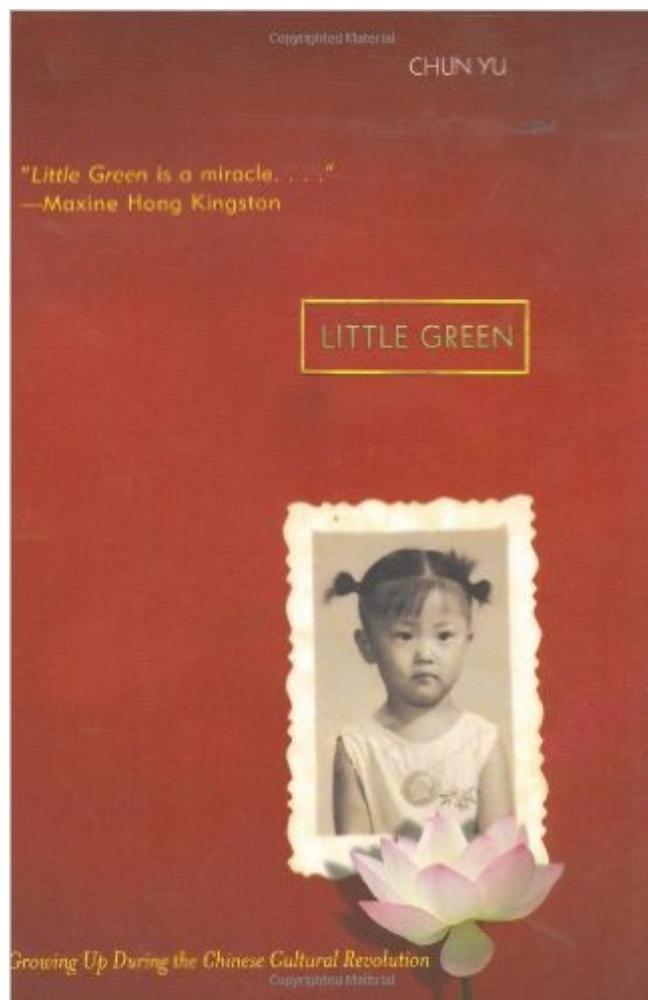


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# Little Green: Growing Up During The Chinese Cultural Revolution



## **Synopsis**

I was born in a small city near the East Sea, when the Great Cultural Revolution began. My name is Little Green, my country Zhong Guo, the Middle Kingdom. When I was ten years old, our leader had died and the revolution ended. And this is how I remember it. When Chun Yu was born in a small city in China, she was born into a country in revolution. The streets were filled with roaming Red Guards, the walls were covered with slogans, and reeducation meetings were held in all workplaces. Every family faced danger and humiliation, even the youngest children. Shortly after Chun's birth, her beloved father was sent to a peasant village in the countryside to be reeducated in the ways of Chairman Mao. Chun and her brother stayed behind with their mother, who taught in a country middle school where Mao's Little Red Book was a part of every child's education. Chun Yu's young life was witness to a country in turmoil, struggle, and revolution -- the only life she knew. This first-person memoir of a child's view of the Chinese Cultural Revolution is a stunning account of a country in crisis and a testimony to the spirit of the individual -- no matter how young or how innocent.

## **Book Information**

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Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 starsÂ  See all reviewsÂ  (17 customer reviews)

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Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 5 - 9

## **Customer Reviews**

It's one thing to read the history of China's Cultural Revolution, quite another to see it through the

eyes of a little girl who lived through it. In "Little Green," Chun Yu, born the year the Cultural Revolution began (1966), chronicles the first ten years of her life, from the revolution's inception to its ending with Mao's death. What's startling about "Little Green" - the title comes from Yu's childhood nickname - is not just the vivid clarity of her memories but the beauty of her words. Written in verse, the book has the crystalline luminosity of Peter Matthiessen's prose and David Whyte's poetry. On one page Yu will speak eloquently of the gift of a blue silk ribbon; on another she'll share her pain - without being overly sentimental - at having her family's garden torn out after the state decided that private gardens were capitalistic. "After a whole spring and early summer of planting and watering, the tomatoes were just starting to ripen under the green leaves. Some melon flowers were still blooming on the fence. The biggest melons had grown to the size of my little fists. The sunflowers along the roadsides were only a couple of feet tall, with tender yellow flowers following the sun around. Nainai [Grandma] sighed. 'It hurts the conscience to destroy these crops. What crime did the plants commit?'" In this slender volume, Yu shows how her family is affected by the Cultural Revolution. Her mother, a teacher, becomes a target of the anti-intellectual movement; her father is sent for several years to a reeducation camp. In "We Saw Baba Only Twice a Year," Yu writes: "Baba lived in May Seventh Cadre School, where he was being reeducated. The cadre school could only be reached by boat, slowly moved by a long bamboo stick. It took a whole day each way. We saw Baba only twice a year, in the summertime and Chinese New Year. After not seeing him for a long time, it felt so strange to call him 'Baba' again." The cover quote, from Maxine Hong Kingston, calls "Little Green" a "miracle" which initially sounded a bit over the top. But as I read the book and learned Yu's story, I didn't find this to be an exaggeration. For someone who learned English as an adult and spent much of her time in this country studying science, "Little Green," written with elegant simplicity in English, truly is miraculous. I found "Little Green" so enjoyable that I began rationing it, reading just a few pages a night, to make it last. Thankfully, this is the first book of a trilogy, and Yu says she's already finished the second volume. I'll eagerly await its publication. Until then, I'll return often to Little Green's clear, bright lines.

I really enjoyed reading Chun Yu's "Little Green." It gives a unique perspective of the Chinese cultural revolution from a young child's view, but at the same time explores very mature themes of cultural and personal identity. As a student of history, this book gave me a new understanding of the crazy times of the cultural revolution -- while creating a sense of beauty and wonder through the free verse structure of the book. I'd highly recommend it.

Little Green is a wondrous work of art, like an ancient Chinese painting brought forward into modern time. Where a Western painter might fill up the entire canvas with paint, traditional Chinese painters used sparse brush strokes to vividly illuminate the very essence of their subject. So does Chun Yu use her poetry to bring to life the world of a ten year old child in the Chinese Cultural Revolution. Like the unfolding of a Chinese scroll, to read her verse is to journey across the landscape of that time. We see her family, other children, revolutionaries and "counter-revolutionaries," political struggle meetings, war trainings, cold streams, warm meals, forbidden ancient poetry, and the sound of snowflakes falling past her ear. Little Green is suitable for all ages, both children and adults. From her readings in the San Francisco bay area, I also learned that this book is the first in a coming trilogy. I give it five stars.

This book is superb, and like nothing I've ever read. It's memoir, it's history, it's poetry, and it's like entering the heart and mind of a young girl in China's Cultural Revolution. It's funny, moving, heartbreaking even, and so very beautiful I've kept my copy with me everywhere I go. I think it's a mistake putting this in any age group. It's truly timeless and yes, some young readers will be delighted to read this, but so will adults of every age. If you're looking for a special gift for someone, this book is just about perfect. What more can I say? This is pure writing at its very best, and "Little Green" will be around forever.

Chun Yu's "Little Green" is a great corrective to much of the highly effective propaganda that emanated from China during Mao Tse-Dong's Cultural Revolution. Chun Yu has achieved this with a unique voice and with a unique literary form that is unusually poetic and that is not in itself a propaganda piece. I believe that "Little Green" should be classified as suitable for all ages. While children will undoubtedly enjoy and learn from "Little Green," I think it ought more properly to be included with literature also intended for adults.

It is a easy reading book and I would recommend to parents who have kids want to know the childhood of a parent. My kid started to ask what looked like when I was a kid. Beyond my childhood stories, I bought this book for him to read. He really enjoyed it.

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