

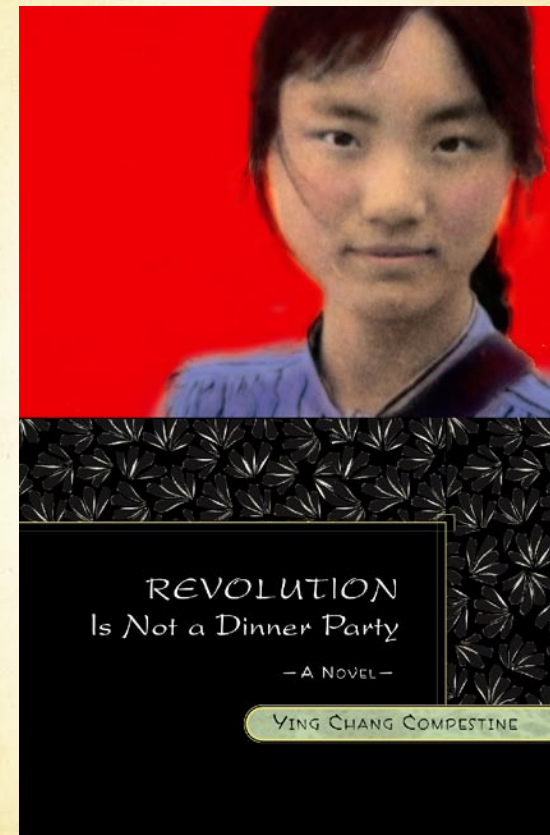
## Ying Chang Compestine

Award-winning author, dynamic public speaker and world traveler, Ying Chang Compestine is the author of many books for children and adults. Ying and her books are featured on the Discovery Channel's *Home Matters* and Home and Garden HGTV's *Smart Solutions*. She has been profiled in many national magazines and newspapers.



Ying is the spokesperson for Nestle Maggi and Celestial Seasonings and a regular contributor to the national magazines *Cooking Light*, *Ski*, *EatingWell*, *Self*, *Men's Health*, *Delicious Living* and *Diablo*. She is also the former food editor for *Body & Soul*, a Martha Stewart Omnimedia magazine that focuses on healthy and balanced living.

Growing up in Wuhan, China, Ying came to the US, earned a graduate degree in sociology from the University of Colorado, and taught sociology for eight years at universities in the US and China. She lives with her family in California. *Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party* is her first novel for young readers.



## Discussion Guide

★ A "gripping account of life during China's Cultural Revolution"

– Publishers Weekly starred review

# Discussion Questions

- The title of this book comes from a passage from Mao Tse-tung's *Little Red Book*:

"A revolution is not a dinner party, or writing an essay, or painting a picture, or doing embroidery; it cannot be so refined, so leisurely and gently, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained, and magnanimous."

Why do you think the author chose to take the title from this passage?

- Why do you think Chairman Mao was so easily able to turn neighbors against neighbors during the Cultural Revolution?
- Ling's mother is able to sense early on that things in China are changing (on page 11, Ling notes that her mother had been in a bad mood for almost a year). What early indications does the author give that "danger [is] knocking on doors all over China"?
- Why does Ling's mother disapprove of so much of her behavior (page 15)? Why do you think Mother seems to Ling "like a proud white rose," which Ling is "afraid to touch because of [the] thorns" (page 40)?
- A propaganda film is a film produced (often by a government) to convince the viewer of a certain political point or influence the opinions or behavior of people. *The Midnight Rooster in Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party* (page 60) is an example of such a film. What effect did watching this film have on the students at Ling's school? Why do you think Ling did not react to the film in the same way as her classmates?
- What role does food play in the narrative of *Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party*? Why do you think food is so central to this book?
- Ling's understanding of what bourgeois means changes throughout the book. Based on the events of the novel, what did the word mean during China's Cultural Revolution? Why was it bad for a family to be bourgeois?
- Father chose to stay in China rather than go to America with Dr. Smith to help build a new China. The rally cry of Comrade Li's Red Guard is also for a new China. Why are the two groups (people like Mother and Father and devotees of Chairman Mao) not able to work together to build a new China?
- When Ling asks Mother why her family needs to hang so many portraits of Mao in their apartment (page 104), Mother explains, "It's like the incense we burn in the summer to keep the mosquitos away." What does she mean?
- What does the Golden Gate Bridge represent to Ling and her family?
- Mr. Ji, the antirevolutionary writer Ling and Father save, says "dark clouds have concealed the sun for too long" before he leaves their apartment (page 136). What does he mean?
- What keeps Ling, Mother, and Father from losing hope like Mr. Ji and the baby doctor did?
- Why does Father operate on Comrade Sin?
- A simile is a literary device that uses like or as to compare two things. How does the author of *Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party* use similes throughout the book?
- Can you think of a time in America's history when the political atmosphere was like that in *Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party*? Why do you think people, no matter what country they live in, behave this way?