysis will help provide evidence for your own analysis essay.

**Step Four: (Optional).** There are many other responses to and interpretations of *American Born Chinese*. If you would like to explore what the author’s purpose was or see other interpretations, visit the following sources.

1. Interview with the author. YouTube: Key Word Search, “Gene Luen Yang interview” Clip title = “American Born Chinese”. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FYCZqt5WSOM>
2. Gene Luen Yang’s tribute website to the Monkey King. Google search “Humble Comics Presents Monkey Kingdom”. <http://www.geneyang.com/monkey/>
3. New York Times Book Review. Google search “New York Times” American Born Chinese. <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/05/13/books/review/Vizzini-t.html?_r=0>

**Step Five:** **Analysis Essay.**

The transformer toy in *American Born Chinese* represents the many alterations or transformations the characters go through in order to fit into American society. Examine the motivations for each character’s transformation and what they ultimately discover about identity. Do you feel there is a benefit in assimilating into the American mainstream?

*Things to consider:*

1. This is a multi-paragraph essay
2. Your essay should be typed
3. You should use evidence from **both** the novel **and** the criticism or other optional recommended sources located in step four within **each** body paragraph
4. You should include parenthetical citations after your evidence within each body paragraph and a properly MLA formatted works cited page at the end of your essay.
5. Discuss the Monkey King, Jin Wang, and Wei-Chen within the essay (each could be his own body paragraph).
6. It is okay to use “I” within the essay, especially in regards to answering the assimilation portion of the question.

**American Born Chinese CRITICISM**

**Please remember to highlight key concepts as you read**

**April Dawn Paris**

*Paris is a freelance writer who specializes in literature. In the following essay, she argues that* American Born Chinese *illustrates how attempts to assimilate lead to negative, harmful transformations*.

The concepts of transformation and personal identity are pivotal in all three narratives of *American Born Chinese*. Transformations can be positive or negative, depending upon the factors that motivate them. *American Born Chinese* offers examples of both positive and negative transformations. Negative transformations in this book are associated with feelings of anger or shame. They are attempts to assimilate, and as the herbalist's wife explains to Jin, they require you to “forfeit your soul.” The positive transformations, on the other hand, are related to acts of kindness and selflessness. Unlike efforts to integrate, a positive transformation leaves a person's soul intact and helps guide others on their journey.

Michael Boatright notes in the *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy* that the main characters of the story reflect the immigrant experience by “living in two often contradictory cultural worlds.” The Monkey King, Jin, Wei-Chen Sun, Danny, and Chin-Kee all have divided identities, and they all undergo their own transformations. The initial transformations of Jin and the Monkey King are attempts at assimilation and reflect “the impact of the American dream on those outside the dominant culture,” according to a review in *School Library Journal* that appears on the First Second Web site. Yang explains this innate desire to assimilate in a *Kartika Review* interview with Sunny Woan: “There's definitely a temptation to become fully assimilated, fully a part of America, but as Asian Americans, we have to constantly struggle against that.”

Jin and the Monkey King transform themselves for the wrong reasons. They are willing to tear apart their personal identities so that they will fit in with societies that reject them. When transformations are made out of shame or an effort to assimilate, they cause more harm than good. Both Jin and the Monkey King wound themselves and others in their quests to change themselves. In reality, all that they need to change is their point of view.

The Monkey King has three identities at the beginning of the story. He is simultaneously a monkey, a king, and a deity. He is a fair ruler who is loved and appreciated by his subjects. He is content with his life until he is thrown out of a banquet for the gods. Although he is a deity, the other gods will not accept him as an equal and laugh at him. Humiliated, the Monkey King immediately lashes out in anger, but he inwardly agrees with the gods' belief that monkeys are inferior. He leaves the banquet and notices the smell of monkey fur for the first time and “stayed awake for the rest of the night thinking of ways to get rid of it.” By accepting the gods' perception of him, the Monkey King loses his self-respect and turns his back on his identity as a monkey.

Filled with anger and shame, he masters the disciplines of bodily form, which enable him to change his size and shape. The Monkey King makes himself physically intimidating, begins wearing shoes, and changes his name to the Great Sage, Equal of Heaven. All of this work is done in an effort to be accepted by the same deities who humiliated him. This physical transformation, however, does not end the Monkey King's feelings of anger or self-loathing; neither does it change the way that others see him. The gods still mock the Monkey King after he changes form. His anger remains, and he uses violence to convince others to accept his chosen identity.

The anger and shame that the Monkey King feels interferes with his duty as a king. He transfers his feelings of inferiority onto the other monkeys and decrees that his subjects too must wear shoes. The panel of this decree shows the monkeys falling off tree branches because of their slippery shoes. This is the Monkey King's final decree before he distances himself from his subjects. They are a reminder of an identity he is afraid of embracing. The Monkey King abandons the monkeys he is meant to care for in order “to announce my new name to all of Heaven.” With this action, he chooses to seek the respect of individuals who do not care for him by deserting those who do.

The Monkey King's desire to be someone other than himself is dangerous. He cannot release the anger and embarrassment that he feels, and he takes it out on others. He becomes violent when anyone calls him a monkey. Tze-Yo-Tzuh asks the Monkey King why he so angry, but by calling him a “little monkey,” the creator of all deities only incites the Monkey King's fury. The Monkey King refuses to believe that Tze-Yo-Tzuh made him to be a monkey because, in his mind, this makes him inferior. Because he stubbornly holds onto his anger and refuses to embrace his complete identity, the Monkey King is trapped under a mountain of rocks for five hundred years. He is only released from his prison when he embraces his personal identity and reverts to his original form. In a conversation with his fellow transformer, Jin, he explains that he could have spared himself this tribulation “had I only realized how good it is to be a monkey.”

Jin is focused on transforming himself throughout his narrative. Jin is both Chinese and an American. Even as a young boy in Chinatown, Jin wants to be a Transformer. When he arrives at a predominately Caucasian school in the suburbs, Jin experiences prejudice and rejection. People in Jin's new school make assumptions about him based on his ancestry, and he becomes a target for individuals who make racial slurs. His encounters at school echo the Monkey King's conflict with the gods. Jin attempts to disassociate himself from his Chinese heritage in order to fit in and reduce his visibility as a target. For example, Jin perms his hair. This effort to assimilate, however, is as ridiculous as a monkey wearing shoes.

Like the Monkey King, Jin finds any reminder of what makes him different from the other students distasteful, despite the fact that other Asian Americans become his closest friends. He initially dislikes Wei-Chen Sun and refuses to become friends with the new student from Taiwan. Later, Jin calls Wei-Chen his best friend, but he is also ashamed of Wei-Chen because he is a first-generation immigrant who does not fit into American society. Wei-Chen is a constant reminder of Jin's family origins. Jin may not realize how obvious his embarrassment is, but Wei-Chen understands. He admits to Jin's crush, Amelia, “I think sometimes my accent embarrass him.” Wei-Chen, however, is able to accept himself in a way that Jin cannot.

Jin further imitates the Monkey King by turning his back on both his friend and his heritage. He betrays Wei-Chen by kissing his girl-friend and then flies into a rage when Wei-Chen says that they are the same. His anger mirrors the Monkey King's, but Jin does not have the same Kung-Fu skills as the mythical character. Both Wei-Chen and Suzy hit Jin when he behaves inappropriately. After his final betrayal of Wei-Chen, Jin “forfeits his soul” and transforms into the Caucasian American Danny. This leads him to an even greater identity crisis. Danny has to cope with looking Caucasian but being Chinese. This crisis reaches its high point every year when his cousin Chin-Kee comes to visit.

Binbin Fu calls Chin-Kee the “epitome of transformation and subversion” in his *MELUS* article. As a stereotype, Chin-Kee is offensive. This two-dimensional caricature, however, conceals the Monkey King. Fu goes on to explain that Chin-Kee and the Monkey King are “two sides of the same coin.” The Monkey King is a beloved myth and Chin-Kee is a reminder of racism. Together they represent the positive and negative history of Asian Americans. The Monkey King uses a negative stereotype as a tool to help Danny, or Jin, face his feelings. By forcing Danny to confront his fear of being Asian, he acts as Jin's conscience. Chin-Kee's antics help Jin find his soul again and embrace his dual identity. The Monkey King's transformation into Chin-Kee is a generous and selfless act that mirrors the transformation of Wei-Chen into a human child.

Wei-Chen undergoes a complex transformation in the book. Before he appears in the story, Wei-Chen is transformed from a monkey to a Taiwanese boy and sent to America by Tze-Yo-Tzuh. This necessary transformation enables Wei-Chen to complete his task as an emissary to humans. The initial transformation is helpful because it is merely physical. Wei-Chen remains true to himself and ignores the taunts of his classmates because his friendship with Jin gives him hope and strength. Unfortunately, his world changes after Jin verbally assaults him.

Like the Monkey King and Jin, Wei-Chen undergoes an inward transformation after experiencing rejection. He retains the human form that Tze-Yo-Tzuh gives him, but he abandons his mission and identity as an emissary. The same anger and self-loathing that Jin and the Monkey King experience are mirrored in his behavior. He becomes aggressive and casts off all that he is by choosing a life of pleasure. The Monkey King and Jin both return to their true form and learn the importance of embracing who they are in the book. Wei-Chen, however, does not accept who he is or renounce his life of pleasure at the end the story. There is hope, however, that a renewed friendship with Jin will help Wei-Chen release his anger and find himself again.

**Source:** Paris, April Dawn. Critical Essay on *American Born Chinese*, in *Novels for Students*, Gale, Cengage Learning, 2012.

Course: The American Experience

**Summer Honors Project Part II:** Individual Assessment

**History of My Life Portfolio:**

***Chronicling Your Journey to Self-Discovery and the American Experience***

**Directions:** Throughout history, the major theme of the American experience has always been the **journey to self-discovery**. After reading the graphic novel *American Born Chinese*, you have learned about Jin Wang’s American experience and his acceptance of identity. The purpose of the Social Studies summer project is to help you **connect your life with historical events**, and chronicle your *own* path to self-discovery. As juniors, you need to realize that you are not living in isolation and that you and your family are affected by national and global events. You will compile a series of **personal and historical events** that took place throughout multiple stages of your life:

**Stage 1: Date of Birth – 2003, Stage 2: 2004 – 2009, Stage 3: 2010 – 2015**

To assist in this, you will accumulate **scanned photos of yourself** as well as **historical events**. Please do not use original pictures - they are too valuable – scan, photocopy, or include pictures in which you have duplicates. If you do not have access to childhood photographs – feel free to use clipart to represent personal events. Your portfolio will also include the following:

**Checklist**

* **2 personal** **events** from each stage of your life (feel free to share more)
* **2 childhood photographs** from each stage of your life (they do not have to be relevant to the event)
* **3 historical events** that took place during each stage of your life
* ***At least one U.S. International Relations event***  🡪 foreign policy, diplomacy, military involvement, trade, etc.
* ***At least one Domestic*** ***event*** 🡪 economic reform, Supreme Court cases, homeland security, social reform, federal programs, technological innovations, etc.

\*\*Stay away from entertainment, celebrity news, scandals, sporting events, etc.

* **Analysis of each event** (at least five sentences each) 🡪 *How did the personal event transform your life? How did the historical event transform your environment?* Briefly discuss the event’s personal and/or historical impact in complete sentences.

* **2 Artifacts from each stage of your life**
* You will copy and paste artifacts that capture the time period and briefly provide written analysis. An artifact could be a photograph, newspaper headline, advertisement, speech excerpt, object, etc. *What does the artifact reveal about the time period?*
* **Written Evaluation (self-reflection)** one paragraph🡪Select the top historical event that you believe has shaped your life and environment the MOST. Provide a written justification supported with historical evidence. Make sure to relate the past event to the present day.
* **Works Cited Page:** You will givecredit to all of the sources you use while conducting historical research (including images). Use easybib.com for the proper format (**MLA**).

**DISCLAIMER ON TIME MANAGEMENT:** This project is time consuming, but manageable if you tackle it in pieces. If you wait to the last minute, you will be STRESSED OUT. So, plan accordingly!

**Part One Rubric: *American Born Chinese* reading and essay**

**Proficient with distinction = 4**

**Proficient = 3**

**Partially proficient = 2**

**Substantially below proficient =1**

**Missing = 0**

**The *Criticism Highlighting* category will be recorded as a reading competency score**

**The average of the *Essay* categories will be recorded as a writing competency**

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| **Skill** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** | **0** | **Teacher feedback** |
| **Criticism Highlighting-**  The **selective** portions that are highlighted represent an understanding of the critic’s interpretation and **key** concepts within the story. (RL-11.7) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Essay Introduction –**  Establishes the purpose of the essay, defines key concepts/vocabulary, captivates reader’s attention and contains a clear thesis statement. (RL- 11.4, W11-12 2d, W11-12 2a) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Essay Evidence-**  Textual evidence from both *American Born Chines*e and the recommended criticism is carefully chosen to support the analysis and inferences provided within the essay (RL/RI 11.1) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Essay Analysis/Inferences/Interpretation**  A clear analysis of how the theme develops and builds on other themes over the course of the text is included. The impact of author’s choices is included and the analysis directly builds from the evidence cited in the essay (RL/RI 11.1, 11.2, 11.3) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Essay Organization/Transitions**  Transition words are used to link paragraphs and sentences. Topic sentences and clinchers are used to guide the reader throughout the piece (W11-12 2a, 2c) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Essay Theme Development**  The themes of transformation, identity, and assimilation are clearly expressed throughout the essay (W11-12 2a) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Skill** | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** | **0** | **Teacher feedback** |
| **Essay Conclusion**  The conclusion supports the significance of the topic and can address the opinion on the necessity of assimilation and/or leave the reader with a lasting impression regarding the themes of the essay (W11-12 2f) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Essay Citations**  After each piece of evidence (directly quoted or paraphrased) from either the novel or support material a correctly formatted parenthetical citation is present. The Works Cited section includes the proper MLA citation of the novel and article(s) used within the essay (W11-12 8) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Essay Sentence fluency/word choice**  There is an evident use of precise language, relevant vocabulary and literary devices to manage the complexity of the topic. Varied sentence fluency is used to clarify complex ideas and concepts (W11-12 2c, 2d) |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| **Essay Grammar-**  Writing demonstrates a clear understanding of grammar and conventions and is appropriate for grade level expectations. |  |  |  |  |  |  |

**Part Two Rubric: American Studies Summer Project History of My Life Portfolio**

***Chronicling Your Journey to Self-Discovery and the American Experience***

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| S.S. COMPETENCIES | **4** | **3** | **2** | **1** |
| **Research**  Shows wide research of historical events and uses appropriate sources.  See attached page of **Library Research Tools** that you can access at home from the school website. These are credible/historically accurate websites.  **Requirements:**   * At least three historical events researched per life stage **(9 total)** with images * At least two personal events per life stage **(6 total)** with \*childhood photographs * At least two historical artifacts per stage with images **(6 total)**   \*childhood photograph does not have to be relevant to the personal event  Includes bibliography in MLA format | Fulfills all research requirements. Research is extensive and historically accurate. Student summarizes each historical event.  Numerous credible sources are utilized  (i.e. Library Research Tools and additional credible resources) | Fulfills most research requirements. Research is mostly historically accurate. Student summarizes each historical event.  Credible sources are utilized. | Fulfills some research requirements. Research is somewhat limited. Student partially summarizes each historical event.  Some sources are not credible (i.e. Wikipedia, blogs, etc.) | Fulfills few research requirements. Research is limited. Student does not summarize historical event. |
| **Comprehension**  Entry is historically accurate and  places each event in its proper historical context. | Information about each event is accurate and identifies the time period, place, and key players. | Information is accurate and identifies two items in reference to historical context. | Most information is accurate and identifies one item in reference to historical context. | Some information is accurate with no references to historical context. |
| **Analysis**  Student interprets history and describes the significance of *each* historical event, personal event, and artifact in five or more sentences. Student discusses the relevance of the event and *how* it impacted their environment and/or life. | Strong evidence of analysis and interpretation is evident and demonstrates the historical significance of the events. | Some evidence of analysis and interpretation is evident and demonstrates the historical significance of the events. | Little analysis and interpretation is present. | Analysis and interpretation is not evident. |
| **Evaluation**  Student demonstrates the ability to draw an independent conclusion about the one historical event that has the greatest impact on his/her environment/life. Written justification should be supported with historical evidence. | Student draws own conclusions explaining how and why the event has altered his/her environment. The evaluation attempts to be objective and is supported by the research. Student connects past to present. | The student draws own conclusions explaining how and why the event has altered his/her environment. The evaluation is supported by research. | A conclusion is present and includes some explanation. | A conclusion is present but does not include explanation. |

**Research Guides and Websites: How to Find Reliable Websites**

***Regarding Websites:****Web research can be very useful and lead to much useful and important information. While every effort has been made to list only "reliable" sites, researchers should be aware that control of sites change (often without notice) from time to time and, thus, the reliability and point of view of the website may change (for better or worse). One of the best uses of web information is to locate good primary and secondary sources that should be directly examined. Websites also go out of existence, so, for scholarly work, they are not reliable sources, like a published work which, presumably, will always be available in some library (Library of Congress) for examination. Beware especially of quoting or otherwise relying upon unidentified opinions found on websites.*

Basic guide to web research:

1. Use your library BEFORE you start your web research. You will learn many terms that will be useful in your web research. You should read at least one good, broad secondary source on the subject before starting your research.
2. Learn how to do web research. Google has a very good set of instructions. USE IT!
3. Know the site you are using. Find out who is responsible for it. If it’s a college/university or educational program like PBS or BBC – that’s a good sign. Stay away from websites that are blogs and/or opinion-based.

**Library Research Tools (on MHS website)**

**Password: 03054**



**ABC-CLIO American History**  
  
Library Online Resource, User: Merrimack Pwd: tomahawks  
  
**Annals of American History**  
  
Library Online Resource, User: Merrimack Pwd: 03054  
  
**Biography in Context**  
  
Library Online Resource, User: merr26068 Pwd: 03054  
  
**Salem History (World and American History)**  
  
Library Online Resource, No user name and password

[**Britannica Online**](http://school.eb.com/)

Library Online Resource, User: **merrimack** Pwd:**03054**