

Crossings

by **Leonard Chang**

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OVERVIEW

Quick Glance 10 Points for Usage Guide

Student Population	
Age/Grade Level Appropriateness	* Ages 13+ * Grades 8+
Genre/s	* Fiction * Immigration * Drama * Adventure
Length	2,687 words
Content Advisories	Reference to immigration that is not legal.
One Sentence Summary	A South Korean woman leaves her country to immigrate to America from Mexico while riding a bicycle for the first time.

Lesson Planning	
Topics & Key Themes Overview	Topics * Unauthorized Immigration * Cultural differences * Marriage in other cultures * Scary and dangerous situations * Learning to ride a bicycle * Feminism
Topics & Key Themes Overview	Themes * Overcoming fear * Pushing through obstacles * The American Dream * Privilege vs. hardship
Historic Events / Time Periods for Study	* Issues and current events surrounding the U.S. and Mexico Border * Social and cultural history of South Korea

Lesson Planning	
Complementary Classic and Historic Texts	<p>* Poem by Emily Dickinson: “A darting fear—a pomp—a tear—”</p> <p>* Factual article about undocumented immigrants: https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/03/06/us/politics/undocumented-illegal-immigrants.html (https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/03/06/us/politics/undocumented-illegal-immigrants.html)</p> <p>* Fiction: <i>Native Speaker</i> by Chang Rae Lee</p> <p>* Novel: <i>The Guardians</i> by Ana Castillo</p>
Author and Artists Information	<p>Leonard Chang is a writer of novels, essays, short stories and screenplays for television. He lives in Los Angeles, CA.</p> <p>Rosalind Helfand was the Managing Editor for Literature for Life (now Locavore Lit LA) and is a photographer.</p>
Key Common Core Standards (found in detail following the curriculum)	<p>CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.2 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.6 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.8 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.A CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.5 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.4 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1.B CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2 CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3</p>

Author Biography

Leonard Chang was born in New York City, and grew up on Long Island, where he attended the public schools in Merrick. After high school, Leonard studied at Dartmouth College, interned with the Peace Corps in Kingston, Jamaica, and continued his studies in Philosophy at Harvard University, where he graduated with honors. He attended the graduate creative writing program at the University of California at Irvine, and received his Master’s of Fine Arts. His first novel, entitled *The Fruit ‘N Food*, sold while he was still in graduate school, won the Black Heron Press Award for Social Fiction, and is now taught at universities around the world. His next novel, *Dispatches from the Cold*, won a San Francisco Bay Guardian Goldie Award for Literature.

He is also the author of a popular and critically-acclaimed noir trilogy, which includes *Over the Shoulder* (HarperCollins), *Underkill* (St. Martin’s) and *Fade to Clear* (St. Martin’s), a *USA Today* Summer Reading Pick and a finalist for the Shamus Award. His eighth novel, *The Lockpicker*, was published in 2017. His

novels have been translated into French, Japanese and Korean, and are regularly studied in literature, sociology and theology courses throughout the U.S., Europe and Asia. Recently the U.S. Consulate in Berlin sponsored his multi-city lecture/reading tour of Germany.

In addition to novels, he writes short stories, essays, screenplays and TV. He was a Visiting Distinguished Writer at Mills College, and a faculty member at Antioch University's MFA Program. He lives in Los Angeles, and is currently a writer/producer for the TV drama *Snowfall*, which airs on FX.

Artist Biography

Rosalind Helfand was the Managing Editor of Literature for Life (renamed Locavore Lit LA). In her spare time, she does photography with the natural world being her her favorite subject.

SYNOPSIS

Unha, a young South Korean woman, has her future plans disrupted when her fiancé breaks their engagement so that he can move to Seoul without her. Believing that she should do something as bold as her ex-fiancé, and having nothing left in Korea, she decides to illegally immigrate to the United States. She travels to Tijuana and plans to cross the border from there. There is only one problem. The people who are helping her cross the border say that the best way to do so is by rental bike. Unha has never ridden a bike, and is filled with anxiety that she will fall or that her inexperience will cause her to be caught at the border. However, Unha learns quickly, and glides into the US from Mexico on her bike.

CURRICULUM

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

Topic and Main Ideas

Instruct students to research current issues and events surrounding the U.S. and Mexico Border. Have them bring in at least two articles, one that supports the wall that some United States leaders would like to build and one that opposes it.

Prior to beginning, review with students how to identify and differentiate reputable sources. Also, discuss how to spot fake news, including strategies for picking out fake news and information from factual, well-researched news. They could even read this article <http://www.factcheck.org/2016/11/how-to-spot-fake-news/> (<http://www.factcheck.org/2016/11/how-to-spot-fake-news/>) or check out this image.

Once students have conducted research from reputable sources, have them present the main arguments from both sides of this issue based on their research. Is there any factual evidence that supports the wall? Is there factual evidence that discredits this proposal? Hold a classroom discussion or debate on this issue.

Passage-Specific Themes

Read the following passage:

Unha's father died when she was young, and her mother worked in a rice noodle factory. They couldn't afford the traditional dowry of buying wedding clothes and gifts for all of the groom's family.

Unha said, Your mother thinks you can get the three keys from someone else?

Woo Chul said, That is a custom for the rich. Another dowry—keys for a new car, a new house, and an office for the groom—was becoming more popular in Korea.

Familiarize yourself with what a dowry is, and what the three keys are in Korea. Once you understand these concepts, research some more of the wedding customs in South Korea. Now that you have done this, consider your own culture's marriage traditions. Compare them alongside each other in a 3-4 page essay. Analyze what values the traditions of each culture signify.

Universal Themes

Have the students do a 10-minute free write on something that they are afraid of, and how they overcome said fear. When they are finished, ask students to get up in front of the class and share what they wrote if they are comfortable doing so. Empathize with them and let them know that even presenting something in front of the class can be a scary thing. If the students don't have a way to overcome their fear, encourage the class itself to be a positive peanut gallery and contribute ideas to how students might overcome that fear.

Key Vocabulary

Definitions are very context-dependent. Make sure that any definitions you look up or work from are the ones that most correctly fit in the context of the story.

Level One	Level Two	Level Three
foreign	slashed	Korean
strange	multitude	three keys
bicycle	border	Tijuana
traditional	prioritize	“illegals”
momentum	beak	dowry
shock	squirm	rice noodle
lukewarm	grimace	Seoul
impatient	interrogated	emigrate
broken engagement	clattered	immigrate
imitation	grit	crossing
bubbling	phlegm	deported
handlebars	pothole	detained
stung	coasting	Border police
	glided	Border patrol
	sweltering	

Vocabulary Activity Options

1. Research the difference between emigration and immigration. Now that you are aware of the difference, fill in the blanks:

Unha ____ from South Korea.

Unha ____ to America.

2. The events in “Crossings” are not told in order. Research the literary term for a story that is told in order, as well as the term for a story that is not told in order. What is the difference? Have the students illustrate their knowledge of this difference by writing a very short story, then re-writing the exact same story in a different order.
3. There are some very intense, gritty descriptive words in “Crossings” like sweltering, phlegm, grit, interrogate, slashed, etc. Using these words, or other words like them from the story, write a piece of flash fiction in which you use them.

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

1. Talk about a time when you were not allowed in somewhere that you wanted to enter. How did that make you feel? Did you try to go inside this place anyway? How did you do so?
2. The protagonist in “Crossings” is dealing with multiple challenges. Not only is Unha immigrating into the United States illegally from Mexico, but she is doing so as a Korean woman. Do you think this makes it easier, harder, or just different for Unha to immigrate than if she were Mexican? How so?
3. Have you heard of the concept of the American Dream? In what context? What is your perception of the American Dream? Is it real? Why do so many people want to come here because of said dream?

Text-Dependent Question Options

1. Why did Unha want to come to America? What was the tipping point that pushed her to immigrate?
2. According to “Crossings,” why is it easier for the Korean immigrants to ride into the US on bicycles? Cite the text in your response.
3. According to “Crossings,” what specifically are the three keys in South Korea? Cite the text in your response.
4. Research the literary term foil. Does Unha have a foil in the story? Cite textual evidence.
4. When Unha’s fiance breaks their engagement, she describes herself as being “elated and frightened.” What are the reasons for these complex emotions? Cite textual evidence.
5. Before reading “Crossings,” the story’s illustration might look simply like a meaningless picture of bicycle tires in a store. After reading the story, what symbolic meaning can you attribute to the picture?

Writing Exercise Options

Narrative

Option One: Write a short narrative story about a time when you had to learn something quickly. What were the stakes? What would happen if you failed? What was your time constraint?

Option Two: Examine the author’s use of unpunctuated dialogue in “Crossings.” Discuss in class when it is appropriate or not appropriate to make such an artistic choice as a writer. After your discussion, write a short fiction story about a choice, a risk, a journey or all three in which the dialogue between characters is similarly presented.

Descriptive

Write a diary entry about the first time you rode a bike. If you haven't ridden a bike, describe your first time on any vehicle. What did it feel like? What was the new sensation like? Was it exhilarating? Terrifying? A bit of both? Make sure to describe your inner thoughts and emotions as well as every minute physical detail of the experience.

Analysis

Think about all that is at stake for Unha when she crosses the border. It is more complicated than her simply wanting to go to America. Write a 2-3 page essay in which you discuss the symbolic meaning of crossing the border for Unha. How does this meaning compare or contrast to the reality of Unha's crossing?

Complementary Reading Text Option

Read this article, which gives a factual depiction of undocumented immigrants:

<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/03/06/us/politics/undocumented-illegal-immigrants.html>
(<https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2017/03/06/us/politics/undocumented-illegal-immigrants.html>)

Writing Exercise

According to the article, how does the White House distort the facts presented to project a negative image of immigrants? Is this negative image reality?

Using the bar graphs and facts presented in the article, write a brief profile of immigrants in America. Is it similar to the White House's profile of immigrants? Why or why not?

Alternative Option: What new facts about unauthorized immigrants did you learn from reading this article? Is Unha's story similar to any of the immigrants in the article? Which aspects of her story?

Write a brief essay describing how Unha's story relates the profile of immigrants in America painted by the article using facts from the article as evidence.

Activity Options

Classroom Activity One

Divide the class into several groups. Give each group a topic for which to research how immigrants contribute to the United States (culture, economics, technology, academics). Have a speaker from each group come up and present their findings to the class, as well as write bullet points of the contributions on the board. By the end of the exercise, the board should be filled with contributions.

Classroom Activity Two

Give each student a piece of rope and give them step-by-step, oral instructions on how to tie a figure eight knot. (Here are instructions: https://www.netknots.com/rope_knots/figure-eight (https://www.netknots.com/rope_knots/figure-eight)) Tell the students quickly. Then tell them to imagine that if they do not tie the knot correctly in two minutes, they will be stuck at school and will not be able to go home that day. Emphasize beforehand that the exercise is PRETEND but play the character once it has begun.

After the exercise, ask the students how it made them feel. Ask them if the added pressure helped them learn. Then, ask them if they can now better empathize with the pressure Unha felt when she had to learn to ride a bike so quickly.

Home Activity

“Crossings” is not in chronological order. Go home and illustrate each section of the story – each crucial image to you. Place the images in an order of your choosing, then come back to class the next day and explain why you chose each image and why you placed them in the order that you did.

Guest Speaker

1. Have a speaker from the Coalition for Humane Immigration Rights in Los Angeles to talk about how they work to achieve their mission of actualizing a world with freedom of mobility, full human rights, and true participatory democracy. Ask the speaker how they’ve helped immigrants migrate into the United States, and ask the students how this relates to Unha crossing the border. <http://www.chirla.org/> (<http://www.chirla.org/>)
2. Invite the author, Leonard Chang, to discuss “Crossings” with the class.

Field Trip

Option One: Visit The Bicycle Kitchen in Los Angeles and learn about their Los Angeles bicycle riding culture, the value of bicycle riding, and their services for cyclists.

<http://www.bicyclekitchen.com/> (<http://www.bicyclekitchen.com/>)

Option Two: Visit the Bicycle Coalition of Los Angeles to learn how they are advocating for and educating about cyclists rights in Los Angeles

http://www.la-bike.org/our_work (http://www.la-bike.org/our_work)

Option Three: Go to the Korean American coalition and learn how they assist and help document Korean immigrants just like Unha here in Los Angeles.

<http://www.kacla.org/> (<http://www.kacla.org/>)

TEST PREPARATION COMPONENT

Writing Exercise

In “Crossings,” why do you think Unha immigrates to the United States? In her stressful border crossing, how does she transcend—both literally and metaphorically—the barriers holding her back? Write a two-paragraph response in which you cite the text.

COMMON CORE STANDARDS REFERENCE

Pre-Reading & Themes Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.2: Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.6: Determine an author’s point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.4: Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

Vocabulary Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.L.8.4: Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

Post-Reading Class Discussion Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1: Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.A: Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.

Text-Dependent Question Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1.B: Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

Writing Exercise Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1.B: Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.2: Write informative/explanatory texts to examine a topic and convey ideas, concepts, and information through the selection, organization, and analysis of relevant content.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.3: Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.

Complementary Reading Text Writing Exercise

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.2: Determine a central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text, including its relationship to supporting ideas; provide an objective summary of the text.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.6: Determine an author's point of view or purpose in a text and analyze how the author acknowledges and responds to conflicting evidence or viewpoints.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.RI.8.8: Delineate and evaluate the argument and specific claims in a text, assessing whether the reasoning is sound and the evidence is relevant and sufficient; recognize when irrelevant evidence is introduced.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1: Write arguments to support claims with clear reasons and relevant evidence.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.W.8.1.B: Support claim(s) with logical reasoning and relevant evidence, using accurate, credible sources and demonstrating an understanding of the topic or text.

Activity Options

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.4: Present claims and findings, emphasizing salient points in a focused, coherent manner with relevant evidence, sound valid reasoning, and well-chosen details; use appropriate eye contact, adequate volume, and clear pronunciation.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.5: Integrate multimedia and visual displays into presentations to clarify information, strengthen claims and evidence, and add interest.

CCSS.ELA-LITERACY.SL.8.1.A Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.