



# Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party

By Ying Chang Compestine

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*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?and end her life?

*Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party* is a 2008 Bank Street - Best Children's Book of the Year.

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## Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party By Ying Chang Compestine Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #112432 in Books
- Brand: Square Fish
- Published on: 2009-09-29
- Released on: 2009-09-29
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.69" h x .74" w x 5.21" l, .45 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 272 pages

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## Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

*Starred Review.* Picture book and cookbook author Compestine (*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.)

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From [Booklist](#)

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

Review

“\* Readers should remain rapt by Compestine's storytelling throughout this gripping account of life during China's Cultural Revolution.” *?Publishers Weekly, Starred Review*

“Laced in all the right places with humor, fury, fear, resolve and eventual relief, her childlike voice is carefully maintained over the sweep of four years--candid and credible, naïve and nuanced.” *?San Francisco Chronicle*

“This child's-eye view of the Chinese Cultural Revolution is ultimately a tale of survival; lyrical yet gripping, accessible and memorable, it's based on the author's experiences. Certain to inspire discussion about freedom and justice.” *?Kirkus Reviews*

“Authentic. . . . This semi-autobiographical novel comes alive with the author's rich descriptions of the sights and smells of China at the beginning of the Cultural Revolution.” *?School Library Journal*

“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.”  
*?Booklist*

“Compestine does a good job giving young YA readers a realistic picture of what that period of history meant to individuals caught in the political nightmare. Certainly those with a Chinese heritage will find the story important to understand their own family history.” *?KLIATT*

“Beautifully descriptive phrases allow this autobiographical fiction to come alive with the colors of the clothing that are lovingly sewn for Ling, the aromatic preparations of the food that is cooked, and the genuine appreciation of school, work, and valued neighbors. . . . The simple narrative is [refreshing] . . . in its youthful disbelief of the hardships that have befallen them in a changing political situation.” *?Voice of Youth Advocates*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Jim Weigel:**

As people who live in the particular modest era should be up-date about what going on or details even knowledge to make these keep up with the era which can be always change and make progress. Some of you maybe may update themselves by examining books. It is a good choice for you personally but the problems coming to you is you don't know which you should start with. This Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party is our recommendation to help you keep up with the world. Why, because book serves what you want and want in this era.

#### **Thomas Smith:**

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#### **Nathan Weaver:**

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