

Red Scarf Girl

Whole-Novel Discussion and Activities

BURNING ISSUES

1. Ji-li's family is discriminated against because her grandfather belonged to a group that is considered to be an enemy of the Revolution. Why do you think that some people are willing to discriminate against others for things they did not do or cannot control?
2. Ji-li and her family are being persecuted for reasons beyond their control. What other stories, TV shows, or movies can you think of in which the hero or heroine faces punishment for things he or she cannot control? Give an example of how one of these heroes or heroines deal with the situation.
3. People under suspicion by the Cultural Revolution's leaders are told that they will receive more lenient treatment if they confess. This assurance leads some people to confess to crimes they did not commit. Would you be willing to confess to a crime you did not commit if confessing meant that you might be treated less severely? Give at least two reasons for your answer.
4. When Ji-li moves to the United States, she has to start all over again—she even has to learn a new language. Why do you think some people are willing to leave everything they know in order to get a fresh start?
5. Jiang ends her story by stating that she hopes that *Red Scarf Girl* will help her mission to improve understanding between the United States and China. If you had written this book, would you have included such an explicit statement of your purpose? Why or why not?

CHOICES ACTIVITIES

1. **LITERATURE Editor for a Day.** Choose a theme from the book—conflicting loyalties or individuality—and select a portfolio of writings with the same theme. Remember to consider other genres—such as poems, plays, stories, and even music lyrics—for your portfolio. Prepare a presentation for your class that discusses how your selections reflect the common theme. (*Critical Writing*)
2. **DRAMA Rewrite History.** Write the script for a historical skit that takes place during the Cultural Revolution. Select the subject from the book or from your research into the history of the Revolution. Choose the setting, make a list of your characters, and write the dialogue. Keep the action and the character list short so that you and a few classmates can perform the skit for your class. (*Creative Writing*)

Red Scarf Girl *continued*

- 3. SOCIAL STUDIES More on Mao.** Chairman Mao Ze-dong is an important figure in *Red Scarf Girl*, although he never personally makes an appearance in the book. Research exactly who Mao Ze-dong was and why he was so important to the Chinese people. (Note that Mao Ze-dong is sometimes spelled “Mao Zedong” or “Mao Tse-tung.”) As you research, keep these questions in mind, and find answers for them:
- How did Mao first become interested in politics?
 - Where did the Chinese Communist Party get its start?
 - What was Mao’s relationship with Chiang Kai-shek?
 - What methods did Mao use to place himself and his party in control?
 - What prompted the Cultural Revolution?
 - What is the prevailing view today of Mao and his methods?
- 4. GEOGRAPHY Where in the World Is . . . ?** Ji-li Jiang and her family lived in Shanghai, a large Chinese city. With a small group of classmates, use an atlas and other reference sources to find out about Shanghai. Where is it in China, and how long has it been there? Has its name been the same over the years? What are Shanghai’s main physical features? What industries are there? What changes has Shanghai gone through, particularly during the years of the Cultural Revolution? Locate photographs or other visual images of the city. Prepare a compare/contrast poster that shows Shanghai at the time of the Cultural Revolution and present-day Shanghai. Present your findings to the class.
- 5. ART Worth a Thousand Words.** With a partner, make a storyboard that illustrates the book. Divide a large sheet of paper into six equal sections. Together, choose what you think are the six most important events in the book. In each section of the paper, draw an illustration of one event. Take turns drawing in each section. Write a one-sentence caption that tells what is going on in each section. Share your storyboard with your classmates.