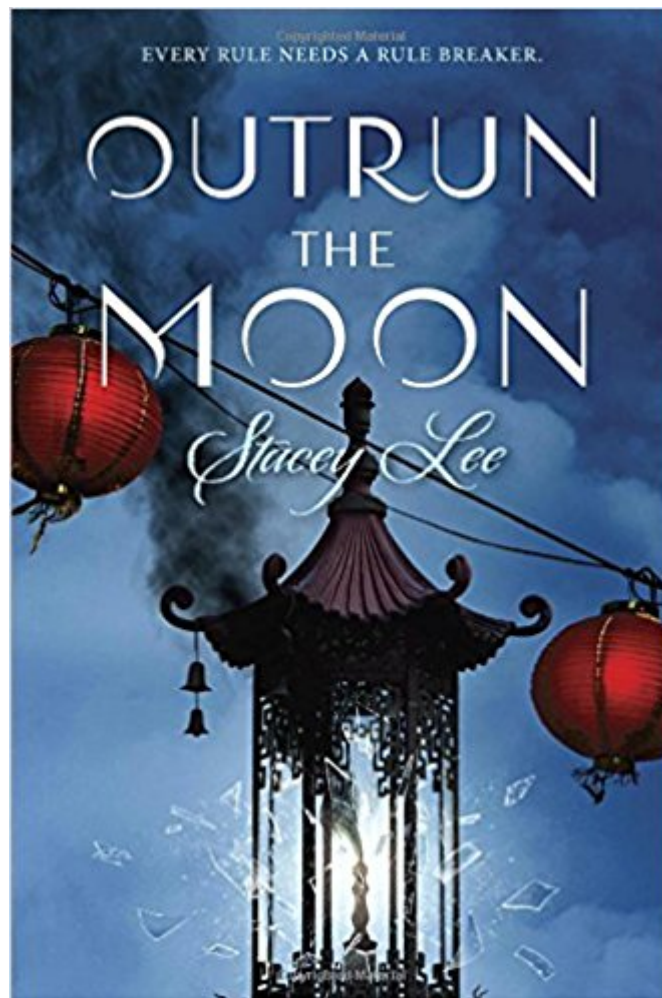


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# Outrun The Moon



## Synopsis

From the author of the critically acclaimed *Under a Painted Sky*, *Verity* is an unforgettable story of determination set against a backdrop of devastating tragedy. Perfect for fans of *Code Name Verity*. Winner of the Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature. Fifteen-year-old Mercy Wong is determined to break from the poverty of Chinatown, San Francisco in 1906, and an education at St. Clare's School for Girls is her best hope. Although St. Clare's is off-limits to all but the wealthiest white girls, Mercy gains admittance through a mix of cunning and a little bribery, only to discover that getting in was the easiest part. Not to be undone by a bunch of spoiled heiresses, Mercy stands strong until disaster strikes. On April 18, a historic earthquake rocks San Francisco, destroying Mercy's home and school. Now she's forced to wait with her classmates for their families in a temporary park encampment. Though fires might rage, and the city may be in shambles, Mercy can't sit by while they wait for the army to bring help—she still has the “bossy” cheeks that mark her as someone who gets things done. But what can one teenage girl do to heal so many suffering in her broken city?

## Book Information

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Adventure

## Customer Reviews

Gr 7 Up-Mercy is ambitious: she wants to own her own tea importing business, but the options for a young Chinese American girl in San Francisco in 1906 are severely limited. Mercy uses her cunning and business sense to bribe her way into St. Clare's, an elite school for girls. Not long after her

arrival, the teen finds out that she will be learning comportment, not business. Mercy's disappointment compounds with a hostile roommate, skeptical classmates, and her end of the bribe she must uphold to stay enrolled. Everyone seems to be hiding secrets, and the 1906 earthquake is coming. Will Mercy be able to outrun and outwit her fate as a laundryman's daughter? Lee creates characters full of depth and nuance that seem historically accurate but still relatable to today's teens. Mercy is a strong protagonist full of determination and adventure who moves the story and will compel readers. Her drive to succeed; her love of her brother, Jack; and her goodness will endear her to readers. VERDICT A diverse, engaging historical fiction that should not be missed.-Cyndi Hamann, Cook Memorial Public Library District, Libertyville, IL Â (c) Copyright 2011. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

Praise for *Outrun the Moon*:\* "Full of beautiful turns of phrase, lessons in Chinese customs and superstitions, and a refreshing protagonist representing intersectional diversity, this is a must-read for followers of historical fiction . . . Â Â Â Â Â powerful, evocative, and thought-provoking." Â Â Â Â Â •Kirkus Reviews, starred review Â Â Â Â Â "Lee creates characters full of depth and nuance that seem historically accurate but still relatable to today's teens . . . A diverse, engaging historical fiction that should not be missed. Â Â Â Â Â •School Library Journal Â Â Â Â Â "Mercy Â Â Â Â Â's narrative is flecked with witty puns, pithy wisdom from her fortune-telling mother, aphorisms from her favorite business book, and her obsession with bad-luck number four, all of which provide meaningful insight into both her character and her culture. While slipping in plenty of meaty historical context, particularly about the discrimination facing Chinese immigrants at the time, Lee tells a resoundingly warmhearted story about community arising amidst earth-shattering disaster. Â Â Â Â Â •Booklist Â Â Â Â Â "Mercy is a splendid narrator; her grit and humor makes the steady flow of racism she encounters even more jarring. Historical fiction fans are in for a real treat. Â Â Â Â Â •Bulletin of the Center for Children Â Â Â Â Â's Books Â Â Â Â Â "Lee brings an awareness of a (perhaps) lesser known time, place, and immigration issue. Mercy has one adventure after another; dramatic situations that she creates by leaping right into action. Despite her impulsiveness, Mercy is a very believable heroine who is sure to inspire readers to keep following their dreams. Â Â Â Â Â •VOYA Â Â Â Â Â "[A]n original exploration of a time and place not often depicted in historical fiction. Â Â Â Â Â •Publishers Weekly Â Â Â Â Â "Stacey Lee is an incredible voice in historical fiction, but she may have outdone even herself in her recent *Outrun the Moon*. Â Â Â Â Â •Bustle.com Â Â Â Â Â "Immersive and

riveting. Mercy Wong had my heart from page one. —Sabaa Tahir, New York Times bestselling author of *An Ember in the Ashes* —“A fantastic read! Emotional, entertaining, and bewitching as it brings to life San Francisco in 1906. —Cynthia Kadohata, author of the Newbery Award-winning *Kira-Kira* and the National Book Award-winning *The Thing About Luck* —

I haven't read many books this year. I've tried to keep up with things, but I've had SO much work, and I fell behind on my Goodreads goal sometime in February. The year hadn't even really got started before I crapped out. Now I'm playing catch-up, but I've started things off with this FANTASTIC book, and I really just need to impress upon you how much you should be reading *Outrun the Moon* as soon as it comes out. I have never been much of a historical reader, but I have read at least THREE historical books this year that have been absolutely fabulous, and so far this has been my favorite. I decided to pick this one, obviously because of the Chinatown setting. I will read anything and everything with Asian characters or settings, because I am just fascinated and love learning about the culture and geography so much. I've been lucky enough to visit two Chinatowns (Philly and NYC) but San Francisco is most definitely on the top of my list because of its rich cultural heritage and history. *Outrun the Moon* takes place in San Fran Chinatown 1906 days before, during, and after the major earthquake and fires that hit the city. The protagonist is Mercy Wong, and she lives in Chinatown with her mother, who is a fortune teller, and her father, who works at a dry cleaners/laundry. 1906 San Francisco is a very racist place, and a Chinese girl going to an all white girls' school in the rich part of the city is unheard of. But Mercy has higher aspirations, and plots a way to get herself there. The synopsis covers much of the novel, and as most historical books are, this one is about the characters, and the snapshot of life they go through that the author has chosen to write about. But most of all, I just really love what this book made me feel. It took me a little bit of time to get attached to the characters, but about one-third of the way into the book I was completely invested and adored all the characters, even the ones that were a little hard to love. This book is not for the faint of heart. There is death, destruction, and devastation, but there is also hope, redemption, and recovery. My emotions ran the gamut of the ENTIRE spectrum, and the author completely broke my heart before piecing it back together again. It's important for me to note just how emotional this book made me — like sobbing-in-the fetal-position emotional. The writing is also really, really great. *Outrun the Moon* is incredibly quotable, but also, it's just really great at

setting the scene and creating the atmospheric sense of place a book like this really needs.

I've never felt more like I was standing right there next to the main character like I did while reading this novel. It's moderately paced, but it's perfect for the storytelling and letting you get to know the characters, their motivations, and what makes them who they are. By the time the book closed, the characters felt like old friends. And I didn't want them to go away and leave me alone. My most favorite part of *Outrun the Moon* though were all the strong women, the girl power, and the ladies working together towards a common goal. It made me feel really, REALLY good. I just got this tingly feeling all throughout me because how often is it that girls work together and work through their problems? This is a book that you can hand to your daughter (or son) and feel good about doing so. Man, if I had a kid, as soon as she hit this reading level I would be thrusting this book into her hands. That's how good it was. I wish I could read it all over again for the first time. And I'm mad that I can't.

It's April 1906 in San Francisco. Mercy Wong, born and raised in Chinatown, dreams of a better life for herself and her family. Every morning, her father comes home to crash after working 16 hours as a launderer, and it pains Mercy to think of her younger brother Jack having to take up the same grueling work someday. Determined to change her family's fortune by starting her own business, Mercy decides that the first step is to gain admission to St. Clare's, an elite boarding school for young women. As the daughter of Chinese immigrants, Mercy does not have the same opportunities for education as her white peers. Her formal public school education ended after she completed the eighth grade. She knows that simply being Chinese increases the odds against her. However, she has an indomitable spirit, and armed with this, the knowledge she's gained from a business book for women, and a daring plan, Mercy manages to negotiate her way into St.

Clare's. From the first moments of her arrival at St. Clare's, Mercy realizes that the fight to prove herself has only just begun. The school headmistress is suspicious and austere, Mercy's roommate seems bent on exposing her as a fraud, and the other students are slow to welcome or even acknowledge her presence. But Mercy has "bossy cheeks," which according to her fortune-teller mother "indicate an assertive, ambitious nature," and she is not about to give up. She digs in her heels and hangs onto the hard-earned opportunity as best she can, though trouble seems to follow her like a shadow. Then the Great Earthquake hits, throwing the entire city

into upheaval. Nothing will ever be the same again, and Mercy realizes she must change her priorities and put aside past differences in order to survive. Mercy Wong is one of the best female protagonists I've read in a long time, for many reasons. For one, I love Mercy's indomitable spirit. The business book she has practically memorized by heart says "one must remain unsinkable in the face of adversity, like a cork in a barrel of water," and Mercy succeeds in this admirably. As a Chinese-American, she faces many obstacles simply because of the color of her skin, yet she doesn't let anything subdue her determination. But I also love Mercy because she's very human. Even though she is used to being a victim of prejudice, Mercy reveals her own prejudices, too. I appreciate the author's honesty here, because no matter what our backgrounds, we all have prejudices of some kind, whether or not we're aware of them. I don't say this to diminish the struggles that Mercy and her real historic Chinese-American counterparts had to endure. What I mean is that author Stacey Lee portrays Mercy as a complex person who, like all human beings, has the potential both to contradict herself and to change for the better. And finally, I love Mercy because she is a strong Asian-American heroine, and we need more great Asian protagonists like her in American literature. As with her first book, *Under a Painted Sky*, Lee once again delivers a riveting adventure with a wonderfully diverse cast. Although the action in *Outrun the Moon* builds more slowly and subtly, Mercy's constantly evolving relationships with the other characters kept me turning the pages. I wanted to know who, in the end, was going to remain standing with her and who wasn't. Besides Mercy, there are quite a few other women in *Outrun the Moon* who are just as resilient and determined as she is in their own way, and I was delighted to find so many strong female characters here. Overall, this book is a moving portrayal of how natural disasters can make people stronger and bring them together despite their differences. I know I'd want to stand with Mercy till the end.

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