The Lost Daughters of China Study Guide

The Lost Daughters of China by Karin Evans

BOOKRAGS

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Introduction

Karin Evans's *The Lost Daughters of China: Abandoned Girls, Their Journey to America, and the Search for a Missing Past* (New York, 2000) is an account of the experiences of Evans and her husband as they adopt a baby girl from an orphanage in China. The book interweaves Evans's personal story with information about Chinese culture and society. Of particular importance is the Chinese population policy that began in the 1980s, which restricted families to one child. This policy was established because China's leaders believed that the country, with one billion people, was overpopulated and would only be able to achieve economic prosperity with rigidly enforced population control. The result was that thousands of babies, almost all of them girls, were abandoned by their parents and had to be placed in orphanages. Many were adopted by American parents who, like Evans an her husband, had to go through a long bureaucratic process with many delays before they could connect with their new daughters in China.

In addition to providing a moving account of how two American parents bonded with a Chinese baby and brought her back to live in San Francisco, *The Lost Daughters of China* also raises many issues that Evans discusses in an accessible and interesting way: the challenges of raising a baby who has a different ethnicity than its parents; the place of women in Chinese society, both in history and today; and the origins and consequences of China's one-child policy.

Author Biography

Karin Evans is a journalist and author whose work has appeared in the *Los Angeles Times, Newsweek, San Francisco Examiner, Boston Globe*, and other publications. She was a founding editor of *Rocky Mountain Magazine*, was an editor at *Outside* magazine, and was a senior editor for the *San Francisco Examiner* Sunday magazine and for *Health* magazine. Evans spent two years working at the Newsweek Hong Kong bureau, where she became familiar with Chinese culture. She has commented that she felt drawn to that part of the world and felt at home there.

Evans lives in Berkeley, California, with her husband, attorney Mark Humbert, and their adopted daughter, Kelly Xiao Yu. The couple adopted Kelly in 1997 from Jiangmen, Guangdong, China. Evans's book *The Lost Daughters of China: Abandoned Girls, Their Journey to America, and the Search for a Missing Past* (2000) tells of her experience adopting a Chinese baby. Evans serves on the board of directors of the Half the Sky Foundation, which exists to help the orphaned children of China.

Plot Summary

Introduction

In the introduction to *The Lost Daughters of China*, Evans presents an overview of the topic of the large number of orphaned Chinese babies that have been adopted by American families. In 1997, Evans herself adopted her daughter, Kelly Xiao Yu, from an orphanage in southern China.

Chapter 1

Evans describes the long bureaucratic process that she and her husband Mark went through after they first decided in January 1996 to adopt a Chinese baby. They were both in their forties and had no children. Chinese baby girls were available for adoption because many were abandoned by their parents and ended up in state-run homes. The process of adopting began at an international adoption agency in San Francisco, where Evans and her husband were informed that the total cost would be around fifteen thousand dollars and that the process would take about a year. In reality, it took nearly two years.

The couple had to apply to the Immigration and Naturalization Service for permission to adopt a foreign baby. This was the first step in what Evans describes as a sea of paperwork, confusing regulations, and bureaucratic delays. Finally, the U.S.- China liaison, a man she calls Max (which is apparently not his real name), calls to inform Karin and Mark they have a baby waiting for them in China. The baby is a year old and healthy.

Chapter 2

Evans describes the trip to China, which she and her husband make in company with several dozen other American adults who are also adopting Chinese babies. They arrive in Guangzhou, on the Pearl River Delta in southern China, eighty miles from Hong Kong. Evans describes the atmosphere of the city, which was hosting a business fair at the time, and notes the presence of twenty McDonalds restaurants. Guangzhou is rapidly growing, and many construction projects are underway. Finally, along with the other American adopters, Evans and her husband receive their baby, whose name is Jiang Xiao Yu. She is healthy and appears to have been well cared for. The couple rechristens her Kelly Xiao Yu, after Evans's father, who died shortly before the adoption took place.

Chapter 3

Evans discusses the circumstances under which baby Chinese girls are abandoned and some of the cultural history of women in China. All that Evans knew about her new daughter was that she had been found abandoned at a local market when she was about three months old. Her birth parents and place of birth are unknown. This is typical of the Chinese baby girls put up for adoption. Evans points out that Chinese culture has a long history of discrimination in favor of male children. Girls are frequently regarded as just an extra mouth to feed.

Chapter 4

This chapter explains China's population control policy that has resulted in so many baby girls being abandoned or worse. The idea of slowing China's birthrate took root in the 1970s. China's population stood at one billion, and its leaders decided that the best way of producing economic growth was to instigate population control. The argument was that fewer people would lead to a rising standard of living and this in turn would produce political stability. In 1980, the policy became official. It was known as the one-child policy. was enforced with some brutality, including forced abortions. Given the cultural preference for male children, baby girls were often abandoned, thus giving the family a chance to produce a son. The population policy created an imbalance in Chinese society: by 1990, five of China's thirty provinces had 120 boys for every 100 girls.

Chapter 5

Evans describes the ten days she and her husband spent with Kelly in Guangzhou before they returned to the United States. They bonded with the baby immediately, and Evans could hardly recall what life had been like without her, so perfect was the match. The new family spent their time sightseeing and wandering the streets of the city. Kelly and the other babies adopted by the American group were blessed in a Buddhist ceremony in a temple. On her arrival in San Francisco, Kelly quickly learned to adapt to her new environment.

Chapter 6

Evans's thoughts turn to the many Chinese babies that are orphaned but not adopted, noting that there may be as many as one million children in institutional care in China. She also comments that children with disabilities or major health problems, as well as older children, have only a slim chance of being adopted. Evans then discusses a television documentary, *The Dying Rooms*, which paints a grim picture of abuse in China's orphanages. She examines differing opinions about whether the documentary was an accurate portrayal of conditions in China's orphanages and points out that many

problems are caused simply by poverty and lack of resources rather than intentional neglect.

Chapter 7

Evans describes the attempts of Americans who have adopted Chinese daughters to raise their children with an awareness of their Chinese heritage. Because of the large Chinese-American community in San Francisco, it is relatively easy for Evans to give Kelly some exposure to Chinese culture, and they celebrate the Chinese New Year and other occasions in the Chinese calendar. However, for people living in other parts of the country, such exposure may not be so easy. Evans describes some of the organizations that have been created to foster understanding of Chinese culture. She also explores the issue of ethnic identity and speculates about whether as they grow up the Chinese daughters will want to know more about their heritage or will regard themselves as completely American.

Chapter 8

Evans speculates about who Kelly's birth mother might have been and the circumstances that may have led her to give up her daughter. In general, few statistics exist to describe the families who abandon their babies. One study suggested that in half of all cases, the decision was made by the father; in 40 percent of cases, it was a joint decision. Only seldom did the mother make the decision on her own. The typical abandoned child was a healthy newborn girl who had one or more older sisters but no brothers.

Chapter 9

Evans considers the issue of whether it may be possible in the future for the adopted daughters from China to learn specific details about their birth families. There may, for example, be an increase in DNA testing, which could provide such information, although for that to occur the political situation in China would have to change.

Chapter 10

The author observes that as long as China's one-child policy continues, there will continue to be thousands more orphans, far more than can ever be adopted, since the pace of the adoption procedure is not likely to increase. But, she points out that the one-child policy is already being officially relaxed in some areas. Also, single children who marry other single children (as will increasingly be the case over the next decade) are allowed by the population policy to have two offspring.

Introduction

Introduction Summary

The Lost Daughters of China is an account of the personal journey of Karin Evans and her husband Mark Humbert in their quest to adopt a Chinese baby in 1997. Evans intersperses poignant anecdotes among research on the topic of abandoned female children lost in China's political and economic quagmire.

Evans begins her account by sharing the scope of the mass exodus of Chinese babies through adoption into the United States and other countries. At the time the book was written in 2000, an average of three hundred fifty babies enters the United States each month to waiting adoptive parents.

Evans explains that the majority of the babies are girls, the result of China's attempts at population control in combination with the country's predilection for male children. Evans and her husband adopted a year-old daughter, named Kelly Xiao Yu, who had been born in the Pearl River Delta of southern China.

Evans writes the book to try to explain to the world, and to her daughter, the complex circumstances surrounding her life and ultimate adoption into a completely different culture.

Introduction Analysis

As a journalist and editor, Karin Evans had spent a few years living in China and working for the Hong Kong bureau of *Newsweek* magazine. Little did she know at that time that she would return one day to adopt a child from the culture she had grown to know and love. Karin's writing style shares her account of the adoption in an almost essay like format, with personal anecdotes integrated throughout.

Journey to the East

Journey to the East Summary

Karin begins by describing the countryside of the Pearl River Delta area in southern China as viewed from the window of a bus, as she and her husband ride toward the city of Guangzhou in 1997. Karin and Mark are on the last stretch of an arduously long journey encompassing two years of paperwork and international diplomacy to reach the orphanage where they will meet their daughter.

Karin and Mark's quest for adoption begins in January 1996, when they are met with stacks of paperwork and unending questions about their personal lives to determine their ability to be good parents. The couple, in their forties, realizes that they are starting their family later than most. Earlier in her life, Karin had had a baby boy, who did not live, and her instincts to become a mother seem to be arising unbidden at this point.

Karin and Mark determine that the risks will not outweigh the possible reward, and they enter into the murky sea of international adoption. Karin's familiarity with Hong Kong plus the overabundance of orphaned Chinese girl babies directed the couple toward their decision for a Chinese infant. Karin and Mark pass their initial interview and begin the process of waiting and paying significant amounts of money along intermittent occasions of progress.

Karin notes that the current trend of adopting Chinese girls in the late 1980's corresponded with the rise in infertility of American women during the same time. This is viewed to be a positive situation for both the orphaned children and the American couples desiring children. At the time that Karin and Mark decide to adopt, there is an abundance of Chinese girl babies, although international adoptions from other countries are thriving, as well.

The adoption agency in the couple's home city, San Francisco, becomes the clearing point for all their questions and for all the examinations and interviews conducted with Karin and Mark. Karin feels that the perfunctory answers she provides as to her request to adopt can never fully explain the emotional need she has to love and guide a little person in the world.

Fortunately, Karin and Mark fit the profile of those couples able to adopt internationally by being well-educated, financially secure professionals. The average cost for adopting a Chinese baby ranges between $10,000 and $20,000, with an additional $3,000 fee going to the Chinese orphanage.

Karin and Mark decide to commit to the process and consider themselves fortunate that they have the resources to achieve their goal. In contrast, the family who will abandon the baby who will become Karin and Mark's daughter, live in extreme poverty in a

country where births are strictly monitored, and girl children considered expendable burdens.

During the time that she waits for news of the adoption approval, Karin writes letters to her daughter, who may or may not even be born yet. Karin writes, "I, too, believe that we each come with a common human heritage, and that this inheritance is every bit as full when the facts of birth are a mystery, as when they are better known. We're all intermingled at some distant point, and our capacity for love means we can all intermingle by choice. So many of the deepest ties are formed not biologically, but through longings of the heart. You, from this moment on, are a child of the heart."

It is eight months after filing their initial paperwork before Karin and Mark receive approval from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service to forward their dossier to the U.S.-China facilitator. The adoption approval now rests in the hands of this Chinese representative of the People's Republic of China, and Karin and Mark resolve to wait out another six to eight months. During this waiting period, Karin finds comfort and support from others in similar situations who post on Internet forums.

Twenty-two months after filing their initial papers, Karin and Mark receive a call from a man Karin calls "Max," informing her that she and Mark have a healthy, one-year-old daughter. Max tells Karin that the baby's name is Xiao Yu Jiang, and that they would be going to China in two weeks to pick her up.

Another phone call on that night brings sad news that Karin's father is dying from inoperable cancer. Karin flies to Phoenix to be with father, hoping that he will live long enough to see Karin's new daughter, but her father dies a few days later. In memory of her father, Kelly, who had adopted Karin, the new baby will be called Kelly Xiao Yu.

Journey to the East Analysis

The story is told in the first person narrative point of view, which means that the reader not only understands the events as told by the narrator but also understands her thoughts and emotions related to the unfolding plot. The style of writing is an informal essay type with much personal information and opinion interspersed among the facts generated from much research. Karin balances her own story and the story of hundreds of other people sharing the experience of adopting a Chinese baby with the facts of the adoption process and Chinese culture.

Karin is also able to integrate her emotions surrounding the adoption process into personal poetry and journal entries, some of which are shared in the book. There is also a poem or Chinese proverb at the heading of each chapter which indicates the content of the chapter delivered appropriately through writings of Chinese culture.

From China with Love

From China with Love Summary

Karin and Mark's trip to China is chaotic, noisy and surreal. Leaving just a few days after her father's funeral, Karin and Mark travel with several other people who had babies waiting at orphanages in the same area to which they are headed. In addition to their own clothes, the couple is instructed to bring many items for the baby, including regular and soy milk, sleepers, undershirts, two outfits and socks. It is also recommended that a transitional comfort object be included, and Karin decides on a plush Winnie the Pooh bear.

The adoptive entourage arrives in Hong Kong after a thirteen-hour flight and is whisked to a hotel, where they stay for a couple days to rest and acclimate to the changes. Max escorts the couples to a Chinese government office by bus to apply for adoption papers and encourages the soon-to-be parents to act pleasantly at all times to eliminate the possibility that they would be perceived as "difficult" Americans.

Before leaving the bus, Max gives Karin a paper with the footprints of their baby pressed on with red ink. The adoption agency requires the completion of more forms signifying their intent and their own fingerprints are pressed onto paper with red ink just as their daughter's tiny footprint had been. After the paperwork is completed, Max distributes tiny photos to the couples, and Karin and Mark get their first glimpse at their daughter.

The rest of the day is spent touring the city of Guangzhou, which is experiencing massive growth and construction. The noise of the traffic and the continuing construction reaches the 25th floor where Karin and Mark try to sleep. They wake up the next morning happy, in spite of having little sleep, because, today, they will see their daughter.

Karin and Mark board the tour bus again and are driven with the other couples to a high-rise building where the orphanage is located. After another anxiety-ridden wait, Max finally emerges from a back room and calls Karin and Mark to the front of the room, where two women rush forward and place the baby in Karin's arms.

All around them, other couples are also receiving their new babies. The atmosphere reminds Karin of some strange birthing ritual in which the lives of everyone in that room are unalterably changed.

On the bus ride back to the hotel, Karin alternately stares into the face of her sleeping child and out the window at the passing Chinese landscape, so that she will be able to tell her daughter about her birth country one day. The new parents must make one last stop at a government office to make the adoptions official, and Karin and Mark learn

nothing more about their daughter other than that she was abandoned in a market on a winter day and the estimated date of her birth.

From China with Love Analysis

The author uses the literary technique of irony when describing the baby items she must pack to take to China. All of the items including a thermos, slippers, and a plush toy all bear tags declaring that the items were "Made in China." It is ironic that the items which were shipped to the U.S. not too long ago will be returning soon to the country of origin. Karin also affectionately thinks about how her own daughter could also bear a "Made in China" tag, although this transaction is of far greater importance than the ones she had made at the retail store.

The author also draws an analogy between her baby's foot print with the lines on a map of the area when she says, "The lines on her sole looked like the rivers on a map of the Pearl River Delta." This comparison is an attempt to link the abandoned child in some way to the geography of her birth country and this is an eloquent and succinct expression.

Down the River

Down the River Summary

Karin and Mark are provided with very little information about their daughter at the point of adoption, which leads Karin to research the abandonment of female children in China. Most of the girl babies are marked by the authorities as "found forsaken," because the babies are found in fields, by the roadside, and many other places with no note or any other form of identification attached.

Rarely, there are notes attached with brief messages such as "I am heartbroken to give her up. But in China, women have no power and I have no choice. I hope someone will care for her." Sometimes, the birth mother includes a note to the child such as "In this life, in this world, I am not able to provide for you. I am giving you up so you can have a life. Good luck and be well."

Abandoning a child is against the law in China, which is why parents leave the babies in secret with no accompanying information. It is considered a benefit to the child to be abandoned rather than live in poverty, because there is always a chance that the baby will be adopted by someone who can care for her properly.

In most cases, birth dates are estimated, because the actual dates are not known. Karin's baby is healthy, well fed, and a happy child for which Karin is grateful, although she will never know the circumstances of her daughter's first year.

The preference for male children in Chinese society is actually a practical matter, which is necessary for perpetuating the family ancestry. A son assumes the fiscal responsibility of the family's property, is expected to work on the father's land, carry on the family name, ensure respect for the spirits of the ancestors, and take care of his parents in their old age.

If a woman is allowed to remain in the family, she is considered just another mouth to feed until she is old enough to live with the family of her future husband. After marriage, she must obey her husband, and if she is widowed, she must obey her son.

Down the River Analysis

Historically, China's population has always been a massive problem, and there have been times when the deaths from famine and floods have reduced the population as natural control mechanisms. For the most part, though, it has been government intervention which has implemented initiatives for control, such as limiting the number of children allowed per family.

During the Communist control of the country under Mao Zedong in 1949, women were encouraged to participate in the party politics and take greater roles in society. During

this time, women achieved more rights than ever thought possible, and female children were even deemed worthy of education. These reforms were short-lived, and the ancient rituals and restrictions came back into play. The role of the female sank once more.

The One-Child, Maybe-One-More Policy

The One-Child, Maybe-One-More Policy Summary

In this chapter, the author provides some history on China's population control methods that account for many of the abandoned female children. In addition to massive natural disasters such as floods, droughts and earthquakes, which annihilate many factions of the Chinese population, China also inflicts severe birth control programs.

As an offshoot of the disastrous Great Leap Forward program developed by Mao Zedong in the late 1950's, a great famine occurred because of crop failures and nearly 30 million people died over a three-year period, half of which were children. With the ghost of the famine still lurking in the early 1960's, China implemented a one-child policy in a massive attempt at population control.

The government's thinking was that fewer mouths to feed would mean a better opportunity for prosperity for families and China as a whole. Consequently, the government implemented state-controlled birth control initiatives where women were subjected to sterilization, enforced IUD insertion, and abortions, some even in the second and third trimesters of pregnancy.

The one-child policy precipitated the abandonment of female children because of the importance of male children. If a woman delivered a girl baby, the family faced the agonizing decision of keeping her and ruining the family's chances for long-term respect and survival, or abandoning her in the hopes that she would be found and taken to a state-operated orphanage.

In some cases, especially in rural areas, midwives kept a bucket of water or box of ashes near the bed of a woman in labor, so that a female child could be drowned or smothered immediately.

The introduction of ultrasound technology in the late 1970's was both a blessing and a curse, because women were routinely subjected to testing to insure that metal IUDs were still in place. In addition, the gender of a fetus was identified early in a woman's pregnancy, allowing for early term abortions of female fetuses. In 1990, 97.5 percent of all aborted fetuses were female.

In 1988, the government loosened its "one-child" policy and implemented a one-son or two-child" policy, which allowed couples to try to conceive a son if their first child had been a female. The issue of second daughters arose and accounted for many more abandoned female children.

According to one source, over 30 million females are missing from China's population, stemming from the 1950's onward. Amazingly, the Chinese people do not challenge the birth control initiatives, because population control is given priority over personal suffering.

The One-Child, Maybe-One-More Policy Analysis

The author provides documentation in this chapter, so that the reader may understand the scope of the population control issue in China resulting in the proliferation of so many abandoned female children. Throughout its history, China has had a huge peasant population who could not afford to provide properly for children and precedence was always given to the male children. In addition, the natural disasters took their toll and many children were lost through floods, famines, and earthquakes.

The government went through several phases of population control, until Deng Xiaoping came into power, and in 1980 initiated the one-child policy with its severe birth control measures. Ideally, a woman was to wait until she reached the age of twenty before marrying, and then she was to produce only one child.

Compliance meant state health and medical benefits as well as access to better employment. Those who resisted the new policy were subjected to enforced sterilizations, metal IUDs, and even late-term abortions. Families who were able to evade the system by hiding pregnant women soon realized that unregistered female children did not have access to health care or education.

Today, the birth control laws in China are easing, but there are still social and economic repercussions for women who keep their female children.

The Taming Power of the Small

The Taming Power of the Small Summary

During the first afternoon that Karin and Kelly spend alone, Karin is delighted with the easy way that Kelly has become comfortable with her. Karin will always remember that afternoon as she and her new daughter bonded with giggles and long looks into each other's eyes.

For the next ten days, Karin, Mark and Kelly join the other adoptive families in the group for touring and dinners. Most of the parents cannot imagine their lives before their new daughters, and the babies seem to blossom more with each day.

Max still functions as the liaison between the government offices and the new parents and shepherds them to the Chinese medical clinic, where the babies receive checkups and inoculations. He also takes them to the U.S. Consulate, where the parents are interviewed one more time before visas are issued for the babies. Max's assistants, Jeffrey, Mary and Anna become members of the extended families and support the new parents in anything from translations to stroller snafus.

Karin and Mark are pleased that Kelly is happy and healthy, and shows no signs of developmental delays which can be a problem for some disadvantaged babies. Karin reasons that Kelly's birth parents showered her with love and kept her until the last possible moment, accounting for her sweet nature and natural curiosity.

One day, the parents and babies are guided to a Buddhist temple, where the children receive blessings of happiness and safety from two monks. Karin finds a smaller temple on the grounds where a statue of Guan Yin, the Goddess of Mercy is located. Guan Yin has been the symbol of hope for Chinese mothers for centuries, known for being a Giver of Children and a women's protector.

Karin offers a prayer for her new daughter and herself at the temple of Guan Yin and says another prayer for all the lost daughters and their mothers. Karin feels overwhelmed with the feeling of Chinese reverence and culture in this place and leaves, regretfully.

On Halloween night, the babies are immersed in their first American ritual, trick-or-treating. They are dressed in costumes and taken door-to-door in the Chinese hotel to get candy from the other adoptive parents.

Before long, checkups, inoculations, and interviews are completed. Kelly receives her U.S. visa card, so that she can enter the United States as a resident alien. On their last night in China, all the adoptive parents and their daughters attend an elaborate dinner, complete with bittersweet tears.

Max and his assistants bid the parents and the babies a final farewell at the airport the next morning, and Karin is overwhelmed with gratitude for all that Max has done for them. Even now, his name is spoken with affection and reverence in their home. He is frequently called Uncle Max and, on occasion, Saint Max, for his place in their hearts.

Leaving China is a mixed blessing for Karin, who is reluctant to leave Kelly's birth home, but she is anxious to return to the U.S., where she will be certain that no one will try to take Kelly away from them. The twenty-hour trip back to San Francisco leaves the little family exhausted and disoriented, but they are soon out and about exploring the city with Kelly, who is amazed and pleased at everything she encounters.

As Kelly adjusts to her new surroundings, Karin is reminded of the philosophical side of her connection to her new daughter through the Chinese legend of a red thread which connects lovers no matter how far the distance of their separation. "A red string around your ankle ties you to the person you'll marry. He's already been born, and he's on the other end of the string."

The red thread has become the new symbol for the Chinese-American adoption community to identify the destiny of parents and children who will be together someday. Karin talks to other women who identify with this concept and feel as if they knew they would meet their daughter one day and feel as if they have known her forever once they do connect.

Karin's emotions go even deeper, as she realizes that she could not possibly love Kelly any more than if she had carried her for nine months in her own body. Karin has so much love for her child that she is certain that they are destined to be together, despite the cultural and ethnic differences.

Karin also comes to terms with the long period of waiting before the adoption. Had the process unfolded in any different timing, either shorter or longer, Kelly would not have been available to them and they would never have known her. Also, if the adoption had occurred even a month sooner, Karin would not have been able to spend that time with her dying father and their new daughter probably would not have been named after him.

The Taming Power of the Small Analysis

Karin credits the author Pearl S. Buck with the international adoption movement through Buck's establishment of the China Emergency Relief Committee and her battle against the Chinese Exclusion Acts, which prohibited Chinese immigration to the United States between 1882 and 1943.

Buck is quoted on the topic as saying, "We send missionaries to China so the Chinese can get into heaven, but we won't let them into our country." Buck's influence helped revise the stringent regulations against transracial adoption, and she served as a role model for the movement, adopting seven of her eight children.

The author uses the symbolism of the red thread uniting lovers as it extends to include the bond between adoptive parents and their Chinese daughters. All the parents who enter into this adoptive process feel as if there is some unseen but powerful force guiding and pushing them to the destiny with their new daughter. The number of Chinese girls brought into the U.S. continues to grow steadily, and Karin says, "It is out of such desire, persistence, courage, and luck that the subculture of adopted daughters of China has grown, that the red thread has kept winding itself around one family after another."

Matters of Life and Death

Matters of Life and Death Summary

Karin remembers that on their last night in China, the adoptive parents had lined up all the babies on a couch, eighteen in all, for a photograph that will forever remind them of this momentous journey. As she looks at the photo later, Karin wonders about all the faceless children who have been abandoned and left behind in orphanages or worse.

Realizing that she, Mark, and Kelly are fortunate, Karin cannot help but think about those children who will never be adopted for one reason or other. According to the statistics, for each child who is adopted out of China, there are dozens more left behind. What is even more startling is that according to outside sources, there are probably a million children in some sort of state care.

Karin feels fortunate that Kelly is healthy, because many of the abandoned children have health problems such as cleft palates, heart problems, and malnutrition among other illnesses. Most people adopting children request a healthy infant, which leaves a glut of older children who did not have the good fortune to be adopted earlier. If the older child has any type of health problem, the odds of adoption narrow significantly.

There are special cases where people have adopted one Chinese child and return to find a child who is less likely to be adopted to add to their family, and most of these people have the finances to provide the appropriate medical care for the severe cases.

Karin also addresses the topic of the conditions found in most Chinese orphanages. There is much speculation about indecent living conditions brought about by documentaries and news reports coupled with the secret nature of the hundreds of organizations which are not available for visits from outsiders. One 1995 documentary in particular entitled "The Dying Rooms" shed light on the horrific conditions in an orphanage in Zhaoquing by focusing on the short life of one girl, Mei Ming, who had been abandoned twice and left to die which she did a few days after the filming was completed.

The Chinese government launched a huge public relations effort to counter this negative press and routinely distributes information showcasing the pleasant environments in the country's finest orphanages. Karin tends to believe that the majority of orphanages must fall somewhere between the postcard images and the horrific documentary.

The movement toward transracial adoptions has precipitated many support organizations to smooth transitions for the parents and the children. One of the organizations, the Half the Sky Foundation, teams empathetic and talented people from both cultures to serve as ambassadors and liaison personnel to provide care and

support for those children awaiting adoption and those who will continue to live in orphanages.

Matters of Life and Death Analysis

The matter of adoption can literally be the difference between life and death for the Chinese orphans, some of whom are abandoned with severe health challenges, because their birth parents simply do not have the resources to provide the necessary medical attention.

According to the World Health Organization, "around the world 10 million children under five die each year from disease, malnutrition, and violence. If children everywhere have a common enemy, its name is poverty."

The author devotes this chapter to research about the conditions in orphanages and also the avenues for improvement from outside sources such as the Half the Sky Foundation which aids children who are left in orphanages, many with no hope of adoption. According to the author, it is important that people realize that they can help orphaned children in China without the full measure of adoption simply by supporting the liaison organizations.

East-West Lives

East-West Lives Summary

At the beginning of 1998, which is also the Year of the Tiger on the Chinese calendar, Kelly attends a party with other Chinese children adorned with plush tiger tails and whiskers painted on their faces. Karin and Mark participate regularly in activities of the San Francisco Bay Area chapter of Families with Children from China. Most of the little girls have American sounding names and some have even come from the same orphanage.

The meetings are only one attempt to expose Kelly to her own Chinese heritage while being raised as an American child. The organization is also invaluable in providing an outlet for parents to discuss the challenges they face daily not only in the topic of Chinese culture but also the attitudes of people who do not understand or appreciate their family dynamic. Karin feels fortunate to live on the West Coast where this type of organization is available as opposed to some insular cities in America where adoptive parents of Chinese children suffer the lack of any such support group.

According to Karin's research, most adoptive parents feel that their Chinese daughters deserve to know their stories and have the opportunity to visit their birth country at some point in their lives. The majority of parents also try to incorporate some elements of Chinese culture into the child's American lifestyle so that a sense of heritage is preserved to a small degree. One father interviewed takes his Chinese daughter to Chinatown in San Francisco regularly so that there is one place she can go where she is not in the minority.

Karin makes the point that some of these adopted Chinese children may grow up with more Chinese culture in their homes than those of children raised in China with the American influences of McDonald's restaurants and Mickey Mouse watches.

Karin notes that she and some of the other adoptive mothers have realized that their daughters no longer seem Chinese to them, they are simply their beloved daughters. Other people are not always so open-minded, and Karin bristles at ethnic generalizations but appreciates the comments of kind, graceful people who acknowledge Kelly's individual beauty.

Mark and Karin know that they have challenges ahead in addressing Kelly's questions about adoption. Karin smiles when she hears Mark tell their daughter, "We heard about you in China and flew all the way there to get you. We love you, sweetie." Karin appreciates Mark's explanation but realizes that some day Kelly will need more explanation on why she was found and not born. However, for now, Karin and Mark focus on their good fortune and their hopes for Kelly.

East-West Lives Analysis

The essay style of the story continues with another chapter devoted to research findings although they are presented in an engaging way with some personal anecdotes integrated to break up the factual information.

One of the anecdotes related to the missing information suffered by orphaned girls, is also symbolic. Karin interviews a Chinese woman named Nona Mock Wyman who was raised in an orphanage in California when she lost her mother at two-and-a half years old. Each Mother's Day at the orphanage, the administrator would distribute roses to the girls, red roses for mothers who were still living and white roses for those mothers who had died. Each year Nona would opt for a red rose, although she did not know whether her mother was alive.

In recalling the incident in her memoirs, Nona says, "Miss Hayes (the orphanage administrator) paused and scanned my hopeful face. Canvassing her large assortment of rose bushes, she strode over to a bush at the corner of the garden and expertly snipped a pink rose. Beaming, she handed it to me." The pink rose symbolizes not only the uncertainty of Nona's parentage, but also the validation of herself as a person in an uncertain and vulnerable time.

The author also points out irony in the situation of young Chinese girls adopted into American families who act like their family members but look like people across the world, while at the same time the people across the world who look like her, act nothing like her, which leaves her in a constant state of contradiction.

In the Light of the Autumn Moon

In the Light of the Autumn Moon Summary

The Chinese Festival of the Autumn Moon traditionally signifies a day for families to pay homage to their ancestors. On Kelly's first Autumn Moon Festival in America, Karin holds her daughter, as they gaze up at the moon, and Karin says silent prayers for her own parents as well as Kelly's birth parents.

The festival falls in October this year, an important month for the family. Not only did they officially adopt Kelly in October, but also her birthday is in October, and Karin's father had died in October of the previous year.

The festival is bittersweet for Karin who now has her beloved daughter, but who also knows that Kelly will never hear the story of her ancestors, which should be her birthright.

Karin has so many times imagined the circumstances of Kelly's abandonment in the market that she has created a scenario including a slight, shy young woman who admits to giving birth in secret. As the child is a girl, the young mother cannot return to her home village and stays with a friend for a few weeks, where she bonds with her newborn.

Soon the young mother must leave the house of the friend whose parents are coming to live with her. The young woman and her baby girl walk the streets for two days, until the mother is exhausted with no food or money. In Karin's mind, the young mother must have spent an agonizing time, as she leaves her daughter at a melon stand and hides in the bushes to watch.

Probably the melon vendor would bellow for the child's mother who does not come so the police are summoned and the child is taken away, hopefully to an orphanage where she will be fed and clothed. The young mother leaves the market in agony knowing she will never see her baby again.

Karin and Mark receive photographs of the market where Kelly was left from a young woman in China who tries to mask the horror of abandonment by telling Karin and Mark that the market is the most promising place for a baby to be left because of the quick discovery of a child.

Karin's thoughts wander to the extended families of these abandoned girls and realize that there are also siblings who must suffer in this huge picture of loss. Parents are most likely to keep a first-born daughter and any subsequent sons while a daughter born after a son is normally given up.

A few days after Karin has been particularly obsessed with the uncertainty of identification and the secrecy of Chinese mothers, Karin is awakened during the night

by something sharp poking her from inside her Chinese quilt. Karin discovers a tiny needle left inside the layers of fabric, most probably lost by the seamstress during her painstaking work.

Karin feels as if the maker of the quilt had found a way to awaken Karin to the fact that the discovery of Kelly's birth parents is like finding a needle in a haystack. The spirit of the seamstress also lives on in the quilt telling Karin that everything and everyone has a maker who never forgets its creation. In this beautiful quilt with its sharp message of loss also comes a message of hope.

Karin is moved to think about the love that the Chinese mothers must have for their babies to give them up to such uncertainty. It is also apparent to Karin that Kelly's mother must have loved the child without reserve because of Kelly's sweet, loving personality. Kelly has a sense of security, which, no doubt, was formed by a bond with her amazing birth mother who waited until the last possible moment before releasing the baby to the unknown.

Karin grieves for Kelly's birth mother but knows that the real story now is that Kelly was found, that she was destined to be found, and that she is dearly loved.

In the Light of the Autumn Moon Analysis

The anecdote describing Karin's finding the needle in her quilt one night is a particularly poignant crafting of symbolism for the lack of connection to Kelly's birth parents. After months of sleeping under the Chinese quilt, Karen is stuck by a tiny needle shortly after she has agonized about the improbability of finding Kelly's mother. Karin interprets the needle stick as a sharp message from across the ocean telling her that a search in this circumstance is futile, as hopeless as finding a needle in a haystack.

The message is not all bleak, however, because the beautiful spirit of the woman who crafted the quilt comes through the painstaking stitches and beautiful design to remind Karin that anything which has been made with love will always carry that love with it no matter where it goes.

Just as the beautiful quilt lovingly fashioned from the hands of a Chinese artisan still bears the essence of that love, so does Kelly retain the spirit of the beautiful young woman who held the child lovingly and then released her in an even greater display of love ever imaginable.

The Search for Home

The Search for Home Summary

Karin walks with Kelly through Chinatown in San Francisco and looks into the faces of the people in the shops and restaurants realizing that many of them come from the Pearl River Delta area where Kelly was born. It occurs to Karin that Kelly may very well have relatives living in San Francisco but without a birth name or city, it is essentially impossible to trace.

Karin has some hope for reconnection for Kelly one day in the information she has received from a Chinese woman who says that especially in the rural areas, the women share their secrets, know where the babies were left, and may one day be able to locate their daughters through DNA testing.

Karin, Mark and the other adoptive families reunite to honor Max who is taking a well-deserved vacation in California. Max suggests that a return trip to China may be a good idea when the girls reach the age of twelve or thirteen. There is no guarantee that the girls will even have a desire to make the trip but the parents agree that they can go if they feel the need to connect in some way.

As Kelly grows and learns, Karin wonders about her traits and characteristics and how nice it would be to attribute them to either herself or Mark or one of their parents. Karin realizes, though, that Kelly, like every human being, is a collection of chromosomes from a long line of relatives and that no two people can ever be directly responsible for the traits of an offspring. This brings Karin to the realization that the red thread connecting her to Kelly must certainly extend farther back in time than anyone can imagine.

The Search for Home Analysis

The author writes about loss a great deal in the book and it becomes an important theme, second only to that of love. In the midst of Karin's joy at having found Kelly, she is also immersed in a swell of sadness for Kelly's mother and for Kelly who may even now experience pangs of loss that she cannot communicate.

It was the loss of her first child and the lack of a child to love that drove Karin to the adoption process, which brought her to Kelly. Now it is Karin's anticipation for the sense of loss that Kelly will feel by not knowing her birth family and country. There is a sense of confidence inferred by the reader that Kelly will have every opportunity to close the gap on her loss by accessing the same perseverance that Karin exhibited in drawing Kelly to her in the first place.

Through the Chinese Looking Glass

Through the Chinese Looking Glass Summary

Under the autumn moon, Karin reflects on her journey to find Kelly and thinks about the four hundred Chinese girls who will arrive in America this month. Karin also thinks about the market where Kelly was left and now views that event not so much as abandonment but as a delivery to safety.

Undoubtedly, the trend of abandoning female children will continue until China lifts its one-child policy or until a pension program is implemented, and the extreme importance of having male children is lessened to a reasonable perspective. Karin continues her research on the topic and discovers that people in China do not speak out about the huge number of girl babies leaving every month. The female exodus is viewed as a necessary means to economic success.

There is evidence that the one-child policy may be fading as the typical tactics of birth control force are being replaced by strategies of persuasion, especially in those cases where the families can prove economic stability.

Karin relates the incident where Kelly watches the movie, "Stuart Little" about a mouse whose real mouse parents return to take him away from his adopted family. Kelly asks when her parents are coming to take her away and seems content when Karin and Mark assure her that they are her parents and no one will ever take her away from them.

Through the Chinese Looking Glass Analysis

By the end of the story, Karin has revealed the contrast between her personal journey of love and fulfillment and the economical and sociological factions in China which make the adoptions of baby girls possible. Karin realizes the irony of her good fortune as one woman who has been truly blessed, when there is a sea of women in China who have surrendered their children in hopeless situations.

In the end, there are no immediate solutions for the lost daughters of China, on either side of the ocean. The loss and angst at the center of the problem can only be counteracted with love, one baby at a time, and one day at a time.

Characters

Karin Evans

Karin Evans is a Caucasian woman from San Francisco. She is the author of the book and the person who adopts baby Kelly. Evans is in her late forties and has been previously married and divorced. She has no other children, her only son having died of a cerebral hemorrhage when he was three days old. She has thought of adopting ever since and has waited until the circumstances seemed right. She is certain she is pursuing the correct course as she navigates her way through the long adoption procedure, and she persists in her goal despite the delays and disappointments along the way. When she finally travels to China, meets Kelly, and takes her back to San Francisco, the bond she forms with the baby is immediate and profound. Evans is a thoughtful, resourceful woman who feels keenly her responsibilities as a new mother and accepts the challenge of raising Kelly with an awareness of her Chinese heritage.

Mark Humbert

Mark Humbert is Karin Evans's husband. He is a lawyer and, like his wife, he has long wanted children. He shares his wife's desire to adopt a baby girl from China. Also like Karin, he bonds immediately with the baby. He is overwhelmed by feelings of love and is surprised at the depth of those feelings and how quickly he is overtaken by them.

Max

Max is the liaison between U.S. and Chinese officials in charge of the adoption process. During the trip to China, Max acts as facilitator for the whole group of Americans. He is extremely efficient, seeming to be everywhere at once, smoothing the way with U.S. and Chinese officials, as well as with hotels, bus drivers, and waiters. Karin is extremely grateful for his help and calls him Uncle Max (and sometimes even Saint Max). She believes she owes as much to him as to anyone in her life.

Kelly Xiao Yu

Kelly Xiao Yu is the Chinese baby girl adopted by Karin and Mark. She is about a year old. The name given to her in the orphanage near Guangzhou is Jiang Xiao Yu . Jiang means "river," Xiao means "little," and Yu means "education." Evans never discerns what the significance of "little education" might be as a name. One Chinese woman tells her that the word Yu, depending on the pronunciation and how it is written, may mean "jade." Whatever the name means, Evans decides to retain it. However, she replaces the name Jiang with Kelly, in honor of Evans's late father. Evans and her husband soon discover that Kelly is affectionate and easy tempered, with a full zest for life.

Themes

Love

The Lost Daughters of China is a love story. Although Evans discusses the larger issues of China's one-child policy, the book is primarily a human story rather than a political or sociological essay. The love story functions on several levels, and Evans takes care to emphasize all of them. Although she knows nothing at all of Kelly's birth mother, she feels confident in making certain deductions. She believes that the mother gave up her daughter only with great reluctance and grief and that she placed her in the market to ensure she would be quickly found. Evans believes without a doubt that Kelly's mother loved her. The baby's ready smile confirms it. Evans exonerates the mother from any blame for her actions and believes that she probably suffered in many ways because of them. The fact that the mother did not abort the baby is another sign that she loved her even before she was born, since abortions are easy to obtain and are even encouraged in China. Evans thinks of Kelly's birth mother as her Chinese soulmate.

The second level at which love occurs is in the orphanage. Although there have been reports of abuses taking place in China's orphanages, Evans is at pains to emphasize that Kelly received excellent care. She is well dressed, with brand new yellow corduroy shoes; she has been breast-fed (whether by the mother or the staff at the orphanage); and she trusts people and displays affection. The staff knows her as an individual, and the caregivers give Evans plenty of details about her: the baby can crawl and walk, she likes rice cereal and little pieces of apple and banana, and she can be mischievous. When Evans takes her away, one of the women waves to the baby, who responds by blowing a kiss and waving.

Finally, there is the love story between mother and daughter. For Evans, the experience is almost overwhelming. On their first full afternoon together, for example, "We looked into each other's eyes and I covered her with kisses. It was a transcendent couple of hours, fixed in my memory now, both physical and mental." Shortly after they return to the United States, Evans has another realization. Holding Kelly in the kitchen, she knows suddenly and absolutely that she could not love the baby any more than she does at that moment: "I loved her without condition, without reservation. There was simply no room left in my heart to love her more." Evans knows that even if she had given birth to Kelly herself, she could not love her more. She also knows that the difference in ethnicity means nothing; she and Kelly are mother and daughter in every sense of the word.

Loss

Alongside the love story is a story of loss. In the case of an adopted child from China, the two go hand in hand. Although Evans is understandably overwhelmed by her own experience of love for her new baby, she is also keenly aware of the other side of the

coin. For her to have the chance to adopt the beautiful baby, many things must also be lost. First, there is the loss experienced by Kelly's birth mother, and Evans also spares some thoughts for the thousands of other Chinese women who give up their babies in similar circumstances. Their loss can never be calculated; the women themselves stay silent and anonymous. There are also many babies who are not so fortunate as Kelly and find no one to adopt them.

Evans wonders also whether, in spite of the joy Kelly shows, there may also be some lurking sadness, some sense of loss at what has happened to her. Evans herself feels great sadness when she leaves China, since that is all Kelly has ever known in her short life, and she may be leaving it behind forever. Kelly would never know for certain her origins or the way she had spent her first year of life. Back in the United States, these thoughts continue to trouble Evans. When Kelly wakes at night and cries loudly, Evans wonders whether she is having a nightmare of being left in the market, of missing the orphanage, or about one of her early caregivers. Evans knows that that gap, that loss, in Kelly's life can never be filled. Kelly will never know her birth mother, who is untraceable, and her origins will always be shrouded in mystery.

Style

Figurative Language

Evans uses figurative language to explain the mysterious process of how and why adoptive parents get connected to their future daughters, who have been born on the other side of the world. She cites a Chinese story that describes how lovers are predestined to meet: a red thread connects them, no matter how far away they may be from each other. Evans explains that the Chinese-American adoptive community considers the expression to include parents and the children they adopt. The idea of the "red thread" gives expression to Evans's idea that there is an order and purpose in the universe. The way people become involved with each other is not random. It is part of a destiny that each person has to fulfill. This explains Evans's strong sense that it was absolutely right and inevitable that she and Kelly would become mother and daughter.

Evans notes that no one can prove one way or the other whether the thread□the hidden connection between two people that manifests itself at a certain time□really exists, or why, or how. She contents herself with this explanation: "Maybe the thread is woven partly from strands of destiny, partly from gratitude, partly from love. Maybe it's all a tribute to the openness of the human heart, both young and old."

On another occasion, Evans creates a symbol out of an everyday object. She is awakened one night by the prick of a needle that has been left in her hand-stitched, made-in-China quilt. She feels as if she has been poked by the anonymous seamstress, and in that small reminder of an absent craftswoman, the spirit of the seamstress comes through. Evans is able to imagine her at work. Evans moves from that thought to imagine the unknown, anonymous lives of the birth mothers of the adopted daughters. She realizes how closely connected these mothers still remain to their offspring, even though they gave them up for adoption, just as the needle connects the quilt to the seamstress. In the case of Evans's daughter, Kelly's ready smile is the clue that reveals the nature of her mother: even though she relinquished her baby, she loved her.

Creative Nonfiction

As a mixture of personal memoir, objective reporting, and historical analysis, with elements of travelogue thrown in as well, the book is not easily classified under traditional literary forms. This type of work, which has become popular over the last two decades, is referred to under a number of different names: creative nonfiction, personal journalism, the new journalism, or literary journalism. According to Theodore A. Rees Cheney, in *Writing Creative Nonfiction*, this new form combines "the skill of the storyteller and the research ability of the reporter." In this case, Evans tells a very personal story, of wanting a baby and of going through all the bureaucracy associated with adoption. She also tells the reader how she feels when she finally meets the baby and how she bonds with her. But Evans weaves into this personal memoir a wealth of

factual information about the history of Chinese society, its attitudes toward women, and how China is changing today. The result of such an eclectic approach is usually a more interesting narrative, appealing to a wider group of readers, than a more scholarly approach that would exclude personal factors and confine itself to description and analysis of factual matters. It is not surprising, given that the author is a journalist rather than an academic, that she chose the livelier method. It presents history and current events with a human face.

Historical Context

China is a huge country and has always had a large population. For much of its history, millions of Chinese peasants have lived in dire poverty. Floods and famine have frequently ravaged the land, and the death rate has always been high. During the 1930s, for example, in many rural areas the infant mortality rate was three hundred to every one thousand people, and average life expectancy was only twenty-four years.

The communist revolution in 1949 at first improved the fortunes of the country. Economic reform gave peasants greater security, and social welfare legislation in the cities gave many people retirement security. But as Evans points out, Chinese leader Mao Zedong's overambitious attempts at agricultural reform resulted in a huge famine. Between 1959 and 1962, famine claimed twenty million lives. It was the largest recorded famine in human history. The effects of famine and malnutrition were especially severe on children. In 1963, half of those people dying in China were under ten years old.

During the 1950s and 1960s, Mao Zedong did not believe that population control was necessary in China. He encouraged women to have more children. Like leaders in many developing countries, Chinese leaders regarded the population control movement as a Western idea designed to thwart their progress. In 1974, at the World Population Conference held in Bucharest, Romania, 136 countries attempted to reach a consensus on the need for population control. China, along with the Soviet Union, refused to support the movement.

But times were changing. When a new set of leaders came to power, especially Deng Xiaoping, limiting the population became Chinese government policy. The rationale was simple: fewer people would mean that China would be better able to feed its people and to make economic progress. The policy was reinforced by the findings of the 1982 census, which showed the population of China to be one billion. The aim of the one-child policy was to reduce the population to 700 million by 2050. The policy had three main points. It advocated delayed marriage (at age twenty-two for men and twenty for women, although for women twenty-four was considered ideal). Childbearing was to be delayed, and there should be only one child per family. Ethnic minorities, however, were allowed to have two children.

The one-child policy announced in 1980 represented a drastic change, since at the time, as Evans points out, it was not uncommon for Chinese to have five or six children. The policy was often enforced cruelly, with millions of forced abortions and sterilizations. In cities, having a second child was punished with the loss of a job and a fine equivalent to three years' salary for each parent. Many families found ways of skirting the law, such as sending a pregnant woman to relatives and then failing to register the birth.

The policy also produced an increase in infanticide of girls. There were many reports of parents drowning or suffocating baby girls (as well as abandoning them) so that they could have another try at producing a boy. In one village alone, forty baby girls were

drowned between 1980 and 1981. In the late 1990s, there were signs that China's one-child policy might be easing. Laws that required parents to register for permits before having a child were abolished in some places, and it was no longer lawful to force women to undergo abortions and sterilization.

Critical Overview

The Lost Daughters of China received generally appreciative reviews. Eleanor J. Bader in Library Journal praises Evans's "riveting" examination of misogyny in China, pointing out that Evans does not "demonize" the Chinese people: "Instead, she eloquently assesses the conditions that force couples to abandon their offspring and chronicles the emotional anguish that accompanies the decision to give up a child."

For Vanessa Bush in *Booklist, Evans* "brings a mother's and a reporter's perspectives to this moving account of China's troubling [population] policy." The reviewer for *Publishers Weekly*, however, has mixed feelings. He or she finds the book strongest when Evans describes the way she and her new daughter quickly created a loving bond. But other sections of the book, in the reviewer's opinion, are not so strong. When Evans describes Chinese history and culture, her "lack of familiarity with China" leads her to rely on secondary sources, resulting in a lack of "fresh insights."

The most critical review of the book was written by Susan Greenhalgh in the journal *Population and Development Review*. Greenhalgh is herself a scholar of China's population policies. Although she acknowledged that *The Lost Daughters of China* is "finely crafted and deeply felt," she also feels that it presents a "romanticized portrait" of the situation, "whisking from view the behind-the scenes political dynamics that allowed the transfer of Chinese child to American parents to appear as a gesture of generosity and love." According to Greenhalgh, Evans ignores the fact that the adoption process was carefully stage-managed by Chinese officials who want to obscure the reality that the adoptions are the result of a population-control policy that depends on coercion.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Aubrey holds a Ph.D. in English and has published many articles on twentieth-century literature. In this essay, Aubrey discusses the pressures that drove Chinese leaders to adopt the one-child policy in the early 1980s.

In her review of *The Lost Daughters of China*, Susan Greenhalgh, herself an expert in China population studies, criticized Evans for sugarcoating the story of Evans's adoption of Kelly. According to Greenhalgh, Evans too readily accepted the image that Chinese officials wished to project□that the orphans were being tenderly cared for and were handed over to their adoptive parents with love. In Greenhalgh's view, this obscured the political dynamics that operate behind the scenes in China.

Rather than being lavished with love, the orphaned babies were in fact the victims of a deliberately coercive political policy that forced their abandonment and neglect.

In fairness to Evans, however, although she emphasizes the personal story of her adoption, she does not ignore the cruelties of the one-child policy. Indeed, it would be hard for the average reader not to feel indignant at her descriptions of some of the excesses of the policy, including forced, late-term abortions and compulsory sterilization.

People in the West have long known that such practices exist in China, ever since Steven W. Mosher revealed them in his 1983 book, *Broken Earth: The Rural Chinese*. The one-child policy has aroused fierce criticism in the West and has had repercussions on U.S.-Chinese relations. For example, during the Reagan administration of the 1980s, the United States withdrew its support for the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), which supports voluntary family planning and prenatal and maternal health care programs around the world, including China. The United States refused to support the fund because of domestic conservative opposition to birth control and abortion. The decision not to support UNFPA was reversed by the Clinton administration in 1993, but in 2002 President George W. Bush announced that the United States would withhold the $34 million voted by Congress for UNFPA. The official reason for this policy was that money given to the United Nations' agency would help the Chinese government to maintain its policy of forced abortion. Critics were swift to point out that the United Nations opposes forced abortions and sterilizations and that the money used by UNFPA in China is intended to show that voluntary family planning can be effective in tackling China's population crisis. However, the Bush administration declined to change its view.

Western distaste for the draconian nature of China's one-child policy is understandable, but what perhaps has been lacking is a full understanding of the pressures that drove Chinese leaders in the early 1980s to adopt the one-child policy in the first place. This is covered only very briefly in *The Lost Daughters of China*. A more detailed examination is contained in China scholar Jonathan D. Spence's book *The Search for Modern China*.

According to Spence, by 1981 it was clear to Chinese leaders that in the absence of population control, any economic gains China made through modernization would be cancelled out by the need to support a rising population. Such had been the case in other developing countries. Confirming these fears, the results of the 1982 census indicated that China's population had grown to over one billion, up from 694.6 million in 1964 (according to an earlier, and probably not entirely accurate, census).

The idea of instituting population control was not a new one. In the 1950s, some Chinese economists, as well as influential leaders such as Zhou Enlai, were advocating reductions in the birth rate. But the triumph of political extremism during the 1960s, with its belief that the revolutionary will of the people, if properly organized, could ensure progress whatever the rise in population, ensured that the issue was not effectively addressed.

By the early 1980s, the population issue was no longer possible to ignore. Statistics showed that in 1981 in China, 6 million babies were born to couples who already had one child; 1.7 million babies were born to those who already had five or more children.

Spence explains that as they pondered their decisions, Chinese leaders had to bear five crucial factors in mind. First was the availability of suitable land for cultivation. Although its land area is larger than the United States, in the late 1970s China only had half as much cultivated land. In addition, China's larger population meant that the amount of cultivated land per capita was only .25 acres, compared to 2.10 acres for the United States. Not only this, the amount of available land was declining. In 1952, the per capita figure had been almost double, at .46 acres. Some of the decline was due to the construction of new homes, factories, and road and rail lines; much of the rest was due to badly planned government policies that produced industrial pollution and extensive deforestation.

The second factor, according to Spence, was the demographics of the population. In 1982 in China, there were many millions of women of childbearing age□over 81 million in their twenties and over 60 million in their thirties. There were also over 125 million girls aged ten to nineteen who were shortly to enter their childbearing years. This meant that unless measures were taken, there would soon be a sharp rise in the birth rate.

In addition to the youthful population, the number of old people was growing as well. This was due to improvements in diet and also in medical knowledge, which resulted in many dangerous infections and parasitic diseases being brought under control. Life expectancy in general rose by an average of eight or nine years over a period of only twenty-four years, from 1957 to 1981.

A third factor was the increasing urbanization of the population. This has implications for population size. In some rural areas, the death rate for infants under four was six times that in China's large cities, and life expectancy in China's cities was on average four years higher than in rural areas. Therefore, increasing urbanization was sure to lead to a rise in overall population.

The fourth factor in Spence's list was the nature of the Chinese labor force. Compared with other industrialized countries, China's workforce started younger and retired earlier. Nearly one in five Chinese workers (18.09 percent) was between fifteen and nineteen, whereas in the United States the figure was less than half of that: 7.94 percent. These young workers did not have any opportunities for further education, and this reflected the fifth and final factor identified by Spence, the fact that the overall level of education of the population was low. Less than 1 percent of the workforce held college degrees, and nearly 74 percent of Chinese peasants had no education beyond elementary school level. Just over 28 percent of them were classified as illiterate or semi-illiterate. These low levels of education did not augur well for the modernization of Chinese society, which was the goal of the Chinese government.

Such were the factors that weighed upon the minds of the Chinese leaders when they made the decision that eventually led to Karin Evans and thousands of other American adoptive parents making their way to China to adopt an orphaned girl. Spence points out that China might have tried another approach than the one-child policy, that of encouraging women not to marry. This possibility was never seriously considered. Chinese women expected to marry. According to the 1982 census, over 94 percent were married by the time they were twenty-five, and over 99 percent by the age of twenty-nine.

Spence's list of five crucial factors in Chinese society makes it clear why Chinese leaders felt they had to take swift measures to curb population growth. Their actions can be further understood in the context of the world population control movement. China did not act in a vacuum; there had been efforts to curb world population since the 1950s. Experts warned of the dangers of overpopulation that would follow the decrease in infant and child mortality that had occurred since the end of World War II in 1945. In 1952, India became the first country to institute a government policy aimed at reducing the birth rate. However, many developing countries were slow to endorse the goals of the population control movement. It was not until the 1984 Second World Population Conference in Mexico City that the majority of developing nations, including China, gave their support to the movement. In 1994, at the United Nations Conference on Population in Cairo, the declared aim was to stabilize world population at 7.27 billion by 2015. Unless this is achieved, some experts warn that the population could reach 10.9 billion by 2050, a figure that many consider unsustainable, given the limits of the Earth's resources.

Seen in this light, it is clear that the concerns of the Chinese government about rising population, and its attempts to curb it, were entirely legitimate. Its coercive methods, most observers would agree, were not. The government was able to impose such methods because of a political system and ideology that are vastly different from those that operate in the West. The West prizes individual rights and freedoms, and has, especially in the United States, historically resisted any encroachment on those freedoms by the state. In China, however, traditionally the interests of the society and the family have taken precedence over the rights and interests of the individual. This has been even more apparent since the communist takeover of China in 1949, since

communism is a totalitarian ideology in which the state assumes the power to regulate the lives of individuals.

As for the future, according to several reports, China's one-child policy was not being as rigidly enforced in the late 1990s as it had been earlier. If this also means a reduction in forced abortions and sterilization, it can only be welcomed. Another factor may provide some encouragement too. It has long been known that in countries where women are well educated and have economic independence and choices about how they will live, rates of childbirth are much lower than in countries (such as China) where women are poor, with low status and little education. It is because of this that in the 1980s and 1990s, the population control movement has emphasized, in addition to contraception and family planning, improvement in the status of women. This includes improvements in women's rights and their status in the family and the community. Another encouraging sign was the fact that China hosted the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing in September 1995. This drew national and international attention to the status of women in China.

China's many well-wishers will hope that a move to voluntary family planning quickly makes coerced birth control a thing of the past. They will also hope that a new emphasis on the rights of women will gradually reverse the historical bias in Chinese society in favor of men and male children□ a bias that since 1980 has led to many cruelties against women and thousands of abandoned baby girls.

Source: Bryan Aubrey, Critical Essay on *The Lost Daughters of China: Abandoned Girls, Their Journey to America, and the Search for a Missing Past,* in *Nonfiction Classics for Students*, Gale, 2003.

Critical Essay #2

Prebilic writes children's books, analytical essays, and technical publications and assists students in San Ramon, California, with language and reading skills. In this essay, Prebilic explores the book's obscure element the violence towards, and belittlement of, women and children.

It may be tempting to read Karin Evans's book *The Lost Daughters of China: Abandoned Girls, Their Journey to America, and the Search for a Missing Past* in terms of the facts of her international adoption. Evans wonderfully articulates her adventures and trials in becoming the new mother of an adopted girl from China. As a journalist by profession, she has the ability to sculpt imagery to describe the places on her journey. Her vivid and moving descriptions of Guangzhou in southern China draw for readers a virtual paradise in their hearts and minds. She gives well-worded imagery that helps the reader "taste" and "touch" the landscape of China and its people.

Yet a deeper, more powerful meaning lies underneath the adoption journey itself. Much like a quilter uses stitched designs to hold together the two layers of cloth, Evans unfolds the myriad political and historical events that have created China as it is today. Evans did her homework; with 130 notes and an extensive bibliography, her book weaves together volumes of historical and political data with her personal adoption experience. These historical and political events, hidden within China's lush subtropical climate and rolling green fields, don't make headline news. "Another baby abandoned" has become a daily event like the weather. Perhaps the belittlement and violence towards women and children remains an obscure undercurrent amid the hustle and bustle of industrialized China. The good that arises out of these bad circumstances, suggests Evans, is the development of multicultural families. As people from the United States and other countries adopt Chinese girls, they make warm and loving homes for them. These lost daughters have a chance at life far better than they could find in China.

Evans's profound experience with adoption adds meaning to her journey towards motherhood. As she describes the Asian landscape, observes the Chinese people, or gazes down a river, she divulges her hopes and fears about her soon-to-be child. She uses the book as a way to divulge her personal experience. She selects her words artistically to present the full depth of her journey. Her words jump from the history of China's policies to her present adoption process, almost as if random thoughts develop her story. As her story unfolds, she imparts the wisdom that readers need to understand China's one-child policy, pointing out the less obvious yet troubling facts of China's human rights issues.

In this venue, Evans traces the history of China's one-child policy, accenting the culture's preference for males. She lists the tremendous pressures that led to stringent family planning: overpopulation, recurring natural disasters, and devastating poverty. These events put the country in crisis. At the same time, the belief that males take care of parents in old age and provide income fueled preference for male children. These

factors coalesced to create a system of beliefs that allowed the Chinese government to implement a rigid family planning practice. The Chinese government meant well but failed in the implementation. Perhaps it failed because it tried to control the uncontrollable□women's fertility. Where did things go awry?

Perhaps, as Harry Wu speculates in China's One-Child Policy Violates Human Rights, it came from "a top down system of control" that emerged as the Chinese government mandated the practice of family planning. According to Wu, when the "central government establishes general policy guidelines, and local governments institute and proscribe specific directives and regulations to meet these guidelines. . . . [they can take] remedial measures." Could it be that the dire need to reduce the population led to trying to enforce something□ procreation□that cannot so easily be controlled? So although the idea may have been sound, even necessary, the crisis caused horrific actions. Evans grapples with these concepts as she presents the many facets of this one-child policy. She, like Wu and many other authors, indicates that the government goes to such extremes that it hunts women down and enforces sterilization or performs mandatory abortions at any stage of a pregnancy.

Why does the government choose to single out women? Some experts suggest that China still carries an archaic misogynistic view. According to a summary by the U.S. Department of State in *Human Rights Abuses in China Are Widespread,*

[t]he People's Republic of China (PRC) is the paramount source of power. . . . Violence against women, including coercive family planning practices; . . . prostitution; discrimination against women; trafficking in women and children; abuse of children; and discrimination against the disabled and minorities are all problems. . . . Therefore, the PRC commit[s] widespread and well-documented human rights abuses in violation of internationally accepted norms.

With great respect for the Chinese people, Evans explores the violence against Chinese women. Using grace, she presents the facts in a respectful way that seeks improvement and compassion. Avoiding blatant criticism and condemnation, Evans explains that women in China have limited professional opportunities. If they work, they stay at the same job, accepting careers that usually don't pay well. Furthermore, the Chinese government controls women's reproductive lives□having a child requires permission. Not obtaining official permission can result in harassment, fines, and forced abortions. Although some of this control seems to be relaxing, experts believe that the damage caused by its procedures will be felt for many years.

Besides misogynistic views, Evans introduces readers to a deeper problem. Why are so many children, especially infants, abandoned? Perhaps, as Laura Sessions Stepp puts forth a universal truth in *Infants Now Murdered As Often As Teens,* "Infants are the most defenseless members of . . . society." Or as Stepp quotes Robert W. Block of the American Academy of Pediatrics child abuse committee, "stress . . . can trigger violent behavior. . . . Babies are easy targets." China's attitudes and policies have created intense stress on its families, similar to an earthquake that shakes a home's foundation.

Evans tackles infant desertion throughout her book. How could someone abandon her precious daughter in a marketplace among the melons? On one hand, Evans expresses deep gratitude for the opportunity to raise her Chinese child, saying that she could not love her daughter more if she were the biological mother. On the other hand, Evans questions the systems that have created an environment where a mother would purposefully get rid of her child. Evans's honest narrative does not turn the reader against China or its people but skillfully raises the question of human imperfection.

If babies are easy targets, then why don't all babies in China experience this demise? Evans voices the one question that reverberates throughout her masterpiece: "Why . . . were almost all the lost children in China girls?" Evans cannot provide a conclusive answer. Perhaps there is not one. However, she gives us insights that show readers how this might happen were they confronted with the same dilemma; a family could disown a woman for having a baby girl. The woman could lose her job and her home, and face a life of poverty.

Evans writes a passage where she places herself in the shoes of the biological mother. This helps readers appreciate the Chinese woman's plight. It gives honor to the courage and sorrow that the other human being must have felt in discarding her female infant. Evans interprets the action of abandonment to be an ultimate act of maternal love.

Is China alone in this belittlement of women and children? Certainly not! Other nations devalue women and children. Most recently the world has learned of the plight of Afghan women. Controlling governmental attitudes have prevented women from wearing what they wanted and from coming and going as they wished. According to Mavis Leno in an interview on the lives of Afghan women, the Taliban regime "punished if more than three unrelated women are found gathering together, if their windows are not painted dark so that no one can see in, or even if their shoes make a noise when they walk." Years of conflict and no investment in health care have contributed to some of the highest infant and maternal mortality rates in the world.

Men have been affected too. As Leno continues in her interview, oppressive Taliban attitudes caused widespread poverty: "Men who depended on their wives' income as well as their own now are responsible for the total support of their family, and often had to help widowed family members." Belittling women hurts the entire population.

Perhaps even if the goals of such cultures have merit, oftentimes the execution of said goals fails. As Wu states in *China's One-Child Policy Violates Human Rights,* China's population policy "should be based on volunteerism and education, not coercion and intimidation." As education and knowledge increase, prosperity rises. People understand their choices and feel safe. Choices lead to empowerment of every individual, which means people can work together to conquer complicated problems.

Evans started out to adopt a daughter so that she could raise a child with her husband. She displays courage in writing this bold and interesting book. Typical of a journalist who aims at communicating with a large audience, Evans states facts without judgment. It seems that she proposes more questions than answers as she successfully balances

the Chinese weaknesses with positive aspects of its vibrant culture. In doing so, Evans refuses to limit herself to what one American university professor specializing in Chinese history tells her, "There's a limit to what people speak out about." To Evans, there is no limit.

In this way, she intricately pieces together the ideas as an intricate design on her quilt; Evans examines one idea at a time, developing her thoughts thoroughly. These ideas come together to encourage understanding and compassion for the Chinese struggles. With new knowledge, Evans gives readers a chance to support a healthier view of human rights in China. In asking the question why, Evans suggests that the problems and the answers are both in the unforeseen□what we cannot see "will always loom as an added obstacle" in the search for unity. The unforeseen in adoption is particularly troubling to Evans, for she will one day face this question of abandonment with daughter Kelly Xiao Yu. Nevertheless, just as Evans can present a difficult issue so admirably, she must have hope that only good will come. As Evans concludes, "May things improve for children everywhere."

Source: Michelle Prebilic, Critical Essay on *The Lost Daughters of China: Abandoned Girls, Their Journey to America, and the Search for a Missing Past, in Nonfiction Classics for Students,* Gale, 2003.

Critical Essay #3

DeFrees has a bachelor's degree in English from the University of Virginia and a law degree from the University of Texas and is a published writer and an editor. In the following essay, DeFrees discusses author Evans's use of personal experience to bring a more evocative understanding of, and to make a more resonant argument in support of, female children adopted from China.

How does an author meld the contradiction of the vast sorrow of losing a child with the joy of gaining a new life? One effective method is through a careful distillation of fact and personal experience. In Karin Evans's history, *The Lost Daughters of China*, she writes a factual, nonfiction account of the adoption process for United States would-be parents to adopt female babies from orphanages in China. However, her account carries with it the weight of circumstance□Evans herself is an adoptive parent, and indeed, her inspiration for the book emanated from her own experience of going through the trials of the adoption process. Because Evans intersperses personal experience throughout the facts and secondary accounts, the reader observes both a personal and objective version of the adoption process and thus is able to glimpse life through the eyes of the anxious adopting family, the hopeless, anguished Chinese mothers and families, and the unassuming eyes of the children. It is a subtle and powerful method of persuasive writing, for in the end, Evans is trying to persuade herself, her husband, her adopted daughter, the government, and the Chinese mothers left with no choice but to give up their female babies that out of the horror of loss and abandonment there is hope, that for the barren there is new life, and that the circle of life can continue on a global scale.

In her introduction to the book, Evans claims three goals for the book, broad and far-reaching aims by anyone's standards. For herself, she wrote the book to begin to understand what life was likely to be like for her adopted Chinese daughter. For her daughter, she wrote the book to provide an opening for her to understand the world into which she was born. And for her reader, "the world at large," Evans claims that she wrote the book as "an attempt to fill in the blank spaces in a profound human exchange." How she knows it is profound, and how she can have the temerity to qualify the timbre of the experience, is because she has lived the experience. Thus, despite the enormousness of these desired aims, once the book reaches the hands of an anonymous reader, the goals are narrowed to a singular focus: to tell a story of what it means to love and to lose a child, with all of its ramifications. Again, Evans is in a unique position to relate this story. As she relates to her audience, several years before she and her husband embarked on the adoption process, she gave birth to a child who died a few hours after being born. In addition, Evans lived in Hong Kong for several years as a foreign correspondent for *Newsweek* and followed the political movement as China adopted a strict one-child-per-family law. Evans is a writer particularly attuned to loss, and again, her empathy provides a jarring vision of loss and fear and despondency among the Chinese women who are faced with the difficult position of deciding what to do with their "unwanted" daughters.

The bulk of the book is concerned with telling the stories of the men and women in China who gave up the thousands of babies that end up in Chinese orphanages each year. It is difficult to ferret out any specific information about the circumstances of each child's—for lack of a better word— abandonment, as the penalties by the Chinese government for abandoning a child are unforgiving, and mothers or families almost always do so with great secrecy, leaving their swaddled infants in the reeds of the river banks, on the doorsteps of orphanages, in marketplaces, anywhere the child might be found and rescued from infanticide or sex-selective abortion. Thus, it is difficult to trace the story of an adopted child from her roots to the cradle of her new, foreign parents, as the roots begin with the orphanage and, perhaps, a comment as to where the child was found: "under a bridge," one couple was told; another told, "beside a freeway"; and to the author and her husband, the adoption facilitator simply said, "in a market." Which market? Which section of the market? By whom? Was she crying? How was she dressed? No answers? The anonymity of the situation and its similarity to so many other situations of abandoned girls threatens to meld each child into the fold of statistical data. However, it is here that Evans's personal vantage point enters to individualize things and to build a three-dimensional life of both the abandoned daughter and the lives she was entering and leaving:

Like most other parents who've adopted children from China, we know nothing about the circumstances of our daughter's birth or about her birth parents. Once we were home, I asked a pediatrician whether her belly button would offer a clue as to whether she'd been born in a hospital or not. It didn't. Not that that particular information would have told us much—but I was straining to picture all the events in her life that I'd missed.

Evans's personal connection with her material becomes the vital component in her cache of storytelling techniques, because it offers an empathic, rather than a merely sympathetic, view. The reader is one step closer to the realities of the experience, one step less removed from the confusion and horror and saving graces of the story of a child lost to her parents, through any variety of unfortunate circumstances, and bundled into the arms of a totally foreign culture. Evans writes about how she believed that her daughter—named Kelly Xiao Yu, a combination of her American name and her name given her at the orphanage (there is no trace of what name she might have had before she got to the orphanage)—must have been nursed, as she was prone to crawling on top of Evans and laying her cheek on Evans's breast. "She sought out that warm spot as if she'd known it well, nestled, nudged me like a kitten." She seemed to have been treated with kindness and affection, but by whom? Who had bundled the child up for a last trip to the marketplace "while [Evans] was at home in San Francisco, fretting about bureaucratic logjams?" The question burned so brightly in her mind—and undoubtedly in the minds of thousands of adoptive parents enduring the same experience—that Evans often found herself "trying to conjure the story from the few details [she] knew."

Evans goes on to reenact the possible circumstances of that day in the market that her now daughter was discovered, abandoned, and in doing so, paints a wrenching portrait of desperation and loss. The baby, stuffed in among fruits and vegetables and turtles

and water beetles, would be discovered□by someone, a farmer, perhaps□cries would ring out, and then it would be announced that it was a baby girl. "Enough said. Someone called the police and they came, as they'd done any number of places before, and took the child off to one of the nearby orphanages. . . ." Evans again effectively intermingles her personal imagination with the plight of all the Chinese daughters being abandoned, bringing a face to so many faceless children.

In a later chapter, Evans discusses the persistence of the problem of abandoned female babies in China. She notes that the desperate measures resorted to by women and families faced with an additional female daughter will continue until the one-child policy is completely lifted, the Chinese economy improves dramatically, or "some kind of pension is in place for rural poor people." She returns to Guangzhou, the city where she adopted her daughter, and pulls the reader back to burgeoning life in her daughter's would-be town. "In Kelly's hometown at this time of year," she writes, "the market would be busy as usual." Evans goes on to detail the bustle of the city, the shoppers, the motorbikes, the fisherman, all crowded into the marketplace, where women may be carrying vegetables, fish, or, perhaps, a baby. She then notes that over time, her image of the circumstances of her daughter's abandonment have altered. "No longer does it seem fair or accurate to say that she was abandoned or left there. Rather, I think, she was 'delivered' to safety in that busy place□so clearly was it her mother's intention to save her."

The Lost Daughters of China is a deeply moving factual account of the current state of affairs regarding abandoned children and adoption in China. The book depicts, through simple first-person accounting and straightforward factual and secondary accounts, true triumph over tragedy. But even more so, by telling the socio-political history of modern adoption in China□and of immigration policy in the United States□from a personal point of view, Evans universalizes her microcosmic experience. Rather than charting the thorough government censuses and facts and relying on the secondary accounts of professors, historians, adopted daughters, Chinese family members or villagers who might, in anonymity, talk, and American families who have successfully or unsuccessfully tried to adopt a Chinese baby daughter□all of which are valuable resources, and all of which provide vital information for Evans's book□and guessing down to the specifics of the experience, Evans begins with the specific, creating a powerful drama within the historical context of the Chinese adoption movement. Furthermore, by creating a fresh approach to the subject, Evans lends authenticity to the book, further engrossing the reader in the epic tale of an abandoned baby girl, a hopeful father and mother-to-be, a Chinese mother and family caught in the pendulum that swings between modernity and the arcane past. Finally, The Lost Daughters of China is about human loss and longing and the inevitable global reach of the desire for family and community.

Source: Allison DeFrees, Critical Essay on *The Lost Daughters of China: Abandoned Girls, Their Journey to America, and the Search for a Missing Past, in Nonfiction Classics for Students*, Gale, 2003.

Topics for Further Study

Research the issue of world population growth and write an essay about it. Do you feel it is desirable to reduce the world's population, and if so, by what methods?

What might be some of the difficulties encountered by someone of Chinese ethnicity growing up in America? Should such a child be raised with an awareness of his or her Chinese cultural heritage, or is it more important for him or her to identify with mainstream American life and culture? Explain your answer.

Should the state have any say in regulating reproductive practices, or should this be a private decision by the individual people concerned? Might a country like China have different needs than the United States in that respect? Explain your answer.

Research the position of women in Chinese society today. How do their lives compare with the lives of women in the United States? Have Chinese women made progress in the last thirty years? What are some of the central issues they face today?

What Do I Read Next?

Christine Hall's *Daughters of the Dragon: Women's Lives in Contemporary China* (1997) is a very readable account□much of it based on personal interviews□of all aspects of the lives of women in contemporary China. Hall examines topics including education, careers, sex and relationships, living conditions, fashion and beauty, leisure pursuits, religion, and politics.

Adeline Yen Mah's bestselling memoir *Falling Leaves: The True Story of an Unwanted Chinese Daughter* (1997) describes her turbulent life, which began in an affluent family in the Chinese port city of Tianjin. She was emotionally abused by her stepmother but fought for her independence and went on to build a successful medical career in the United States. The memoir tells of her triumph over despair in a long search for love and understanding.

The Bonesetter's Daughter (2001), by Amy Tan, explores the Chinese immigrant experience in America and the complex relationships between mothers and daughters. The novel weaves together two separate narratives: the story of LuLing, a young girl in 1930s China; and that of LuLing's daughter Ruth as a middle-aged woman in modern San Francisco.

Wild Swans: Three Daughters of China (1992), by Jung Chang, is a dramatic and sometimes horrifying account of China as seen through the eyes of women of three different generations: the author, who left China in 1978; her mother, who married a communist revolutionary soldier; and her grandmother, who was sold as a concubine to Beijing's police chief.

Wuhu Diary: On Taking My Adopted Daughter Back to Her Hometown in China (2001), by Emily Prager, is another story of adoption and China. Prager adopted an unwanted baby girl from Wuhu, a village in southern China. This mixture of memoir and travelogue is the story of her return to China with LuLu, her five-year-old daughter, to reintroduce the girl to her roots.

The contents of *China Today: How Population Control, Human Rights, Government Repression, Hong Kong, and Democratic Reform Affect Life in China and Will Shape World Events into the New Century* (1995), by Donald Shanor and Constance Shanor, are clear from the title. The Shanors cover history, economics, foreign policy, and other fields as they examine the many different aspects of contemporary China.

Further Study

Croll, Elisabeth, *Changing Identities of Chinese Women: Rhetoric, Experience and Self-Perception in Twentieth-Century China*, Zed Books, 1995.

Croll discusses the successive revolutions attempted by Chinese women within their society, communities, families, and themselves. The text is sometimes weighed down by scholarly jargon, but there is much useful information, including a discussion of female infanticide as a result of the one-child policy.

Faison, Seth, "Chinese Are Happily Breaking the 'One Child' Rule," in *New York Times*, August 17, 1997.

This article discusses how the one-child policy is currently being eased as China's economic growth has eroded the state's control over individual lives, creating many loopholes in the official enforcement of the policy.

Hartman, Betsy, *Reproductive Rights and Wrongs: The Global Politics of Population Control and Contraceptive Choice,* HarperCollins, 1987.

Hartman covers many topics, including the causes and consequences of population growth; the history of the population control movement; and the forces behind the development of contemporary contraceptive technologies. She also examines societies that have reduced population growth through social and economic development.

Reese, Lori, "Children's Palace: China Copes with the One- Child Policy," in *Time Asia*, Vol. 154, No. 12, September 27, 1999.

This article claims that Chinese parents in the cities are raising a generation of spoiled single kids. The parents, who had almost nothing in their youth, overcompensate now that times are more prosperous by indulging their child's every whim.

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Wu, Harry, "China's One-Child Policy Violates Human Rights," in *Opposing Viewpoints: China*, edited by James D. Torr, Greenhaven Press, 2001; excerpted from "Forced Abortion and Sterilization: The View from the Inside," by Harry Wu, July 1998.

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Project Editor
David Galens

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Sara Constantakis, Elizabeth A. Cranston, Kristen A. Dorsch, Anne Marie Hacht, Madeline S. Harris, Arlene Johnson, Michelle Kazensky, Ira Mark Milne, Polly Rapp, Pam Revitzer, Mary Ruby, Kathy Sauer, Jennifer Smith, Daniel Toronto, Carol Ullmann

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Product Design
Michelle DiMercurio, Pamela A. E. Galbreath, Michael Logusz

Manufacturing
Stacy Melson

For more information, contact
The Gale Group, Inc
27500 Drake Rd.
Farmington Hills, MI 48334-3535
Or you can visit our Internet site at
http://www.gale.com

Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Nonfiction Classics for Students (NCfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NCfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on

□classic□ novels frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NCfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NCfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NCfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NCfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

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A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

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Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Nonfiction Classics for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

Editor, Nonfiction Classics for Students
Gale Group
27500 Drake Road
Farmington Hills, MI 48331-3535