Summary of the story

In ancient China Mulan is a young woman who wants to bring honor to her family. The only way for a young woman to do this is to marry a good husband, but Mulan does not feel ready or suited for marriage.

When the Huns invade China, the Emperor orders one man from every family to join the army and protect the country. Afraid that her father is too old and sick to fight, Mulan cuts her hair, takes her father’s armor, and leaves home in the middle of the night to take his place. It is strictly forbidden for a young woman to do this and she risks death if she is discovered. A small dragon, Mushu, goes with Mulan to protect her.

When Mulan arrives at the army camp, she acts like a man and calls herself “Ping.” With all the other new recruits, “Ping” works hard for their leader, Captain Shang, to become real soldiers and soon they are ready to fight.

Meanwhile, Shan-Yu and his army of Huns attack a village in the mountains where the main Chinese army are waiting and kill everybody there. Captain Shang, “Ping,” and the other soldiers discover the village and realize that they are now the only army division that can fight the Huns.

Soon the Huns attack Mulan’s division. “Ping” saves her comrades by causing an avalanche, but she is injured in the battle by Shan-Yu. Her true identity is then discovered and she is left alone in dishonor while the rest of her division go to the Emperor’s City to celebrate the victory.

Mulan discovers that some Huns survived the avalanche and they are going to attack the Emperor. Mulan rides to the Emperor’s city, where she finally persuades her comrades of the danger. With their help, she saves the Emperor from the Huns. Afterwards, the Emperor thanks her for saving him and for saving China.

When she returns home, her father cares much more that his daughter is home safely than about the great honor she has brought to the family.

Background information

Mulan is the 36th Disney Animated Classic. The movie was released in 1998.

The movie was inspired the traditional Chinese Ballad of Hua Mulan, which tells the story of a young Chinese woman who disguises herself as a man to take her aging father’s place in the army.

The movie was nominated for an Academy Award® for the Best Original Score.

Did you know … ?

Mulan means “magnolia blossom” in Chinese.
The characters

Mulan is a young woman who wants to bring honor to her family. She lives with her parents and grandmother.

Fa Zhou is Mulan’s father. He fought in the Emperor’s army years ago.

Mushu is a little dragon. He wants to help and protect Mulan.

Chi Fu works for the Emperor of China.

Captain Shang is a leader of the Emperor’s army.

Yao, Chien-Po, and Ling are new soldiers in the Emperor’s army.

The Emperor is the Chinese leader. He lives in a palace in the Emperor’s city.

Shan-Yu is the leader of the Hun army.

Key words

(see page 5 of these Teacher’s Notes for the Key words in context)

ancestor (n)  
armor (n)  
army (n)  
arrows (n)  
avenue (n)  
cannon (n)  
camp (n)  
cannon (n)  
column (n)  
dragon (n)  
emperor (n)  
explode (v)  
fireworks (n)  
honor (n)  
pole (n)  
rope (n)  
safe (adj)  
soldier (n)  
temple (n)  
weight (n)

Topics and themes

Reversing gender roles Mulan is expected to bring honor to her family by finding a good husband. Instead, she wins honor by pretending to be a man, and through her own personal bravery and determination. What do the students think about the fixed gender roles in ancient China? Are the roles of men and women more flexible in modern times? (See also Activity 1 on page 3 of these Teacher’s Notes.)

Honor The concept of “honor” was very important in ancient China. Ask the students to explain how Mulan is expected to win honor for herself and her family, and how she actually wins it in the end. Is honor still important in modern times? How can people win honor today? How can they lose it?

Bravery Mulan is brave in defeating the Huns, but she is also brave in going against her family’s expectations. Ask the students what different forms bravery can take. Can the students tell you some other examples of bravery in stories or in real life?

History: China The story of Mulan is set in ancient China probably around the 4th century. Students could find out more about this time in Chinese history.

Geography: China Do the students know where China is? Ask them to find the country on a world map or globe. What is the capital city of China? What countries have borders with China? (See also Activity 2 on page 3 of these Teacher’s Notes.)

Chinese culture What do the students know about Chinese culture? What foods come from China? What sports and pastimes are popular there? When is the Chinese New Year? How is it celebrated? (See also Activity 2 on page 3 of these Teacher’s Notes.)

Ancestors In the story, the ancestors still have influence over the lives of their living family members. What do the students think about this? Do they know anything about their own ancestors?

Family At the end of the story, Mulan’s father realizes that family ties are more important than winning honor, or society’s expectations. What do the students think about this? Do they think that family loyalty is more important than anything else?

Pride Mulan’s father is too proud to admit that he is too old and sick to fight in the army. Mulan realizes that part of the reason she wanted to fight was to feel proud of herself. Ask the students to say when they felt proud of an achievement. Can they think of any other examples in movies or stories where someone felt too proud to admit something?
Class Activities (After Reading)

Here are some activities to do with your class after reading Mulan.

1. Act like a man / woman
   • Ask the students to say who in the story had to act like someone of the opposite gender. (Mulan as a male soldier. Yao, Chien-Po, and Ling when they pretend to be palace women.)
   • Divide the class into small groups. Ask the girls to pretend to be male soldiers. Ask the boys to pretend to be palace women. Encourage them to speak in English within their groups and when interacting with other groups.
   • Ask the students how it felt to act like someone of the opposite gender. Was it easy or difficult? Are men and women so different in their behavior?

2. China factbook
   **Materials:** map of the world, around 10 photographs of China; small sheets of construction paper; hole punch; ribbon or string; small sheets of paper; colored pencils / pens; scissors; glue
   • Before the session, research some facts about China and print out around 10 color photographs (landmarks such as the Great Wall of China, big cities, people, food, animals, the Chinese flag, traditional clothes, transportation, Chinese writing, etc.). Also find a map of the world to bring to class.
   • Show the map of the world to the children. Can any students find China on the map?
   • Explain that Mulan is set in China. What do students already know about China?
   • Show the students the pictures of China you downloaded. Talk about the landmarks, big cities, food, clothes, language, etc. Write some of the key vocabulary in English on the board.
   • Give the materials to the students. They each make a simple booklet by folding some sheets of construction paper in half, hole-punching the sheets, and tying ribbon or string through the holes.
   • They decorate the front cover, draw and color pictures, and stick them into their booklets.
   • They label their pictures with some sentences in English.

3. Scratchboard fireworks picture
   **Materials:** a piece of thick paper or card per student; colored crayons in all colors; black paint; dishwashing soap; paint brushes; a tool for scratching (e.g. nails or bent paperclips)
   • Before the session make your own scratchboard fireworks picture:
     – Take a piece of thick paper or card and use different colored crayons to cover it quite thickly. (There should be different strong areas or blocks of color all over the card / paper.)
     – Mix a little dishwashing soap into some black paint. Paint a layer of black over the colorful pattern.
     – When the paint has dried, scratch long fine lines coming out from central points into the surface to reveal the colors beneath and to look like exploding fireworks against the night sky.
   • Give a piece of thick paper or card to each student. Place crayons, paint (with dishwashing soap added), brushes and scratching tools on each table.
   • Show the students your scratchboard firework picture. Explain to them that they are going to make a similar picture inspired by the fireworks display at the end of the story.
   • The students make their scratchboards following the method that you used to make the sample picture above. Encourage the students to speak in English about what they are doing.
   • Display the finished scratchboard paintings in the classroom.
4. Mulan flickbook

**Materials:** sheets of paper cut into 10cm x 10cm squares; pencils; colored pens; a heavy-duty stapler

- Before the session make your own Mulan flickbook:
  - Take around 20 squares of paper and draw a simple line-drawing of Mulan on the first square of paper. Color it if you wish.
  - On the next square draw the same picture but with a slight difference (her arm slightly higher, for example).
  - Continue on the other squares of paper, drawing the “frames” of this simple animation until the book is complete.
  - Staple the pieces of paper along the left-hand side to make a book.

- Show the students your book and flick the pages so they can see Mulan “moving.”

- Explain how to make the flickbook. Tell the students to decide what they’d like Mulan to do in their animation (simple things like wave a fan, jump, lift a sword, etc.).

- Give the materials to the students.

- The students complete their own flickbook drawings. Offer help and suggestions where needed.

- Staple each book as you did with your own and let the students enjoy flicking their own and other students’ books. They should describe the animations they see in English.
Key words

**ancestor** ....... The wind carried her words into the temple where the Fa family’s ancestors lay. (p. 10)

**armor** .......... She ran quickly to the room where her father kept his sword and armor. (p. 8)

**army** .......... “The Emperor has ordered one man from every family to fight in his army.” (p. 5)

**arrow** .......... He shot an arrow into the top of a tall pole. (p. 15)

**avalanche** ..... It was an avalanche, and it was impossible for the Huns to escape it. (p. 24)

**camp** .......... “Be at the army camp tomorrow!” Chi Fu shouted after him. (p. 6)

**cannon** .......... He taught them to shoot arrows and use the army’s cannons. (p. 16)

**column** .......... They used their belts to climb up the palace’s big stone columns. (p. 31)

**dragon** .......... She sat under the Great Stone Dragon outside and cried in the rain. (p. 7)

**emperor** ........ His name was Chi Fu and he worked for the Emperor of China. (p. 5)

**explode** .......... The fireworks exploded across the sky in a thousand colors. (p. 35)

**fireworks** ....... Later there was going to be a fireworks show. (p. 29)

**honor** .......... Mulan loved her family and she wanted to bring honor to them. (p. 3)

**pole** ............ It was impossible for Yao to climb the pole. (p. 15)

**rope** ............ Outside the window there was a long rope down to the ground. (p. 33)

**safe** ............. “Ancestors, please hear me,” she said quietly. “Keep Mulan safe.” (p. 10)

**soldier** .......... With her short hair and her father’s armor, Mulan looked just like a young soldier. (p. 8)

**sword** .......... She took down the sharp sword and cut off her long, dark hair. (p. 8)

**temple** .......... Now the family ancestors in the temple could not laugh at him. (p. 38)

**weight** .......... He gave two heavy, round weights to Yao. (p. 15)
While-Reading activities

Activity 1 (pages 3–6)
Circle the right words.

1 Mulan wanted to bring **money** / **honor** to her family.
2 “A wife must be quiet, **brave** / **polite**, and pleasant,” said Mulan.
3 Fa Zhou did not want Mulan to **worry** / **speak** about the future.
4 Fa Zhou was thinking about Mulan when he talked about the **horses** / **small flower**.
5 One **man** / **woman** from every family had to fight in the army.
6 Chi Fu **agreed** / **did not agree** with Mulan that her father must not fight.

Activity 2 (pages 7–10)
Write **T** (True) or **F** (False).

1 Fa Zhou thought that it was an honor to fight in the army.  
2 Mulan cut her hair with her father’s sword.  
3 Mulan took her father’s horse when she went to join the army.  
4 Fa Zhou wanted to go after Mulan and bring her home.  
5 The First Ancestor’s name was Mushu.  
6 Mushu’s job was to wake up the ancestors.

**
Activity 3 (pages 11–15)

Check ✓ the right answer.

1. Who did the ancestors want to keep Mulan safe?
   a. Mushu □
   b. the Great Stone Dragon □
   c. Fa Zhou □

2. What did Mulan do before she went into the army camp?
   a. She practiced being a man. □
   b. She talked to the ancestors. □
   c. She went home. □

3. How did Mulan say hello to a soldier?
   a. She smiled at him. □
   b. She told Mushu to say hello. □
   c. She hit him. □

4. What happened next?
   a. Many of the other soldiers started to fight. □
   b. The soldiers said hello. □
   c. Captain Shang joined the fight. □

5. What did the soldiers have to do?
   a. Say sorry. □
   b. Clean the whole camp. □
   c. Say thank you to Ping. □

6. When will the soldiers be ready to fight in the army?
   a. When one of them climbs the pole and gets the arrow. □
   b. When one of them lifts the two weights. □
   c. When one of them shoots an arrow into a pole. □
Activity 4 (pages 16–20)

Use the words in the box to complete the sentences.

brave different heavy long nervous proud

1. A good soldier must be strong, fast, and ________________.
2. Shang taught the soldiers to fight with ________________ sticks.
3. Mulan climbed the pole with the two ________________ weights.
4. Mulan felt ________________ when three other soldiers jumped into the lake.
5. Shan-Yu did not want to take a ________________ path into the mountains.
6. Mulan felt ________________ to be a real soldier.

Activity 5 (pages 21–26)

Put the sentences into the correct order.

a. An avalanche covered the Huns.  
   b. The doctor told Shang that Mulan was a woman.  
   c. The Huns attacked Shang and his soldiers.  
   d. Shang decided to follow the Huns to the Emperor’s city.  
   e. Mulan saved Shang from the path of the avalanche.  
   f. Mulan shot the cannon at the top of the mountain above the Huns.  
   g. The Huns attacked the village and killed everyone there.  
   h. Mulan felt a terrible pain in her stomach.
Activity 6 (pages 27–31)

Copy each sentence under the correct picture.

a. Mulan tried to tell Shang about the Huns, but he did not listen.
b. Mulan saw that Shan-Yu and some of his men were still alive.
c. Mulan and her friends climbed the palace’s stone columns.
d. Shang left and Mulan was left alone in the snow.
e. The Huns attacked Shang and the Emperor.
### Activity 7 (pages 32–38)

Write the correct name in each space.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Shang</td>
<td>Mulan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. ____________ told Shang to get the Emperor.
2. ____________ ordered the Emperor to fall to his knees.
3. ____________ fought bravely with Shan-Yu.
4. ____________ shot a big rocket at Shan-Yu.
5. ____________ wanted Mulan to work at the palace.
6. ____________ told Mulan, “You are the greatest gift of all.”
7. ____________ looked from the temple at Shang and Mulan in the garden.
After-Reading activities

Activity 1
Draw a picture in each box.

sword armor arrow
cannon dragon firework
Activity 2

Match the descriptions to the names. Draw lines.

1. She takes her father’s sword and armor.  a. Shan-Yu
2. He orders Fa Zhou to join the army.  b. Chi Fu
3. He goes with Mulan to keep her safe.  c. Fa Zhou
4. He worries about his daughter.  d. Mulan
5. He shows the new soldiers how to fight.  e. Mushu
6. He wants to attack the Emperor.  f. Shang

Activity 3

Who said it? Write the names.

Chi Fu   Fa Zhou   Mulan   Mushu   Shan-Yu   Shang

1. “I am the greatest … the strongest …”
2. “You must kill her!”
3. “It is an honor to fight for my country and my family.”
5. “Fall to your knees, old man!”
6. “I can never be a perfect wife.”

Activity 4

Write T (True) or F (False).

1. All Chinese men had to join the Emperor’s army to fight the Huns.  ☐
2. Mulan ran away from home to join the army.  ☐
3. Mushu brought Mulan back home.  ☐
4. Mulan saved Shang’s life in the avalanche.  ☐
5. The Emperor was the first to discover Mulan’s secret.  ☐
6. The Emperor gave Mulan the sword of Shan-Yu.  ☐
7. Shang could not forget Mulan.  ☐
Answer Key

In the back of the Reader

Before You Read
1 Students’ own answers
2 a army  b cannon  c soldier  d camp  e armor

After You Read
1 The correct order is: c, f, h, b, a, e, d, g
2 a She joins the army to save her father’s life / because her father is too old and too sick to fight.
   b Because the army will kill her if her secret is discovered.
   c He wants to protect her / keep her safe.
   d Because Mulan is really a girl / to save the honor of the Emperor’s army.
   e Because Mulan saved his life he can’t take her life.
   f He thanks her for saving China.
   g He could not forget Mulan.
3 Students’ own answers

In these Teacher’s Notes

While-Reading activities

Activity 1
1 honor  2 polite  3 worry  4 small flower  5 man  6 did not agree

Activity 2
1 T  2 T  3 F  4 F  5 F  6 T

Activity 3
1 b  2 a  3 c  4 a  5 b  6 a

Activity 4
1 brave  2 long  3 heavy  4 nervous  5 different  6 proud

Activity 5
The correct order is: g, d, c, f, a, e, h, b

Activity 6
1 d  2 b  3 a  4 e  5 c

Activity 7
1 Mulan  2 Shan-Yu  3 Shang  4 Mushu  5 the Emperor  6 Fa Zhou  7 the First Ancestor

After-Reading activities

Activity 2
1 d  2 b  3 e  4 c  5 f  6 a

Activity 3
1 Mushu  2 Chi Fu  3 Fa Zhou  4 Shang  5 Shan-Yu  6 Mulan

Activity 4
1 F  2 T  3 F  4 T  5 F  6 T  7 T