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Girl Under a Red Moon

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Book Review

Girl Under a Red Moon

Author

Da Chen

Reviewer

Jaimee Pease

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Rating

Outstanding

Level

Intermediate, Young Adult

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Pages

188

Year

2019

ISBN

9781338263862

Publisher

Scholastic Focus

Life is hard for all the people of Yellow Stone village in the remote Fujian province of China, where Mao Zedong's cultural revolution is on the rise. Thirteen-year-old Sisi wants to join the Red Guard and prove her loyalty to China, but she can't escape the notoriety of her family's bourgeois past. Shunned by her principal and rejected by her peers, Sisi must flee before the Red Guard comes for her. Together with her youngest brother Da, Sisi seeks sanctuary at a school in a neighboring town protected by kind, old Principal Jin. Life there proves to have its own challenges. As Sisi and Da work hard and make friends, the revolution escalates and the recently appointed Commissar Lai brings danger for everyone.

Girl Under a Red Moon portrays the chaos and upheaval that Mao's cultural revolution brought upon China's most vulnerable citizens. Told from the perspective of eight-year-old Da, the narrative weaves the sentimental musings of a young child with jarring experiences of violence and fear. Parts of the story are told through recollection, giving the narration a dream-like quality. His recollections show the influence of Mao's cultural revolution on the population, turning children against teachers, neighbors, and friends. Soft black and white illustrations of the rural landscape at the beginning of the story are contrasted sharply with old photos and propaganda at the end, echoing the conflict of the revolution in Da's childhood.

*Contains moderate violence and moderate sexual content.