

# Chinese Cinderella



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著者:Adeline Yen Mah

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Book Description

A riveting memoir of a girl's painful coming-of-age in a wealthy Chinese family during the 1940s.

A Chinese proverb says, "Falling leaves return to their roots." In Chinese Cinderella, Adeline Yen Mah returns to her roots to tell the story of her painful childhood and her ultimate triumph and courage in the face of despair. Adeline's affluent, powerful family considers her bad luck after her mother dies giving birth to her. Life does not get any easier when her father remarries. She and her siblings are subjected to the disdain of her stepmother, while her stepbrother and stepsister are spoiled. Although Adeline wins prizes at school, they are not enough to compensate for what she really yearns for -- the love and understanding of her family.

Following the success of the critically acclaimed adult bestseller *Falling Leaves*, this memoir is a moving telling of the classic Cinderella story, with Adeline Yen Mah

providing her own courageous voice.

Amazon.com

Chinese Cinderella is the perfect title for Adeline Yen Mah's compelling autobiography in which, like the fairy-tale maiden, her childhood was ruled by a cruel stepmother. "Fifth Younger Sister" or "Wu Mei," as Yen Mah was called, is only an infant when her father remarries after her mother's death. As the youngest of her five siblings, Wu Mei suffers the worst at the hands of her stepmother Niang. She is denied carfare, frequently forgotten at school at the end of the day, and whipped for daring to attend a classmate's birthday party against Niang's wishes. Her father even forgets the spelling of her name when filling out her school enrollment record. In her loneliness, Wu Mei turns to books for company: "I was alone with my beloved books. What bliss! To be left in peace with Cordelia, Regan, Goneril, and Lear himself--characters more real than my family... What happiness! What comfort!" Even though Wu Mei is repeatedly moved up to grades above those of her peers, it is only when she wins an international play-writing contest in high school that her father finally takes notice and grants her wish to attend college in England. Despite her parent's heartbreaking neglect, she eventually becomes a doctor and realizes her dream of being a writer.

Teens, with their passionate convictions and strong sense of fair play, will be immediately enveloped in the gross injustice of Adeline Yen Mah's story. A complete glossary, historical notes on the state of Chinese society and politics during Yen Mah's childhood, and the legend of the original Chinese Cinderella round out this stirring testimony to the strength of human character and the power of education. (Ages 10 to 15)

--Jennifer Hubert

From Publishers Weekly

Mah revisits the territory she covered in her adult bestseller, *Falling Leaves*, for this painful and poignant memoir aimed at younger readers. Blamed for the loss of her mother, who died shortly after giving birth to her, Mah is an outcast in her own family. When her father remarries and moves the family to Shanghai to evade the Japanese during WWII, Mah and her siblings are relegated to second-class status by their stepmother. They are given attic rooms in their big Shanghai home, they have nothing to wear but school uniforms, and they subsist on a bare-bones diet while their stepmother's children dine sumptuously. Mah finds escape from this emotionally barren landscape at school, but the academic awards she wins only enrage her jealous siblings and stepmother, and she is eventually torn from her aunt. After one championship and shipped off to boarding school. That Mah eventually soars above her circumstances is proof of her strength of character. The author recreates moments of cruelty and victory so convincingly that readers will feel almost as if they're in the room with her. She never veers from a child's sensibility; the child in these pages rarely judges the actions of those around her, she's simply bent on surviving. Mah easily weaves details of her family's life alongside the traditions of China (e.g., her grandmother's bound feet) and the changes throughout the war years and subsequent Communist takeover. This memoir is hard to put down. Ages 12-up. (Sept.)

From School Library Journal

Grade 6 Up-This absorbing autobiography tells the story of an unwanted child in upper-class 1940s China. Because her mother died at her birth, Wu Mei (Fifth Younger

Sister, renamed Adeline) was a "bad luck" daughter, never forgiven by her father or her four older siblings. When she was a year old, her father remarried. Her Eurasian stepmother produced two more children, who became the favored ones. Wu Mei's efforts to attract her father's attention by consistent top marks at school were ignored and ridiculed except by her Aunt Baba, who shared a similar outcast status in the family. Her aunt's constant affection and encouragement provided the only relief to the girl's daily humiliation and emotional abuse. Determined to separate the two, her parents sent the 11-year-old to boarding school. This was 1948; the Communists were consolidating their power. Soon she was the only student left, abandoned and forgotten by her parents when they fled to Hong Kong. Luckily, an aunt rescued her and returned her to her unwelcoming family. There, enrolled in another Catholic school, she finally gained her father's permission to study in England. Mah has told this story before, in her best-selling autobiography, *Falling Leaves* (Wiley, 1998). This version for younger readers is more sharply focused, seen through the lens of the story of Ye Xian, a version of the "Cinderella" tale dating back to the ninth century. Fourteen pages of front matter and the slow beginning necessary to introduce the unfamiliar setting may deter some readers, but those who persevere will be rewarded by the rich depiction of a very different world.

Kathleen Isaacs, Edmund Burke School, Washington, DC

From Booklist

"Mama died giving birth to you. If you had not been born, Mama would still be alive." Even though Mama died two weeks after the birth from a fever, this brutal message dooms Wu Mei (Fifth Younger Sister) throughout her sad and lonely childhood in China during the 1940s and 1950s. Wu Mei, whose English name is Adeline, faces the anger and cruelty of her family; only an aunt and frail grandfather are supportive. Shunted off to boarding schools, left out of family activities, Adeline nevertheless thrives academically and hopes desperately (and futilely) to please her father. In this young adult version of the author's *Falling Leaves*, Mah offers a bittersweet look into the pain of childhood and a fascinating glimpse at a tumultuous time in China. Amazingly unscathed by the Communist revolution, her wealthy family heads for Hong Kong after Mao assumes power and resumes its privileged lifestyle. There are moments of clumsiness, as when Adeline verbalizes her distress in ways young people probably would not: "And if I should be so lucky as to succeed one day, it will be because you believed in me," she tells her grandfather. But this is a captivating read because we care so much about the heroine and her future.

Anne O'Malley

Book Dimension

length: (cm)17.3 width:(cm)10.7

作者介绍:

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## 标签

传记

英文

悲惨童年

Chinese

英语文学

女性

西文中国

英文原版

## 评论

考据癖： 1) 创办Shanghai Women's Bank (480 Nanjing Lu)的Grand-aunt名叫严淑和；  
2) 香港Sacred Heart Canossian School明明是1992年才搬去Caine Rd的，怎么书中1950年代的时候地址就已经是Caine Rd了？？难道是作者写书的时候才去查的地址？  
3) 越读越觉得和爱玲祖师爷的阅历相似。天津出生，上海成长，香港读书，终老美国。都出生富贵之家，都不被继母生父所爱，都和姑姑关系好，都是读书天才，都成了作家。  
4) 不过是50年代的事，怎么觉得很有年代感？那代人的英文真是杠杠的。想来我和作者出国的年龄是一样的啊！

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so sad

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可以算作儿童读物吧

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当时真的看的泪流满面，可能觉得有些代入感吧。

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适合刚开始读英文原版书的人，词汇语句都比较简单，且书中有大量描写中国传统文化（旗袍、裹小脚、麻将、象形字…）及民国时代背景的段落，能积累不少地道的英文表达。至于内容，自传型小说，颇流水账式回忆，倒不引人入胜。

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通过阅读这本书，让我感受到我的生活有多么幸福！五妹在如此艰苦的情况下，都能坚持为自己的梦想奋斗，不仅如此，她还没有迷失自己，坚持自己的善良与本心。我希望自己也能够像她一样，无论身边的环境多么恶劣，一定要坚持做自己，一定要为自己的梦想努力。第二本英文原著！

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sad story..

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实在是喜欢不起来...

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阅读这本书的过程是带着快乐又是不快乐的~  
一本书，自己想读下去，并喜欢着，是愉悦的；但是只要想像一下五妹的生活，浓浓的悲凉就会袭来。说说几点体会：l  
一个人无论环境如何，命运掌握在自己手里，自己不能放弃自己l  
书中有一句话我很喜欢Shafts of sunlight flooded in from the large windows, exposing tiny particles of dust dancing in its wake.觉得世界很明媚，希望自己以及周边在意的人时时都能有这种明媚的心情l  
一点小小的延伸：时常在想，如果我是五妹，我应该绝对不会原谅父亲，努力让自己优秀，远离这里的一切，不知道五妹是怎样的，以及大家会如何选择…

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Lovely design for both the cover and font. Composed of appealing yet melancholy short stories. Easy to comprehend, but lacks certain subtlety and intricacy for further rumination. Very poignant at the first read, but won't have the desire to read it again.

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really good memoir for young people to read.

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Very tormenting sometimes, especially when so many adults around and just bear the cruelty of her parents, only encouraging her to fight for her own fate but choose not to stand up and fight for her. Adults are all but cowards. The only one with gut is a young boy, shame.

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Good stoy

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A touching story about an unwanted girl.

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这本书描述了作者悲惨的童年经历。虽然家道富有，但作者从生父和继母那得到的是冷漠和无情。父亲甚至不记得她的中文名和生日，只有爷爷和姑姑真正关心她。如果作者没有赢得英国的作文大赛，成为第一位香港获奖者，她的命运估计就跟她大姐一样了。故事情节虽然简单，但作者文笔细腻，读起来让人心疼，忍不住一气读完。当然书中个别细节不太合理，例如爷爷甚至没有去学校看过她一次。既然生下孩子，就该好好抚养。父亲没有尽到自己的责任，更让人遗憾的是，没有一个大成人站出来为作者反抗。所有人都是懦夫。

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给四星吧，书挺好看的，作者文笔很奇妙，代入感很强，不足的就是感觉有点bias了，我觉得没那么惨吧？那个年代那么多人没吃没穿没学上，女主有吃有穿有学上只不过跟当时社会的富人家的孩子比会觉得有点惨而已。（仅个人观点，勿喷。）还是很佩服作者文笔的，会有一种一直想读下去的欲望。

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中学时的课外读物，当年还交过读书笔记。

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女主挺可怜的 书里说了她如何受到家人无视和欺待 她也能挺过来 不容易

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很佩服年幼的Adeline,虽然饱受年幼丧母的悲痛与歧视、后母的恶待、父亲的忽视和时代的动荡辗转，但她总是能在坎坷的生活里找到快乐和希望，并通过自己的努力远走英国，去追寻自己想要的生活。本书的故事很鼓舞人心。同时，本书除了记录Adeline不易的童年生活，也从侧面记录了抗日战争时期中国资本家的生活，非常值得一读。

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## 书评

大半天读完。自传题材，unwanted主题，这种痛非锦衣玉食能填补的。少儿读物，是因为人物个性勾勒比较扁平，非黑即白，非善即恶。  
倘若人性有那么简单就好了，都可以生活在一个fairyland。

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After finish this book the first idea come out of my mind is 'knowledge upgrades one's life'. This is a real story bases on the author's life experience. Actually her family was much richer than many people's in that period, but she had a miserable childho...

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