



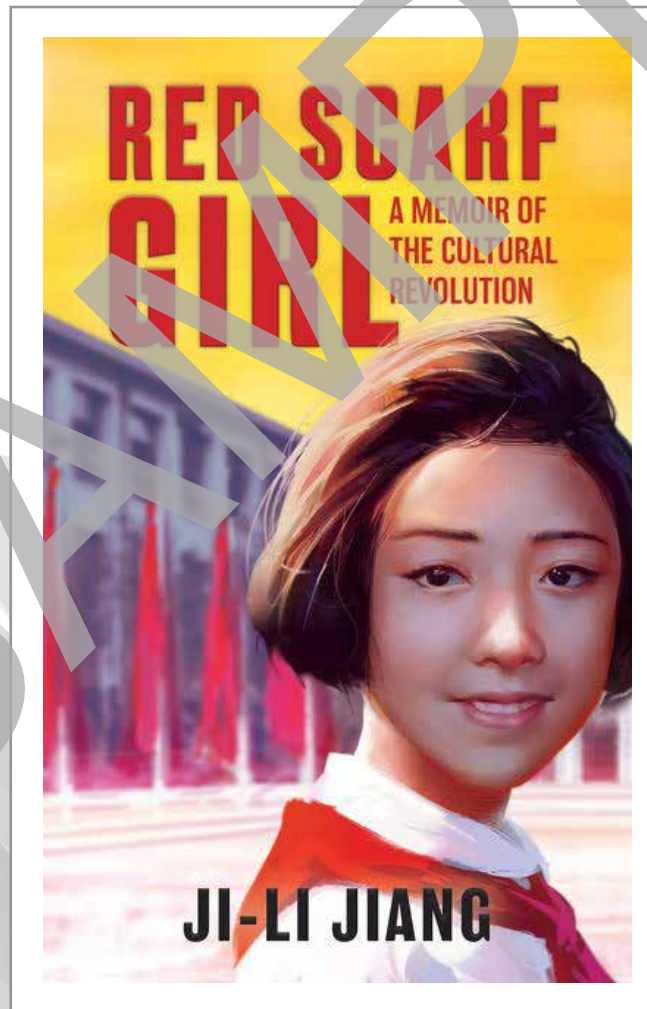
TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

Red Scarf Girl

Ji-Li Jiang



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

Red Scarf Girl

Ji-Li Jiang

TEACHER GUIDE

NOTE:

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Research, comparison, problem solving, decision making, recalling, questioning, interpreting evidence, forming opinions, point of view

Comprehension

Cause/effect, classifying, details, generalizing, inferencing, predicting, summarizing, main idea, evaluating

Listening/Speaking

Discussion, oral report, dramatization, presentation

Vocabulary

Context clues, synonyms, antonyms, definitions

Writing

Report, essay, encyclopedia entry, biographical sketch, postcard description, letter, creative writing, note-taking and listing, newspaper journalism, radio script

Literary Elements

Characterization, identifying main events, foreshadowing, simile, metaphor, theme, descriptive language

Across the Curriculum

Art—posters, collage, scrapbook page; Literature—literary review; Science—agriculture, behavioral science, industry, medical science, technology, weather; Health—exercise; Social Studies—culture, geography, history, maps, politics, sociology; Women’s Issues—customs, education

Genre: memoir

Setting: China, primarily Shanghai, during the Cultural Revolution, 1966–1968

Point of View: first person

Themes: tradition vs. revolution, thinking for yourself, rejection of old for new, fear, mob mentality, coping with change, dealing with pressure, family relationships, courage, friendship, human cruelty, abuse of power, educational reform, making decisions, privacy

Conflict: person vs. society, person vs. self

Style: narrative

Tone: earnest; rising intensity

Date of First Publication: 1997

Summary

Red Scarf Girl presents vivid recollections of the Cultural Revolution in China from 1966 to 1968. Ji-li Jiang is a brilliant 12-year-old girl and a model Communist when the revolution starts. Her life is perfect until she wants to become a Liberation Army dancer. Ji-li learns then that her family cannot pass the political background investigation. Her long-deceased grandfather was a landlord, the proletariat's worst enemy. Her tainted class status thrusts Ji-li into a conflict between her trust in Maoist goals and the brutal conduct of the revolution. Ji-li is engulfed in a rising tide of psychological torment and tough choices. Educational reforms devalue her. A family friend is beaten bloody. Her innocent father is detained. A best friend's grandmother commits suicide rather than face the Red Guards. The Jiang home is searched, and possessions are seized. Finally Ji-li is asked to testify against her father and renounce her family or be treated as the proletariat's enemy. The revolutionary process by then has shown her what her choice must be. The Cultural Revolution no longer matters to her. Her family is too precious to betray.

About the Author

Ji-li Jiang (pronounced Gee-lee) was born in Shanghai, China, on February 3, 1954. Her mother once acted onstage, and her father worked at the Children's Art Theater. Jiang wanted to act, but her politically incorrect family background—described in *Red Scarf Girl*—continued to haunt her. She was denied admission to the Shanghai Drama Institute and had to settle for teaching. When she was allowed to leave China in 1984, Jiang attended the University of Hawaii. She was inspired to write *Red Scarf Girl* from a child's viewpoint when she received a copy of *The Diary of Anne Frank*. After graduation in 1987, Jiang worked as a corporate operations analyst and a budgeting director before founding her own company, East West Exchange. Her first book was the award-winning *Red Scarf Girl*. It was named a Best Book of 1997 by *Publishers Weekly* and received several honors from the American Library Association, including Notable Children's Book and 1997 Best Book for Young Adults.

Understanding Values

Values represent people's beliefs about what is important, good, or worthwhile. For example, most families value spending time together.

Directions: Think about the following characters from the novel and the values they exhibit. What do they value? What beliefs do they have about what is important, good, or worthwhile? On the chart below, list each character's three most important values, from most important to least. Be prepared to share your lists during a class discussion.

Ji-li

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Dad

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Grandma

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Values

Song Po-po

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Du Hai

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Six-Fingers

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

After you have finished the chart and participated in the class discussion, think about which character seems to have values most like your own. Write a paragraph that explains why you chose this character.

“Prologue” and “The Liberation Army Dancer,” pp. 1–18

Ji-li Jiang introduces herself as a happy, brilliant 12-year-old when the Cultural Revolution begins in 1966. She embraces the Communist Party. A Liberation Army soldier tests Ji-li's flexibility and chooses her to audition for dance training. Ji-li wants to audition, but her father says she can't because the family will fail the political background investigation. Until then, Ji-li thinks her family is perfect—Dad, Mom, Grandma, brother Ji-yong, and sister Ji-yun. Ji-li begins to doubt her beautiful dreams for the future.

Vocabulary

excel (1)
Communist (1)
cultural (1)
exemplary (3)
martial (5)
audition (6)
status (9)
salon (16)
dowry (16)
calligraphy (16)

Discussion Questions

1. How does Ji-li feel about Chairman Mao and the Communist Party? What evidence supports your answer? What does her enthusiasm for the Young Pioneers tell you about Ji-li? *(Ji-li thoroughly embraces her life in New China. She wears a red scarf, an emblem of the Young Pioneers who are destined to become members of the Communist Party. She never doubts the kindness of the Party and refers to Chairman Mao as “our beloved leader.” She is thrilled to see a Liberation Army soldier, described as one of the heroes who helped Chairman Mao liberate China. She wants to become a Liberation Army dancer. pp. 1, 3, 4, 6, 7)*
2. What reasons does Ji-li have for believing she can audition successfully for dance training? What does Dad say about her chances? How does Dad feel about forbidding Ji-li to try out for the dance team? *(Ji-li has been a martial arts student since second grade. She passed the Liberation Army soldier's flexibility test. She is an Outstanding Student, an Excellent Young Pioneer, and her school's student chairman. Dad says that talent and political activities won't matter because the family cannot pass a political background investigation. It is better not to audition than for everyone to know the family fails politically. Students should note that Ji-li sees pain in Dad's eyes and sorrow on his face. pp. 7–10)*
3. Consider the missed audition as a turning point in Ji-li's life. How does she change? Did you ever have to give up something you wanted very much? How did you feel about it? *(Ji-li feels like the luckiest girl in the world until the audition. She feels happy, loved, respected, and proud because she could always excel. After Dad forbids her to audition, Ji-li changes. She withdraws from classmates and family. For the first time, she doubts the fulfillment of her beautiful dreams for the future. Answers will vary. pp. 1, 13, 17–18)*
4. How many people occupy the Jiang home and who are they? How does Ji-li compare her home to those of other Shanghai families? How do homes in your neighborhood compare? *(6; The Jiang home includes Dad, Mom, Grandma, Ji-li, her brother Ji-yong, and her sister Ji-yun. They live in one room on the top floor of a big building. There is a small kitchen on the landing outside the room. The room is ten times as big as many homes of Ji-li's classmates, and a hundred times brighter. The Jiangs have a private bathroom, almost as large as some families' entire homes. Many have no bathroom, and very few have a full-size one they don't have to share with other families. Answers will vary. pp. 13–15)*
5. Why does Ji-li find Grandma amazing? What do Ji-li's remarks tell you about education for girls in early 20th-century China? *(Grandma graduated from high school and helped found a primary school, where she taught and became vice-principal. Very few girls went to school when Grandma was young. pp. 13–14)*

6. What is “Jiang’s salon”? What does it contribute to Ji-li’s life? Is there anything like it in your life? (*Jiang’s salon means Saturday-night gatherings held for colleagues from the theater where Dad is an actor. The children greet them as “Aunt” and “Uncle.” Ji-li considers the gatherings wonderful parties. Uncle Zhu helps her with calligraphy. Uncle Fan makes the discussions more interesting to hear. The children are so fascinated with the conversation that they don’t want to go to bed. Answers will vary. pp. 16–17*)
7. **Prediction:** Discuss the slogan on page 1 of the novel, especially these words: “...father and mother are dear, but dearer still is Chairman Mao.” Will Ji-li’s trust in Chairman Mao create a conflict between Ji-li and her parents?
8. **Prediction:** Will Ji-li begin to have trouble realizing her ambitions?

Supplementary Activities

1. Predictions: Begin a Prediction Chart (see page 7 of this guide) and add to the chart as you read.
2. Characterization: Begin a Characterization web (see page 8 of this guide) for Ji-li and add to it as you read. Recognize personal traits of her character.
3. Foreshadowing: Locate examples of foreshadowing from pages 1–18 such as “...I achieved and grew every day until that fateful year, 1966. That year the Cultural Revolution started” (p. 1). Ji-li cannot be a Liberation Army dancer because her family will not pass the political background investigation (p. 9).
4. Metaphors and Similes: Begin a list of metaphors and similes and add to the list as you read. Discuss Ji-li’s comparison of herself to Little White (p. 17).
5. Politics: Begin a list of revolutionary slogans and sayings of Chairman Mao. Example: “Study hard and advance every day” (p. 3). Add to the list as you read. Write a sentence explaining the significance of each slogan to the story.
6. Research: In pairs, research the Communist Party in China and its rise to power. Present your findings in an oral report.

“Destroy the Four Olds!” and “Writing *Da-Zi-Bao*,” pp. 19–51

An Yi and the young Jiangs happily view the breaking of the Great Prosperity Market sign. The adult Jiangs don’t seem happy about destroying the “fourolds.” Ji-li and Ji-yun see teenagers harass a man for wearing “fourolds.” Du Hai and Yang Fan accuse An Yi and Ji-li of liking “fourolds” words and bourgeois ways. Students make *da-zi-bao* to criticize teachers. Ji-li goes with classmates to threaten Aunt Xi-wen for being bourgeois. Ji-li is upset by a *da-zi-bao* that suggests she has a relationship with a male teacher.

Discussion Questions

1. What is Grandpa Hong’s bookstall like? Have you read any of the titles Ji-li found at the bookstall? Do you think the bookstall contains books that are poison to youth? (*It’s like a bookshop or a library. Children can rent and read the books at the bookstall. Answers will vary. pp. 19–20, 48*)
2. What is the purpose of Chairman Mao’s campaign to “Destroy the Four Olds”? Does this seem like a good plan? Why, or why not? How would you describe the “Four News”?