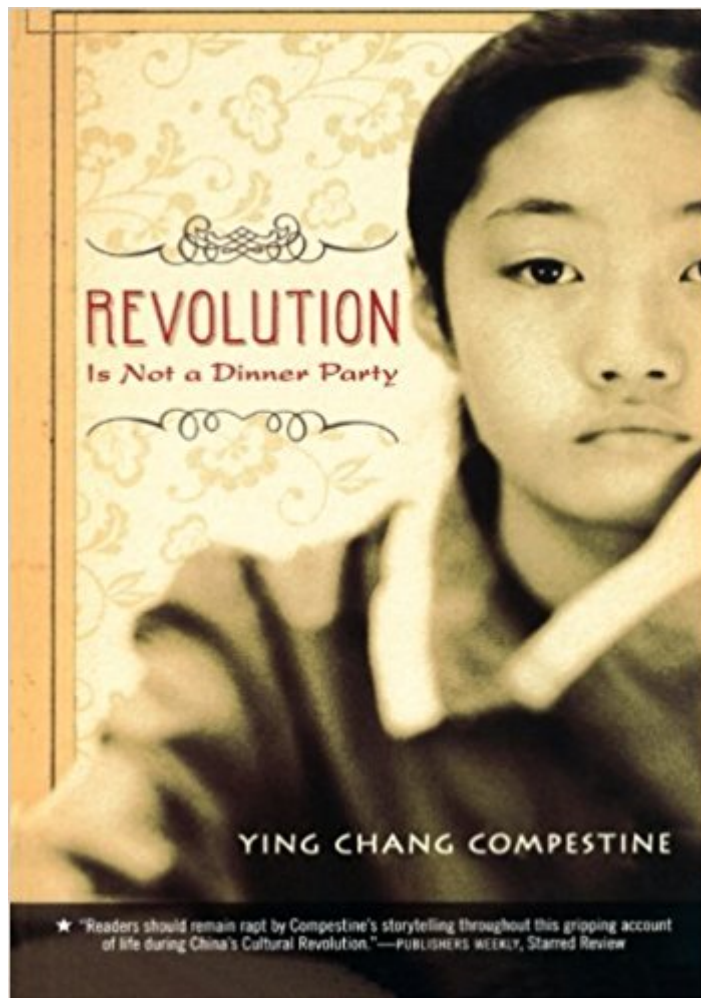




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Revolution Is Not A Dinner Party



Synopsis

The summer of 1972, before I turned nine, danger began knocking on doors all over China. Nine-year-old Ling has a very happy life. Her parents are both dedicated surgeons at the best hospital in Wuhan, and her father teaches her English as they listen to Voice of America every evening on the radio. But when one of Mao's political officers moves into a room in their apartment, Ling begins to witness the gradual disintegration of her world. In an atmosphere of increasing mistrust and hatred, Ling fears for the safety of her neighbors, and soon, for herself and her family. For the next four years, Ling will suffer more horrors than many people face in a lifetime. Will she be able to grow and blossom under the oppressive rule of Chairman Mao? Or will fighting to survive destroy her spirit? Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party is a 2008 Bank Street - Best Children's Book of the Year.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 740L (What's this?)

Paperback: 272 pages

Publisher: Square Fish; Reprint edition (September 29, 2009)

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Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 46 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #144,222 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #41 in Books > Children's

Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Violence #135 in Books >

Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Asia #479 in Books >

Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Values

Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 5 - 9

Customer Reviews

Starred Review. Picture book and cookbook author Compestone (The Real Story of Stone Soup) turns to 1972 China as the setting for her first YA novel. Eight-year-old Ling, the spunky daughter of two doctors, lives in Wuhan, China; dreamy and idealistic, she often describes her world in metaphor (about her neighbor, Ling notes, Mrs. Wong was fragrant and warm like a red peony,

which always welcomed visitors). But the lives of Ling and her family are disrupted when Comrade Li, an officer of the Communist Party, moves into their apartment. Difficulties mount as friends and neighbors disappear, Ling's father is arrested and she endures vicious tormenting at school because of her bourgeois background (At times I wished my family was poor and my parents worked on a vegetable farm... so I could have friends. But if my parents worked on a farm, who would treat their patients?). Although her father has been jailed, her family starved and their books burned, Ling fights to keep her long hair, a symbol of dignity and individualism to her, though her classmates see it as emblematic of Ling's privilege. Ling survives on wit, hope and courage until the death of Chairman Mao, after which she and her mother have a joyful reunion with Ling's father. Readers should remain rapt by Compestine's storytelling throughout this gripping account of life during China's Cultural Revolution. Ages 10-up. (Aug.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Known for her picture books, Compestine grew up in China, during the Cultural Revolution, and her autobiographical novel tells the history from the viewpoint of the young, protected, privileged child who loses her innocence when political brutality invades her home. For nine-year-old Ling, things always seem clear. She's close to her loving father, who teaches her English and about freedom in America, but she feels distant from her tense, angry mother. During the course of four years, repression increases, and eventually the Red Guards arrest Dad as a class enemy. Ling feels the repression in other ways, too; she stands up to class bullies who try to cut off her "bourgeois" hair. Always she is sustained by memories of her brave father and his dream of freedom. In clipped lyrical sentences, Compestine's first-person narrative sets a naïve child's struggle to survive against betrayal and courage in one neighborhood and also the political panorama of spies and slogans. Rochman, Hazel --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

I have been looking for books for our literature curriculum written by and based on Asian cultures. Unfortunately, it isn't terribly easy to find something that both fits those categories and is a worthwhile book to read in class with middle school students. Oh, there are books out there, but so many of them are written by American or European authors about Asian cultures. I was happy to find *Revolution is not a Dinner Party* by Ying Chang Compestine, a story about a young girl growing up in China at the end of Mao Ze-dong's Cultural Revolution. Ling is nine years old and her biggest dream is to see the United States. Her father teaches her English in secret, shows her pictures of

the Golden Gate Bridge, and they sing English songs and read English books. But something is happening in China that threatens her family's way of life. Both her parents are doctors- her father of Western medicine and her mother of traditional Chinese medicine. During the Chinese Cultural Revolution, if you weren't working class, you were considered extravagant and wasteful, and Ling's parents fell into that category. When a Maoist officer moves into their apartment building, everyone in the building is careful because he has the power to make them all disappear if they are thought to be an anti-revolutionist against Mao. When Ling's neighbor, another doctor, disappears, Ling begins to slowly understand the severity of the situation. Then the neighbor's wife is taken and their son moves in with Ling's family. When he is found trying to escape to Hong Kong, he turns on Ling's family and turns them in to save himself. Ling's father is arrested and Ling and her mother must survive on their own with ration dollars becoming fewer and fewer and food in the black market more and more unreliable. Trying to protect her mother, Ling takes over getting food for the family and tries to stay out of trouble. Unfortunately, she has too much of her father in her and can't bear to swallow her pride when confronted by bullies at school and their Maoist parents. Will Ling's fate be any better than the millions of others who were murdered or disappeared during the Cultural Revolution? This is a fast, small book that really blew me away. It reminded me a lot of Marjane Satrapi's graphic memoir *Persepolis* in that the main character is a young girl dealing with very mature, life threatening situations she doesn't completely understand. I feel like this perspective is important for students because they can see how the events that unfold are wrong through an innocent child's eyes. It is also interesting to see students critically analyze the naivete of the main character, especially since they are children themselves! It is important for children to relate to a culture they don't know much about, so having a common thread helps make the book more meaningful to them. I have read some reviews on this book that criticize it for being "historical fiction" rather than a memoir, but I am not sure what is wrong with this. The author grew up in China during the Revolution and based the characters and events off her own experiences. Despite being fiction, the story is steeped in the author's life, making this just as powerful a story even if it isn't a memoir. I still think it is a valuable tool for exposing students to a culture they might not have been exposed to. This is a perfect book for middle reader students, although the subject matter is serious and it could be used for an older, low-skilled student who likes historical fiction. I imagine this book being appropriate for grades 5-8 for the most part. At the end there is an explanation from the author of how the events in the book relate to her own life. There is also a brief explanation of the historical background, which might be better if read with students first, before the story. This would be a valuable book for any student to read!

I don't know how historically accurate this book is. But, having lived in China for a year, I know that much of what she describes did indeed happen during the Cultural Revolution. The book shows how easily people can turn on one another given the right situation. I found the book compelling, dramatic, and interesting. I loathe how dictators can totally destroy an entire culture and get people to follow blindly along. This book shows how devastating the Cultural Revolution was....I recommend this book to show what can happen when a strong leader becomes too powerful.

my son loved this book, was very interesting! I grew up in a communist country...

Quick read. It makes you want to know more about the aftermath of it all. It's heartwarming and purely emotional.

This book is amazing I want them to make a 2nd one too it has great historical event best book ever

The combination of a very likable character caught in a very stressful time made this true story hard to put down. Reading about how Ling navigates the journey from privileged child to outcast provides a deep and personal account of what it is like to live through a political upheaval.

I didn't want to put this book down! Amazing and at times, heartbreaking story!

Excellent supplement for all reading levels to our 8th grade China unit.

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