



## **Chang's Paper Pony** by Eleanor Coerr, pictures by Deborah Kogan Ray

**Summary:** Chang and his grandfather are Chinese immigrants who work in the kitchen of a hotel during the California gold rush. Chang's dream is to own a pony, but that seems remote. With the help and friendship of a miner named Big Pete, Chang's dream does come true.

GRL L

**Objectives:** Practice prediction. Study genre. Identify story elements.

### PRE-READING

#### Activity 1

Read the book's title and the author's and illustrator's names. Ask students to describe the character on the cover. Discuss the colors the illustrator used and read the sign on the building.

#### Activity 2

Tell readers that during the same time period as Buffalo Bill and the Pony Express, people were heading to California to find gold. This was called the gold rush. Have the students take out their **Map of the United States of America** from the back of the Teacher's Guide and find the state of California. Label it "Gold Mountain," the name Chinese people called California.

#### Activity 3

Give some background about Chinese immigration from 1850–1864. Explain that war and a series of natural disasters threatened the lives and livelihoods of many people in China. As news of the California gold rush spread, many chose to leave their country and immigrate to California. Add "The California Gold Rush" to the timeline begun when the group read *Small Wolf*.

### DURING READING

#### Activity 4

Read the summary on the back cover. Ask students what they expect to find out in the story.

#### Activity 5

Read the chapter titles aloud. Have students read Chapter One to tell Chang's wish. Read Chapter Two to tell what kind of trouble Chang faces. Ask for examples of discrimination. Read Chapter Three to learn who Big Pete is. Read Chapter Four to tell why Chang has gold fever. Have students predict what will happen in Chapter Five, "The Real Pony." Read the chapter. Does Chang's dream come true?

#### Activity 6

Read the Author's Note. What genre is this book?

### AFTER READING

#### Activity 7

Have students go back to the story to complete the **Story Elements** worksheet found at the back of the Teacher's Guide.

#### Activity 8

Have students answer the following comprehension questions:

1. *What was Chang's wish?*
2. *Why was it so important for Chang to make it happen?*
3. *What kind of discrimination did Chang face as a Chinese immigrant?*
4. *Describe Big Pete's personality.*
5. *How was he different from the rest of the American miners?*
6. *What is "gold fever"? Why did Chang have it?*
7. *How does Chang earn his real pony in the end?*

**Reader's Theatre Script**  
**Chang's Paper Pony**  
**by Eleanor Coerr**

Setting: California gold mining camp, 1850s

Narrator 1	Grandpa	Big Pete
Narrator 2	a miner	
Chang	Scholar Yow	

**Chapter 1--Chang's Wish**

Narrator 1: Chang and Grandpa Li were peeling potatoes in the kitchen of the Gold Ditch Hotel. Suddenly Chang stopped and ran to the door.

Chang: Grandpa, I hear horses! Oh, if only I had a pony, I would never be lonely.

Grandpa Li: Next year the miners will bring their families. You will not be lonely then.

Narrator 2: But Chang was not sure. He remembered the day he and Grandpa Li had arrived in San Francisco. He remembered how some boys had thrown stones at them.

Chang: American children hate us.

Grandpa Li: They do not hate us. They just do not understand us.

Chang: I would rather have a pony. Then I would really have a *pengyo*---a friend.

Grandpa Li: You have friends now. There is your teacher, and the barber, and the blacksmith. And don't forget Big Pete.

Chang: They are too old to play with. But I could play with a pony.

Narrator 1: Grandpa Li pointed to a painting tacked above the stove.



Grandpa Li: That is the only pony we can afford. Now finish peeling the potatoes. Hungry miners will soon come for my good supper.

Narrator 2: Chang did as he was told. He also set the tables, brought water from the well, and carried in wood for the stove. All the time he wished he had a pony.

## **Chapter 2--Trouble**

Narrator 1: Some miners were rough. They liked to yank Chang's pigtail. Chang tried to keep his pigtail out of their reach.

Narrator 2: And he was always polite. When a miner asked him his name, Chang bowed low.

Chang: My humble name is Chang.

Narrator 1: The miner slapped his knee and cried.

Miner: Doesn't that pop your eyeballs!

Narrator 2: Everyone laughed.

Narrator 1: Chang ran into the kitchen.

Chang: I want to go home to China.

Narrator 1: Grandpa Li held him close.

Grandpa Li: You know we can't go back. There is a war in China.

Chang: But those miners--why are they so mean?

Grandpa Li: They left their hearts at home. All they can think about is gold. And gold fever makes them a little crazy.

Narrator 2: After supper Chang took a bath in the big tub. Then he tightened his pigtail and put on clean clothes.

Narrator 1: He walked down the dusty main street to his lessons. Chang stopped to look at the horses in the town stable.

Chang: When I have a pony, I will keep him here.

Narrator 2: Scholar Yow taught Chang to read and write English. How Chang hated it! The words looked like ugly worms wiggling across the paper.

Narrator 1: Chang liked painting Chinese words with a pointed brush and black ink. Each word looked like a picture: child, man, mountain. When he came to the word horse, Chang began to daydream.

Narrator 2: CRAAAAACK! Scholar Yow's stick came down across Chang's skinny back.

Scholar Yow: If you don't stop playing, you will be an empty bamboo--good for nothing.

Narrator 1: Chang swallowed hard. He did not care about being an empty bamboo. All he wanted was a pony.

Narrator 2: That night Chang hugged his pillow. He pretended it was his pony's neck. He could almost feel its soft nose and hear it breathing.

### **Chapter 3--Big Pete**

Narrator 1: Things got better for Chang when Big Pete came to Gold Ditch. Big Pete was the tallest, strongest man Chang had ever seen. He never pulled Chang's pigtail or teased him.

Narrator 2: It was getting very busy in Gold Ditch. More and more miners came every day. They dug for gold in the mountains. They panned for gold in the rivers.

Narrator 1: They weighed their gold nuggets on Big Pete's scales. Tiny flakes of gold fell to the floor. The men only cared about big nuggets of gold.

Narrator 2: One day Big Pete showed Chang some of the big nuggets. That was when Chang got an idea.

Chang: Big Pete, will you show me how to look for gold? I need gold to buy a pony.

Big Pete: A pony costs a heap of money.

Chang: Please, I will clean your cabin and scrub your floor.

Narrator 1: Big Pete laughed.

Big Pete: Tell you what, if your grandpa says okay, I will take you tomorrow.

Narrator 2: Chang gave a shout and ran to the Gold Ditch Hotel.

Chang: Please, please let me go with Big Pete to look for gold.

Grandpa Li: Ahummmmmm.

Narrator 1: Chang held his breath and waited. Finally Grandpa nodded.

Grandpa Li: Just this once. Maybe the fat God of Luck will smile upon you.



## Chapter 4--Gold Fever

Narrator 1: Early the next morning Grandpa Li packed a lunch for Chang and Big Pete. Chang took a bag to put the gold in. Big Pete lifted him onto his horse and yelled as they rode off.

Big Pete: HY-AAAAAH!

Narrator 2: Big Pete showed Chang how to pan for gold in the river. He poured some earth into a pan. Then he rocked and twisted it in the water.

Narrator 1: When the mud washed away, there were sand and pebbles. But not a speck of gold.

Narrator 2: Chang worked hard. The sun grew hot. Sweat ran down his face, and his hands got blistered.

Big Pete: Go easy, partner. The gold will not run away.

Narrator 1: But Chang could not slow down. He wanted his pony! Suddenly, he let out a shout.

Chang: YOWEEE! GOLD!

Narrator 2: Flakes of gold glittered among the pebbles and sand in his pan. Chang carefully poured it all into his bag.

Narrator 1: He and Big Pete galloped into Gold Ditch.

Chang: Now I can have my pony!

Narrator 2: Chang spread the treasure on the kitchen table.

Narrator 1: Big Pete helped him blow away all the sand and dirt.

Narrator 2: Chang stared at what was left.

Chang: That will not even buy a goat. Now I will never have a pony

## **Chapter 5--The Real Pony**

Narrator 1: In the morning Chang kept his promise. He took a broom to Big Pete's cabin and began to sweep.

Narrator 2: Suddenly he saw something glittering between the wooden boards. He knelt down for a closer look and whispered

Chang: Gold!

Narrator 1: The pieces were no bigger than a pinhead, but there were lots of them. Maybe enough to buy a pony! He put all the gold flakes into a pail and ran home to show Grandpa Li.

Chang: Now I can buy a pony, for sure!

Narrator 2: Grandpa Li gave Chang a long, hard look.

Grandpa Li: Of course you will give the gold to Big Pete. It was in his cabin.

Chang: I....I guess so.

Narrator 1: His dream of having a pony faded away.

Big Pete: By Jingo! I never knew there was so much gold in my floor.

Narrator 2: Big Pete took the gold to the bank in Sacramento.

Narrator 1: Chang took down the paper pony and tried to forget his dream.

Narrator 2: One afternoon Chang heard a clippity-clop.

Grandpa Li: That's Big Pete's horse.

Chang: I know.

Narrator 1: Slowly he walked to the door. There was Big Pete. He was leading a handsome pony.

Big Pete: He is all yours, partner. I bought him with your share of the gold.

Narrator 2: Chang gently reached out and rubbed the pony's moist nose. The pony nuzzled Chang's fingers and whinnied softly. A big smile spread across Chang's face.

Chang: I think he likes me.

Narrator 1: Big Pete swung Chang up onto the pony's back.

Narrator 2: Chang felt he would burst for joy.

Chang: Oh, my own pony! I will call you Pengyo.

Narrator 1: Chang leaned over and whispered into the pony's ear.

Chang: I love you, Pengyo.

Narrator 2: Pengyo gave a little snort, as if he understood.





