

My Grandparents Came From Toisan China Free Reader & Family Guide

My Grandparents Came From Toisan China

The Story of a Thousand Villages

Paperback: 978-1-967065-40-0

Hardback: 978-1-967065-41-7

LCCN: 2020901116

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A companion guide for families, classrooms, and intergenerational reading

Asian Adventures Book: <https://mybook.to/asianadventures>

About This Book

My Grandparents Came From Toisan: The Story of a Thousand Villages is an intergenerational picture book about ancestry, memory, immigration, and belonging. Through poetic storytelling and personal history, the book honors grandparents, villages, and the journeys that shape families across generations.

This guide is designed to help readers of all ages reflect, discuss, and explore the deeper themes of the story together.

Teacher / Librarian / Parent Note – Reader Guide

Dear Educators, Librarians, and Families,

My Grandparents Came From Toisan, China is more than a picture book – it's a bridge across generations, cultures, and oceans. This Reader & Family Guide is designed to help children, parents, and educators explore themes of ancestry, immigration, resilience, and creativity in ways that are engaging and meaningful.

Inside, you'll find:

Discussion questions for young readers and older students

Activities to encourage family storytelling, drawing, and reflection

Gentle history of Toisan (Taishan) and the global Chinese diaspora

Exploration of traditions like Qing Ming and cultural connections across continents

Recommended museums and resources for further learning

This guide is flexible — use it in classrooms, library storytimes, family reading sessions, or cultural studies projects. It's perfect for helping children understand how personal and community histories shape identity, values, and creativity.

We encourage families and teachers to explore together, share stories, and create their own bridges across generations.

For the free download and supplemental resources, visit:
www.surfsoup.tv

With gratitude,
Donna Kay Lau

Author, Animator, Illustrator, and Creator of Surf Soup®

Who This Guide Is For

Families reading together

Grandparents and grandchildren

Educators and librarians

Homeschool and cultural studies groups

Anyone interested in ancestry and family history

Big Themes to Explore

Ancestral roots and village life

Immigration and resilience

Grandparents and family legacy

Cultural memory and traditions

Creativity passed through generations

Honoring ancestors (Qing Ming)

Discussion Questions

For Young Readers

What is a village?

Why do you think the grandparents left their village?

What things did the grandparents carry with them, even when they moved far away?

What does it mean to belong to a family story?

For Older Children & Adults

Why do you think some family stories are not written down?

How does immigration change a family, and how does it stay the same?

What traditions or memories connect you to your ancestors?

How can creativity be passed down through generations?

Family Activity Ideas

1. Draw Your Village

Draw or imagine a village where your family comes from. It can be real, remembered, or imagined. Add details like food, paths, rivers, or homes.

2. Family Story Time

Ask an elder in your family to share a story about their childhood or their parents. Write it down or record it.

3. Memory Objects

Choose one object that represents your family history (a recipe, photo, tool, or gift). Share why it matters.

4. Qing Ming Reflection

Light a candle, offer flowers or food, and take a moment to remember ancestors or loved ones who came before you.

Gentle History Background

Toisan (Taishan)

Toisan, also known as Taishan, is a region in southern China made up of many villages. For generations, families lived close to the land, passing down knowledge through daily life rather than written records.

In the late 1800s and early 1900s, many people from Toisan left their villages due to hardship and limited opportunities.

They traveled overseas seeking work and a better future for their families.

Immigration & Early Chinese American Life

Chinese immigrants faced strict laws that limited where they could live, work, and whether family members could join them. Many opened laundries, shops, and small businesses, creating new communities that carried village values into new lands.

Honoring Ancestors: Qing Ming

Qing Ming is a traditional time to honor ancestors. Families clean graves, offer food, and take time to remember those who came before them. It reminds us that we walk with our ancestors and carry their stories forward.

Learn More: Museums & Cultural Centers in China

If you would like to explore more history connected to the story, these museums preserve the experiences of overseas Chinese families and Taishanese heritage:

Taishan Overseas Chinese Culture Museum (Taishan, Guangdong, China)

A museum dedicated to the history and culture of Taishanese emigrants. It highlights village life, overseas journeys, and the enduring connection between families and their homeland.

Overseas Chinese History Museum of China (Beijing, China)

中国华侨历史博物馆 A national museum presenting the history of Chinese emigration around the world, with exhibits on migration, daily life abroad, and ties to home.

Overseas Chinese Museum (Xiamen, Fujian, China)

华侨博物院 China's first museum dedicated to overseas Chinese history, founded with support from emigrant communities. It preserves artifacts, letters, and stories of migration.

Creative Extension

Illustrate a scene from your family's history

Create a small book about your grandparents

Write a letter to a future generation about where your family comes from

About the Author

This story is inspired by real family history rooted in Toisan, carried through immigration, creativity, and remembrance. It honors grandparents, ancestors, and the generations still to come.