



## TITLE

# TYRUS WONG: MORE THAN *BAMBI*

GRADE LEVEL: ELEMENTARY TO HIGH SCHOOL

**SUBJECT:** Social Studies, History, Arts

**THEME:** Activism, Bias and Stereotype, Civil Rights, Identity and Culture, Immigration, Labor, and Performance

**STANDARDS:** Common Core; UCLA U.S. History Content Standards: Era 6: The Development of the Industrial United States (1870-1900); Era 10: Contemporary United States (1968 to the present)

## OBJECTIVES:

### Students will be able to:

- Name the main artist/creator of the illustrations used in Walt Disney's animated film, *Bambi*.
- Explain how discrimination played a role in Tyrus Wong's not being fully acknowledged for his contribution to *Bambi*.
- Describe how he achieved recognition for his art well beyond that as an illustrator during his long and distinguished career.

## ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS:

- How does race play a role in limiting one's potential to succeed or to achieve recognition for one's accomplishments?
- What challenges and hardships did immigrants coming through Angel Island face?

## CLASSROOM TIME:

1 to 2 Periods

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## VOCAB:

**Chinese Exclusion Act:** Passed in 1882, the Act denied Chinese entry to the U.S. and citizenship. Renewed and expanded so that by 1921, all Asians were subject to exclusion.

**“Paper Son”:** term used to describe males who entered the U.S. using false identity papers. “Paper Daughter” applied to females in the same way.

**Angel Island:** Immigration station in San Francisco; entry point for most Chinese wanting to come to the U.S.

**Ellis Island:** Immigration Station in New York City; entry point for most Europeans wanting to come to the U.S.

**Works Progress Administration (WPA):** Depression era agency (1939–43) created to provide useful work for the unemployed.

## ACTIVITIES:

### Show the film trailer for Bambi

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yDGv4GIR7A4>

Freeze the film clip right at the end (1:05 mark). The teacher may want to engage the students in a brief discussion about the film: Have they seen it? Any memories they associate it with? Then, show them the painting, “Deer on Cliff” by Tyrus Wong: <https://hammer.ucla.edu/now-dig-this/art/deer-on-cliff>. Bring attention to his signature on the painting in the lower right. Follow-up with the (obvious) question: Who do you think came up with the drawings (and designs) for Bambi?

### Have students read Wong’s obituary from the New York Times: Tyrus Wong, 'Bambi' Artist Thwarted by Racial Bias, Dies at 106 - The New York Times

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/30/movies/tyrus-wong-dies-bambi-disney.html>

Depending on the grade level of students, they can read the whole article or it can be subdivided into sections of about six to 10 paragraphs for small groups to focus on more closely. Have them:

- Summarize highlights of his career as noted in the first part of the obituary
- Explain how he came to the U.S. and the challenges he faced: Chinese Exclusion Act, being a “Paper Son”; being detained at Angel Island and separated from his father.
- Identify key points in his life and explain how it affected him (schooling and early work, marriage, working for and then being fired over a strike at Disney, World War II, “retirement” ...)



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### ACTIVITIES:

Show the CBS news clip from 2017 (six minutes long) and lead the class in discussion to fill in any gaps from what they have already gleaned from the obituary.

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/artist-tyrus-wongs-remarkable-life/>

### Assessment:

Have students create a tribute to Tyrus Wong's life. He received many accolades for his work, but most came late in his life. The tribute can come in various forms: a short speech for an awards ceremony; a poem or a song; a piece of student art that highlights or captures a specific aspect of his life or work.

### RESOURCES

Julie Leung and Chris Sasaki, Paper Son, Teaching Books, Cooperative Children's Book Center, Univ. of Wisconsin. (Ages 5-9)

[https://school.teachingbooks.net/annotations.cgi?id=63963#cid\\_1](https://school.teachingbooks.net/annotations.cgi?id=63963#cid_1)

California Museum: Site contains an excellent activity for elementary school students

<https://californiamuseum.org/>

"Deer on Cliff" Now Dig This! Art in Black Los Angeles, 1960-1980 Digital Archive. Los Angeles: Hammer Museum, 2016.

<https://hammer.ucla.edu/now-dig-this/art/deer-on-cliff>

Margalit Fox, New York Times Obituary, Dec. 30, 2016

<https://www.nytimes.com/2016/12/30/movies/tyrus-wong-dies-bambi-disney.html>

CBS News: Artist Tyrus Wong's Remarkable Life, Jan. 28, 2017

<https://www.cbsnews.com/news/artist-tyrus-wongs-remarkable-life/>



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