



EMILY  
ACROSS  
THE JAMES  
BAY BRIDGE  
JULIE LAWSON

TEACHER'S  
GUIDE

BY REBECCA DUGGAN



Penguin Group (Canada)



## HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In the late 1800s, improvements to transportation, including streetcars and railways, changed life in Canada. Electricity and indoor plumbing were available in homes, and people were flocking to Canada to experience new opportunities and high quality of life.

While most of the immigrants to Canada in the late-nineteenth century were of European descent, there were also Chinese immigrants. In fact, shiploads of Chinese people went to Victoria, British Columbia, in the early 1880s to work on the railroad. After the railroad was completed, many of them stayed on to work as cooks, gardeners, or servants in affluent households in the area.

Some anti-Chinese sentiment existed. Although many Victoria-area residents were fascinated by Chinese customs and traditions, just as many were upset about Chinese immigrants accepting jobs that could have gone to Canadians. In an attempt to control immigration from China, the government imposed a fifty-dollar head tax on every Chinese person entering the country.

## PLANNING STRATEGIES

*Across the James Bay Bridge* is the first of four books about Emily. These books work wonderfully as read-alouds for grades two to five. Reading them and doing follow-up activities with students meets curriculum expectations in both language arts and social studies. *Across the James Bay Bridge* can be completed in just over a week, reading aloud to a class for about twenty minutes a day for six days. It would be valuable to have the other Emily books available to students to read independently after completing the first book.

*Across the James Bay Bridge* also works very well for literature circles. Some students may want to read this book independently as a novel study. Other students could read different books in the *Our Canadian Girl* series, and by sharing the information they have learned, compare and contrast different periods and events in Canadian history.

## PLOT SUMMARY

Ten-year-old Emily lives in Victoria, B.C., with her father, mother, and two sisters. On the first day of the new year, 1896, Emily and her sisters are playing at the park while her parents are at home preparing for a New Year's party they're hosting. While the girls are feeding the ducks, they hear a gong, a sign from their Chinese cook, Hing, that they need to return home. On the way back, Emily sees a Red Bird bicycle, a new invention, and she expresses her desire for one.

At the New Year's party, Emily meets eleven-year-old George, who has recently moved to British Columbia from England. George convinces Emily to enter her father's forbidden study. When Emily reaches out to stop George from touching her father's precious possessions, she knocks over a vase. After lamenting over how she can fix it, Emily returns to the study the next day when everyone is out of the house and glues the broken pieces back together.

While playing with her friends, Emily pulls the ponytail of a Chinese peddler to prove how brave she is. Then, after talking about Chinese people, Emily dares her friends to come to Chinatown with her. They reluctantly agree and hatch a plan to go together without letting their parents know. In Chinatown, they witness the opening of a new store, complete with fireworks, and a funeral procession. George steals some of the fireworks and is chased through the streets. Separated from the group, Emily wanders the streets lost. She finds Hing, who leads her out of Chinatown and back to her waiting friends.



After Christmas vacation, an embarrassed Emily explains to her friends that she did not get a bicycle as she had boasted, and she secretly hopes that she'll get one for her birthday. Upon returning home from school, Emily discovers that Hing has been fired because her parents found the broken vase and assumed he was the culprit. Racked with guilt, Emily rushes to Chinatown to find Hing and set things right. When she finds him, he takes her to his house and gives her a cup of tea. Hing tells her that he has a family in China that he would like to bring to Canada, but he cannot afford the head tax imposed on Chinese immigrants.

Upon returning home, Emily explains to her parents that she broke the vase. Hing's job is reinstated. Emily plots to tell her father about Hing's family troubles and hopes that he can help. When her birthday comes and goes with no gift of a bicycle, Emily's father explains that because of the tough economic times he is unable to afford one. He does, however, give her a bank account with five dollars and the promise of a trip to Chinatown to celebrate the Chinese New Year. While in Chinatown, Emily sees a strange play with Hing. She also receives money in a Chinese *lai see* envelope. Emily decides to give half of her lucky money to Hing's daughter and save the other half, along with her birthday money, for a bicycle.

## COMPREHENSION QUESTIONS AND RESPONSE JOURNAL TOPICS FOR EACH CHAPTER

### CHAPTER 1

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#### Comprehension Questions

What does Emily want for her birthday?

How does Hing let Emily and her sisters know that it is time for lunch or dinner? Do you think Emily likes this idea? Why or why not?

Do you think that Emily will get what she wants for her birthday? Why or why not?

#### Response Journal Topic

Describe a present that you really wanted for your birthday. Did you get it?

### CHAPTER 2

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#### Comprehension Questions

Why does Emily dread the New Year's toasts?

How does Emily feel about Hing? How does this differ from George's feelings about him?

What do you think that Emily will do about the broken vase? What should she do?  
What would you do?



## Response Journal Topic

How is Emily's New Year celebration similar to how you celebrate a holiday with your family?  
How is it different?

## CHAPTER 3

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### Comprehension Questions

Why do you think that Emily was excited about the earthquake? How did she think it could have solved one of her problems? Was she right?

What did you learn about Emily's character in this chapter? Describe two character traits that she possesses and use evidence from the text (for example, something Emily does or says) to support your answer.

## Response Journal Topic

Describe a time when you had an accident or made a mistake. What did you do? How did you solve the problem? How did people react?

## CHAPTER 4

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### Comprehension Questions

Use evidence from the text to describe two new character traits that Emily exhibits in this chapter.

How is life different across James Bay Bridge? Describe the neighbourhood that Hing lives in and compare it to Emily's neighbourhood.

What is a superstition? Hing explains to Emily that the firecrackers are used "to scare away evil spirits and bring good fortune." List three superstitions that you know.

## Response Journal Topics

Have you ever been to a funeral? Describe a funeral that you have been to or describe what you imagine would happen at a funeral. How is the funeral that you are describing different from the funeral that Emily witnesses in Chinatown? How is it the same?

## CHAPTER 5

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### Comprehension Questions

What is prejudice? What do you think it means? Check the meaning in the dictionary.  
How is prejudice evident in this chapter?

Why did Emily get to stay home from school in the afternoon?

Why do you think that Hing did not tell Emily's parents who really broke the vase?



## **Response Journal Topic**

Have you ever taken the blame for something you didn't do? Describe what happened?  
How did it make you feel?

## **CHAPTER 6**

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### **Comprehension Questions**

Why are Emily's friends nervous about going to Chinatown?

Why can't Hing's family come to Canada?

What is Emily's plan for bringing Hing's family to Canada?

### **Response Journal Topic**

Have you ever made a mistake and tried to do the right thing? How did it work out?

## **CHAPTER 7**

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### **Comprehension Questions**

How do Emily's parents react when they find out how the vase broke? What are they most upset about? Why are they also proud of Emily?

What is Emily's new plan?

How is Emily punished?

### **Response Journal Topic**

Describe a time that you were punished. Do you think the punishment was fair? Why or why not?

## **CHAPTER 8**

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### **Comprehension Questions**

Why doesn't Emily get a bicycle for her birthday?

What is the special gift that Jane gives her?

Where does Emily's father invite her to go with him? Do you think this makes her feel better?

### **Response Journal Topic**

Describe a time when you were disappointed by something you were looking forward to.



## CHAPTER 9

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### Comprehension Questions

What gift does Hing give to Emily? How does he say that it will help her?

Emily was born in the Year of The Dog. Research the year you were born according to the Chinese calendar. What are the characteristics of people born in your year? Do you think you possess some of these characteristics?

How does Emily plan to spend the money she received in her *lai see* envelope? What does Emily's father think of her plan?

How does Emily demonstrate generosity in this chapter?

### Response Journal Topic

What do you think might happen to Emily and her family in the next book?

## CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

While curriculum connections vary from province to province *Emily: Across the James Bay Bridge* meets expectations in social studies and language arts across Canada for grades two, three, four, and five. Below are some examples of specific curriculum connections for each grade and a list of tasks students should be able to perform to meet curriculum guidelines. For more details, please refer to the provincial websites listed in the Web Resources section of this guide.

### GRADE TWO/THREE

#### Social Studies

- demonstrate an understanding that Canada is a country made up of different cultures
- identify early settlers and their origins, and describe their lives and their contributions
- describe the physical features of regions within each of the provinces and territories
- demonstrate an awareness of British Columbia's and Canada's diverse heritage

#### Reading

- express clear responses to written materials, relating the ideas in them (thoughts, feelings, experiences) to their own knowledge and experiences
- talk about characters and situations in stories, and information and ideas in non-fiction materials

### GRADE FOUR/FIVE

#### Social Studies

- demonstrate an awareness of the various relationships (e.g. economic and cultural) within and between Canadian regions
- demonstrate an understanding of the characteristics of the provinces
- describe how immigrants apply for citizenship and become Canadian citizens
- describe the historical development of various B.C. communities
- demonstrate an awareness of British Columbia's and Canada's diverse heritage
- demonstrate understanding of why immigrants come to Canada, the challenges they face, and their contributions to Canada



- explain ways people preserve and transmit culture
- explain citizenship in terms of participation in the community, province, country, and world
- demonstrate understanding of equality and fairness in Canada with respect to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, the B.C. Human Rights Code, and the Ombudsman Act

#### Reading

- offer various responses to reading, listening, and viewing experiences supported by reasons, examples, and details
- begin to identify a writer's or a character's point of view
- use their knowledge of the organization and characteristics of various forms of writing to understand and use content.

## WEB RESOURCES

Supplementary information can be found online at the following websites:

For information about Chinese immigration to Canada in the late-nineteenth century:

<http://ist.uwaterloo.ca/~marj/genealogy/chinese.html>

For information on the head tax imposed on Chinese immigrants:

[www.asian.ca/law/cia1885.htm](http://www.asian.ca/law/cia1885.htm)

[www.ccnc.ca/redress/history.html](http://www.ccnc.ca/redress/history.html)

[home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~dhum/re\\_aspects.html](http://home.cc.umanitoba.ca/~dhum/re_aspects.html)

For information on the prejudice faced by Chinese immigrants in Canada:

[www.canadianculture.com/geezer/jack78.html](http://www.canadianculture.com/geezer/jack78.html)

[www.ccnc.ca/toronto/history/info/infosum.html](http://www.ccnc.ca/toronto/history/info/infosum.html)

For information on Chinese New Year history, traditions, and customs:

[http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_761595955/Chinese\\_New\\_Year.html](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761595955/Chinese_New_Year.html)

[www.kidsdomain.com/holiday/chineseny.html](http://www.kidsdomain.com/holiday/chineseny.html)

[www.kiddyhouse.com/CNY](http://www.kiddyhouse.com/CNY)

[www.familyculture.com/holidays/chinese\\_new\\_year.htm](http://www.familyculture.com/holidays/chinese_new_year.htm)

For information on provincial curriculum guidelines:

[www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/subject.html](http://www.sasked.gov.sk.ca/docs/subject.html)

[www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/GR-PUB/menu-curricu-a.htm](http://www.meq.gouv.qc.ca/GR-PUB/menu-curricu-a.htm)

<http://curriculum.epsb.net>

[www.bced.gov.bc.ca](http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca)

[www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/curricul.html](http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/curricul/curricul.html)

[www.k12curr.edu.gov.nf.ca/rootdocs/guides.htm](http://www.k12curr.edu.gov.nf.ca/rootdocs/guides.htm)

[www.yesnet.yk.ca/index.html](http://www.yesnet.yk.ca/index.html)

[www.stemnet.nf.ca/curriculum](http://www.stemnet.nf.ca/curriculum)

<http://siksik.learnnet.nt.ca>

[www.gov.pe.ca/educ](http://www.gov.pe.ca/educ)

[www.gnb.ca/0000](http://www.gnb.ca/0000)

[www.gov.nu.ca/Nunavut/English](http://www.gov.nu.ca/Nunavut/English)



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Con, Harry, Ronald J. Con, Graham Johnson, Edgar Wickberg and William E. Willmott, *From China to Canada*, Edited by Edgar Wickberg, Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Ltd., 1982.

Harris, H. Sun, M. *The Chinese Canadians*. Scarborough: Nelson, 1982.

Yee, P. *Tales from Gold Mountain: Stories of the Chinese in the New World*. Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 1989.





**ACTIVITY 2:**

**ACROSS THE JAMES BAY BRIDGE**      **NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

Research the Chinese New Year celebration. Try these web resources to help you answer the following questions.

[http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia\\_761595955/Chinese\\_New\\_Year.html](http://encarta.msn.com/encyclopedia_761595955/Chinese_New_Year.html)

[www.kidsdomain.com/holiday/chineseny.html](http://www.kidsdomain.com/holiday/chineseny.html)

[www.familyculture.com/holidays/chinese\\_new\\_year.htm](http://www.familyculture.com/holidays/chinese_new_year.htm)

1. How many days does Chinese New Year last? \_\_\_\_\_

2. Chinese New Year is a holiday full of superstitions. Name five things that Chinese people believe cannot be done during Chinese New Year.

a) \_\_\_\_\_

b) \_\_\_\_\_

c) \_\_\_\_\_

d) \_\_\_\_\_

e) \_\_\_\_\_

3. Match the Chinese New Year symbol to its reason for importance.

oranges and tangerines

long life

the colour red

wealth and the reawakening of nature

*lai see* envelopes

abundant happiness

peanuts

a bright sunny future

flowers

good fortune

4. What do you think is the most exciting about Chinese New Year? What would you like to see, smell, taste, hear, or see at a Chinese New Year celebration?

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**ACTIVITY 3:****ACROSS THE JAMES BAY BRIDGE**      **NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_**COMPARE AND CONTRAST**

How does life differ on the other side of the James Bridge Bay? Compare the people and the neighbourhood of Chinatown to the people and the neighbourhood of James Bay. How are they the same and how do they differ? Fill in the chart with your ideas.

	<b>CHINATOWN</b>	<b>JAMES BAY</b>
What houses look like		
How holidays are celebrated		
What jobs people do		
Food and drinks people enjoy		
What people do for fun		
What you can see when you are walking through the neighbourhood		
The clothing people wear		



**ACTIVITY 4:**

**ACROSS THE JAMES BAY BRIDGE**      **NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PROBLEM SOLVING**

Show all your work using pictures and words.

*Question #1*

How much money will Hing need to save to bring his daughter, his two sons, and his wife to Canada if the head tax on each of them is \$50.00

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*Question #2*

If Emily has the \$5.00 she received on her birthday and half of the \$3.00 she received in her *lai see* envelope how much more money will she need to buy the Red Bird bicycle which costs \$12.00?

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*Question #3*

If you bought 20 lemon barley sticks how would you share them equally with Amelia and Jane? How many would be left over?

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## ACTIVITY 6:

### ACROSS THE JAMES BAY BRIDGE NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

#### DRAMA ACTIVITY

In groups of four choose one of the following scenarios to act out.

1. Actors—Emily, Jane, George, Peddler  
You are all playing outside when a peddler comes around selling new toys. Decide what toys he might be selling in 1896 and whether or not you are going to buy them.
2. Actors—Hing, his wife, his son, his daughter  
Hing's family has just come over from China. What would you say at this joyful reunion? What might Hing want to show them first?
3. Actors—Emily's mom and dad, George's mom and dad  
Have a discussion about how you feel about people coming into Canada from China. How do you all feel about increasing the head tax on people who are Chinese coming into Canada?
4. Actors—Two children from 2004, Two children from 1896.  
Pretend that you could go back in time. Have a discussion about how life is different in 1896. Talk about your homes, what you do for fun, and what a day in your life is like.
5. Actors—Two inventors, Two children  
Two inventors are trying to convince people to buy a bicycle. Television and commercials did not exist in 1896. Make up a sales pitch describing bicycles and explain to children why they should buy bicycles. Children, explain whether or not you would buy a bicycle and why or why not? How would having a bicycle make your life easier or harder?

\* Make sure that everyone in your group has a speaking part.

\* Make sure that you stay in character for your entire scene.



## ACTIVITY 7:

### ACROSS THE JAMES BAY BRIDGE NAME: \_\_\_\_\_

#### MAKE YOUR OWN CHINESE LANTERN

##### What You Need

- Construction paper
- Scissors
- Tape
- Stapler
- Ruler
- Pencil
- Glue, glitter, sequins, tissue paper

##### How To Make It

1. Use your ruler to measure and cut 1 inch off the short end of your paper. Set aside to use as the handle.
2. Fold your paper in half lengthwise.
3. Draw a line 1 inch from the end of the long edge of the paper opposite the folded edge. This will be the line where you stop cutting.
4. Measure and mark lines 1 inch apart starting at the folded edge and moving towards the “stop cutting” line.
5. Cut on the marked lines up to the “stop cutting” line.
6. Unfold the paper.
7. Re-crease the paper in the opposite direction. This will hide any pencil marks.
8. Match the long edges together on the lantern and use tape to hold it in place. You may need a staple to secure it.
9. Staple the handle to the top of the lantern.
10. Add glitter and sequins. You may also wish to stuff it with yellow tissue paper if you want to simulate a lit lantern.
11. Display your beautiful lanterns around the classroom.

