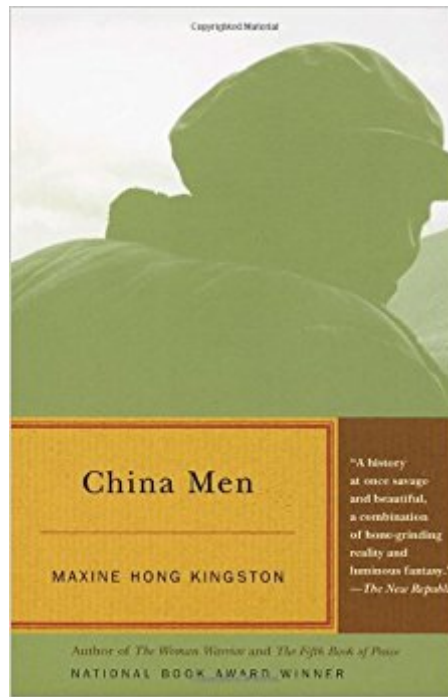


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China Men



Synopsis

The author chronicles the lives of three generations of Chinese men in America, woven from memory, myth and fact. Here's a storyteller's tale of what they endured in a strange new land.

Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

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Customer Reviews

If you want to learn about a great, five-thousand-years-old culture of the east meeting the west, *China Men* is definitely the right book for you. Maxine Hong Kingston has skillfully woven an epic of Chinese history in America in the most creative way. From the early Chinese immigration to the present day, the Chinese's dream, experience, suffering, and success in America is wonderfully told through many generations. Unlike many historical novels, this book is told from the Chinese perspective right down to the details from character to character. This book is written so impressively eloquent and truth to the bones that I dare say a native Chinese might not even know as much about his/her own culture. From Alaska to Hawaii, Kingston has covered every corner of the U.S. that Chinese immigrants have gone. The characters also added a little Chinese wisdom now and then in a day when working on the railroad or fighting in the Vietnam War. Aside from extremely in-depth in history and Chinese culture, the stories are especially fun to read. I can only describe them as totally fantastic, bizarre, and unbelievable. Do you know the Chinese had found a place called "Land of Women"? There was also communist Uncle Bun who suspected the U.S. government was plotting to poison him by collecting garbage from every door and hiding them in his food. Yes, these interesting stories have significant meaning related to the actual history. Not all of them are funny though; there are also stories that are terrifyingly shocking such as the inhuman

tortures the Japanese did to Chinese and the bias laws America had toward Chinese. There are also side stories and fairy tales of all kinds from Chinese ghost stories to a lesson by Li Fu-yen which added a savor to the book.

In *China Men*, Kingston took me on a ride all over the literary landscape. In general, I thought her book was an interesting tossed salad of memoir, fable, reporting, and poetry. As a reader, it reminded me of a scrapbook of family stories, newspaper articles, heritage legends -- all assembled in one place. Interestingly, Kingston begins the book with two distinctive chapters. Unlike the rest of the book, these two chapters are relatively homogenous, sticking with one form, voice, structure and tone throughout. The first chapter is the fable of the Land of Women. I didn't understand this chapter until the last sentences, when it seemed as though Kingston was saying that coming to North America emasculated the Chinese men who made the journey to the Gold Mountain. If Kingston's main theme is that the journey to North America emasculated the Chinese Men, then from a reader's perspective I'm not sure if the book delivers on this promise. To put a fable with a very obvious moral at the beginning of the book seems to me to set up a contract with the reader about the subject or theme of the book. Although, Kingston explores many different aspects of the Chinese experience in North America, and even starts to explore the ways that China Men were oppressed, I'm not sure she completely proves her case in my mind. I could be wrong, however. Interestingly, the second chapter of the book is another short one, this time a nearly pure piece of memoir. Alone, this chapter seems to set up the author's own relationship with Chinese men. By mistaking another man for her father, she seems to be saying from the beginning of the book that from her perspective Chinese men are nearly interchangeable. But interestingly, she isn't the only one who makes the mistake.

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