

Comprehension and Discussion Activities for the Movie

Mulan

This module has been designed to accompany the film *Mulan* (1998).

Mulan is based on the 4th century Chinese legend of a young girl named Fa Mulan. When China is invaded, Mulan's father is asked to go to war. Mulan fears that if he becomes a soldier he will be killed. To save him and to prove herself to her family and community, she disguises herself as a man to become a soldier instead of her father. *Mulan* tells the story of her journey into war, which challenges society's expectations of women from her community.

The module consists of teacher's notes and three handouts that you can copy and give to your students. If you don't have access to a copier, you can write these on the board.



You might like to do many of these activities in students' first language. It is important that they understand the ideas behind the story, and this is easier in their own language.

1. Before You Watch

1.1: Background

Exercise A: Ask students what they know about ancient China. Write their ideas on the board.

Exercise B: Give copies of **Worksheet 1: Background Information** to your students.

Students read the background information, and look at the characters in the movie. What do they think will happen in the movie? Write their predictions on the board.

1.2: Useful Vocabulary

Here are some useful words and phrases to help students understand the movie. Write these on the board and get students to look them up in their dictionaries, or explain the meanings.

ancestor matchmaker honour Emperor guardian avalanche
imperial counsellor troops cannon concubine fireworks

2. While You Watch

2.1: The Huns Invade China 00.00 – 18.15

Give copies of **Worksheet 2: While You Watch** to your students, or write the questions for 2.1 on the board. Play the film to 18 minutes and 15 seconds.

Answers to 2.1

Exercise A: 1. False 2. False 3. True 4. True 5. True 6. False

Exercise B: 1. The Emperor to his General
2. The Matchmaker to Mulan
3. Mulan's father to Mulan

2.2: In the Army 18.15 – 41.00

Play the film to 41 minutes. If students don't have **Worksheet 2**, write the exercises on the board before you play the film.

Answers to 2.2

Exercise A: 1. 3, 2, 1, 5, 4

Exercise B: 1. Because if the army find out that Mulan is a woman, they will kill her.
2. To ring the gong and wake up the ancestors and guardians.
3. The General is Captain Li's father.
4. By climbing the pole and getting the arrow.

2.3: Fighting the Huns 41.00 – 1.1.40

Play the film to 1 hour 1 minute and 40 seconds. If students don't have **Worksheet 2**, write the exercises on the board before you play the film.

Answers to 2.3

Exercise A:

Chi Fu, the Emperor's counsellor, tells Captain Li Shang his troops are not ready to fight. However, Mushu and Cri-kee write a fake letter to Chi Fu. The letter orders the troops to go to the front lines. When they arrive there, they see that the Huns have destroyed the imperial army. Li Shang's troops follow the Huns. Mulan destroys the Hun army by firing a cannon at the mountain. This causes an avalanche.

Exercise B:

1. F. He decides to attack the Imperial Army.
2. F. They find out Mulan is female when she gets an injury.
3. T
4. T
5. F. Li Shang, Chen Po, Yao and Ling go to rescue her.
6. F. He doesn't kill her because she saved his life.

2.4: The Imperial City 1.1.40 – end

Play the film to the end. If students don't have **Worksheet 2**, write the exercises on the board before you play the film.

Answers to 2.4

Exercise A: 1, 4, 6, 2, 5, 7, 3

- Exercise B:
1. Mushu is talking to Mulan. They have just decided to go home.
 2. Mulan is talking to Captain Li Shang. She is trying to persuade him that the Emperor is in danger.
 3. The Emperor is talking to Mulan. He has just given her his medal and Shan Yu's sword.

3. After You Watch

3.1: What happened?

Give copies of **Worksheet 3: After You Watch** to your students. Students identify what was happening in each picture.

Answers to 3.1

- a. Yao and Ling are disguised as concubines. They are preparing to enter the palace and rescue the Emperor.
- b. The First Ancestor is angry with Mushu.
- c. The Emperor has just given Mulan the sword of Shan Yu, and told her to take it back to her family.
- d. The Hun army is about to attack Captain Li Shang's troops.
- e. Mulan is talking to her father. She is afraid she has dishonoured her family.
- f. Mulan is cutting her hair. She is about to leave home and join the army, disguised as a man.

3.2: Gender Roles

Exercise A: In Mulan's community, how are women expected to behave? In groups students list the skills and characteristics of an ideal woman in ancient China, according to the movie.

Exercise B: In Mulan's community, how are men expected to behave? Groups make lists similar to that in Exercise A.

Exercise C: Are these expectations similar for women and men in your community? What is similar and what is different? Discuss as a class.

Exercise D: Do you think these expectations are fair? Should men and women be treated the same, or is it good to treat them differently in some ways? Discuss as a class.

Answers to 3.2

Exercise A: Some answers could be:

- *by getting married and being a good wife*
- *to have a tiny waist*
- *to be obedient*
- *to have children (especially sons)*
- *to "hold their tongues in a man's presence" = to be quiet when men are around, to keep their thoughts to themselves*

Exercise B: Some answers could be:

- *to be brave and strong*
- *to go to war and protect their people*

Worksheet 1: Background Information

Was Mulan a real person?

Mulan might have been a real person (there certainly have been real-life women warriors in Chinese history), but nobody knows exactly which region she came from and when she lived.

The Great Wall

The Great Wall of China was built in the 2nd century BCE. The first emperor of China ordered the Wall's construction. Unfortunately, the Great Wall cost a lot and it took huge numbers of forced laborers to build it, so it was a very unpopular project.

Huns

The Huns were a group of tribes who managed to conquer much of Europe and Asia between the 4th and 8th centuries. Through a combination of advanced weaponry, high mobility and effective battlefield tactics, they achieved many military victories.

Characters in the Film

Fa Mulan is a young woman who prefers riding her horse to a more traditional female role.



Li Shang is a handsome and brave soldier. He is the son of **General Li**.



Fa Zhou is Mulan's father. He was injured fighting for the Emperor in the past.



Fa Li, Mulan's mother, and **Grandmother Fa** want Mulan to find a good husband.



Chen Po, Yao and Ling are soldiers. They become Mulan's friends.



The Emperor of China is a wise, kind man.



Mushu is a small fire dragon. He is one of Mulan's family guardians.

Shan Yu is the leader of the Huns. The Huns want to conquer China.



Chi Fu is the Emperor's counsellor.

Cri-kee is a cricket, who brings good luck.

Worksheet 2: While You Watch

2.1: The Huns Invade China 00.00 – 18.15 minutes

Exercise A: True or false? If false, write a true sentence.

1. The Chinese soldiers stop the Hun army from invading China.
2. Mulan's parents don't want her to get married.
3. The matchmaker is angry with Mulan.
4. Mulan's parents are disappointed that she did badly at the matchmaker's.
5. Each family has to provide one man to serve in the army.
6. Mulan is proud that her father is going to serve the Emperor.

Exercise B: Who said these things? Who were they talking to?

1. 'A single grain of rice can tip the scale. One man can make the difference between victory and defeat.'
2. 'You may look like a bride, but you will never bring your family honour.'
3. 'I know my place. It is time you learned yours.'

2.2: In the Army 18.15 – 41.00

Exercise A: Put these events in order.

1. Mushu accidentally destroys the Great Stone Dragon.
2. The First Ancestor tells Mushu to wake the guardians.
3. Mulan's parents discover she has gone.
4. Mulan joins the army.
5. Mushu goes to help Mulan.

Exercise B: Answer these questions.

1. Why doesn't Mulan's father go after her and bring her back?
2. What is Mushu's main job?
3. What is the relationship between Captain Li and the General?
4. How does Mulan impress Captain Li?

2.3: Fighting the Huns 41.00 – 1.1.40

Exercise A: Complete the following paragraph with words from the box.

<i>cannon fake avalanche orders follow counsellor destroyed Mulan</i>

Chi Fu, the Emperor's _____, tells Captain Li Shang his troops are not ready to fight. However, Mushu and Cri-kee write a _____ letter to Chi Fu. The letter _____ the troops to go to the front lines. When they arrive there, they see that the Huns have _____ the imperial army. Li Shang's troops _____ the Huns. _____ destroys the Hun army by firing a _____ at the rocks. This causes an _____.

Exercise B: True or false? If false, write a correct sentence.

1. Shan Yu decides to avoid the Imperial Army.
2. The soldiers find out that Mulan is female when they are swimming.
3. Mulan likes Captain Li Shang.
4. Captain Li Shang's father is dead.
5. After Mulan has fired the cannon, Chi Fu goes to rescue her.
6. Captain Li Shang doesn't kill Mulan because she gives him money.

2.4: The Imperial City 1.1.40 – end

Exercise A: Put these events in order.

1. Mulan goes to the Imperial City to save the Emperor
2. Ling, Yao and Chen Po disguise themselves as concubines.
3. Li Shang visits Mulan and her family.
4. Nobody listens to Mulan.
5. Mulan defeats Shan Yu and saves the Emperor.
6. The Huns take the Emperor prisoner.
7. The Emperor honours Mulan.

Exercise B: Who said these things? Who were they talking to? What was happening at the time?

1. 'Don't you worry. Things will work out. We started this thing together, and that's how we'll finish it.'
2. 'You said you trust Ping? Why is Mulan any different?'
3. 'Take this, so your family will know what you have done for me.'

Worksheet 3: After You Watch



Plot Summary

Fa Mulan is getting ready to meet the matchmaker – the woman who arranges who she can marry. If she gets a good husband, she will bring honor to her family. Unfortunately, Mulan accidentally sets fire to the matchmaker, who gets very angry.

The Huns, led by the evil Shan Yu, invade China. Each family must send one man to be a soldier. Fa Zhou, although old and injured, is the only man in his family. Mulan decides to go instead. She disguises herself as a man and joins the army. She knows that if others discover that she is a woman, she will be killed.

Mulan's First Ancestor wants to send an ancestor to protect and help her. He asks Mushu, a small dragon, to awaken the "Great Stone Dragon." Unfortunately, Mushu accidentally destroys this Dragon. He decides to go protect Mulan himself.

Mulan joins the army and trains to become a soldier with a group led by Captain Li Shang, the son of General Li. The men finish their training, but Chi Fu, the Emperor's counsellor, refuses to let them go to battle. He believes that they are not prepared to go to war. Mushu writes a fake letter from the General, however, ordering Li Shang to take his men to battle. When they arrive at the battlefield, they find that General Li and his men have been killed.

Captain Li Shang and his troops are attacked by the Hun army. As the Huns come down the mountain, Mulan takes the cannon and fires the rocket at a mountain of snow, which causes an avalanche. The Huns are buried under the snow. Mulan rescues Captain Li from being buried by the snow, but is injured. Li Shang calls a doctor as Mulan faints. The doctor discovers that she is a woman. Although the punishment for her actions is death, Captain Li decides not to kill her, as she saved his life the day before. He expels her from the army, and she decides to return home, saddened by her failure.

As she prepares to leave, she discovers that the Huns are still alive. She goes to the Palace and tries to warn Captain Li's army as they are celebrating their believed victory, but they don't listen to her. The Huns kidnap the Emperor.

Captain Li Shang and his troops try to follow the Huns into the palace but are unsuccessful. Mulan thinks of a plan. She and some of the soldiers disguise themselves as concubines and sneak into the palace. The Huns are distracted by the "women," and Mulan and her friends save the Emperor. Captain Li and Mulan are still in the palace, fighting Shan Yu. Shan Yu is about to kill Captain Li when Mulan again saves him.

The Emperor bows to Mulan, an extremely high honor. The Emperor then offers Mulan a job in the palace, but Mulan politely refuses the offer because she wants to return to her family.

Mulan's family is pleased to see her come back. Captain Shang also arrives to visit Mulan. She invites him to stay for dinner.