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The Diary of Ma Yan : The Struggles and Hopes of a Chinese Schoolgirl

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Yan, Ma and Haski, Pierre. *The Diary of Ma Yan : The Struggles and Hopes of a Chinese Schoolgirl*. HarperCollins, 2005. ISBN 0060764961. \$15.99. 176 pp.

Reviewer: Gillian Streeter

Reading Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Informational books;

Subject: Girls--China--Diaries--Juvenile literature; Books--reviews;

This book consists of the plans and insights of a China schoolgirl and the explanatory inserts of the photographers and journalists who created the book. Ma Yan and her family live in Ningxia, a part of China so drought ridden that it has been declared uninhabitable by the Chinese government. Uninhabitable or not, three million people live there and the only escape is through education. The extreme pressure Ma Yan feels to succeed in school as well as her family's poverty are painfully recorded on every page.

Pierre Haski, a French photographer and journalist, compiled the Ma Yan's journals given to him by her mother as he visited the Ningxia region. The journal entries span 2000 and 2001, with a slight gap as some of the entries were destroyed. The words are simple but thoughtful, honest and open. Part of the proceeds from this book are sent to The Association for the Children of Ningxia, an organization formed as a result of the book's publication in France. This book is a wonderful insight into the difficulties in other parts of the world, and a bold advocate for education.