Discussion Guide: *Gold Mountain*

1. Why does Ling Fan feel that disguising herself as a boy and taking a railroad job in America is her best chance of earning the money to free her father? What are the alternatives and why does she reject them?

2. Ling Fan, Tan Din, and Wong Wei each have personal reasons for wanting to earn as much money in America as possible. What are the similarities and differences in how they pursue this goal?

3. What are some of the ways that Chinese workers on the railroad are treated differently than white workers?

4. How do Ah Sook and Chin Lin Sou differ as leaders? Why does Ling Fan respect Chin Lin Sou more?

5. Why do you think Ling Fan gives Wong Wei the benefit of the doubt and goes out of her way to help him so many times? Have you ever had a "friend" who behaved in ways that remind you of Wong Wei?

6. Tan Din tells Ling Fan that there is "so much more to this country than the work on this railroad." Do you agree or disagree? In what ways do Ling Fan's experiences on the railroad reflect broader American values and power structures? What aspects of America has Ling Fan not seen as a railroad worker?

7. Ling Fan realizes she hasn't given much thought to the impact the railroad's construction has had on Indigenous nations. Have you ever realized you were benefiting in some way from a system or a situation that harms other people? What did you do?

8. Jonathan O'Brien takes it upon himself to undermine the railroad. Do you agree or disagree with his justification for his actions? Do you think a different approach would've been more effective? Why or why not?

9. Chin Lin Sou believes that Chinese railroad workers are "making the first tiny dents into a country that is still so new, people still don't know its true contours. Surely we can find a place in a country still trying to decide what it is." In what ways has this prediction come true? In what ways has it not?

10. How has Ling Fan changed since she began her sojourn? In what ways does she remain the person she has always been?