PAPERSON

THE INSPIRING STORY OF TYRUS WONG, IMMIGRANT AND ARTIST
About the Book
Before he became an artist named Tyrus Wong, he was a boy named Wong Geng Yeo. He traveled across a vast ocean from China to America with only a suitcase and a few papers. Not papers for drawing—which he loved to do—but immigration papers to start a new life. Once in America, Tyrus seized every opportunity to make art, eventually enrolling at an art institute in Los Angeles. Working as a janitor at night, he twirled his mop like a paintbrush in his hands. Eventually, he was given the opportunity of a lifetime—and using sparse brushstrokes and soft watercolors, Tyrus created the iconic backgrounds of Disney’s Bambi.

About the Author
Julie Leung is the author of the Mice of the Round Table series, including A Tail of Camelot, Voyage to Avalon, and Merlin’s Last Quest. Julie worked as a marketing director at Del Rey Books. Visit her on the web at jleungbooks.com and follow her on Twitter at @jleungbooks.

About the Illustrator
Chris Sasaki is a former character designer and illustrator for Pixar Animation Studios, where he has designed characters for Monsters University and Inside Out. His work has been featured at Gallery Nucleus, Cartoon Brew, in the New York Times, and in the Society of Illustrators Annual. He lives in Oakland, California. Visit him on the web at csasaki.com.

Angel Island Poetry
At Angel Island, the immigration center where Tyrus was separated from his father, many immigrants wrote poetry on the walls, much of it can still be seen. Share with your students some of the history of Angel Island and Chinese immigrants found at the public radio website listed below. Talk about the concept of “paper sons” and how Tyrus Wong must have felt during his time on Angel Island. Watch and discuss the first three and a half minutes of the Discovering Angel Island video. Then have each student write an “I Wish” poem from Tyrus’s point of view, using the reproducible provided.

Link for the video:
youtube.com/watch?v=f_EQY-0ThOM

Filling in the Blank Paper
Tyrus’s father had a good education in China, but as a Chinese immigrant, he could only get jobs as “a servant, a laundryman, a waiter,” often far from Tyrus. “Still, his father believed life in America could be like a blank paper,” ask students to think about the disadvantages Tyrus faced as an immigrant and about how he filled the “blank paper” during his life in America. Have each student research another immigrant in American history who, like Tyrus, contributed to their new country despite hardships. Students should write a paper about Tyrus and the other immigrant, the difficulties they faced, and their accomplishments. Have students share their findings with the class.

Kites as Art
Tyrus Wong used his artistic skills not only on the job but also to make the world around him more beautiful. One way he did this was by making kites. Share some photographs of his kites made from the Malibu Arts & Culture exhibit about them. Then have students talk about the elements of the kite that make them work—art, such as color, shape, line, and texture. Ask them how kite making is related to science and why people like to fly kites. Then have each student draw and color a design for a kite inspired by those of Tyrus Wong, using the reproducible provided.

The Kites of Tyrus Wong Exhibit:
malibuartsandculture.org/265/The-Kites-of-Tyrus-Wong-Exhibit

Kites as Art
In the space below, draw and color a kite based on the ones Tyrus Wong created.

In the space below, draw and color a kite based on the ones Tyrus Wong created. Use the following questions to help plan your kite:

1. What will the subject be (for example, an animal, a bird, a dragon)?
2. What colors will you use? What designs or patterns?
3. Where will the strings attach? What will the tail look like?
4. How is your kite inspired by Tyrus Wong? What do you like about his kites?