Chapter Title Summaries

Ying Chang Compestine purposefully named each of her chapters. Each title represents an important moment or event in Ling’s life. For each chapter, explain why the title is appropriate. Use at least one quote from the chapter to support your answer. Then illustrate the scene that best represents the chapter title.

Complete a Chapter Title Summary for each of the following chapters:

Chapter 9: Revolution is Not a Dinner Party
Chapter 10: Drawing a Class Line
Chapter 11: Dark Clouds
Chapter 12: Would I Ever See Him Again?
Chapter 13: The Long White Rope
Chapter 14: Shopping with Mother
Analyzing Chairman Mao’s Teachings

On page 104, Ling shares a passage from Chairman Mao’s teaching about class struggle. In school, she had been required to study it and write it from memory.

“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 gentle, so temperate, kind, courteous, restrained, and magnanimous. A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another.”

Ling reflects on the passage and thinks, “I didn’t understand what “class” and “revolution” had to do with a dinner party.” She then wishes she could have a dinner party again.

Part 1: Vocabulary
Use a dictionary and define the following words from the passage. Be sure your definition is related to the context in which the word is used.

a) refined: __________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________

b) temperate: ______________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

C) courteous: _______________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

D) restrained: _______________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

e) magnanimous: ____________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
f) revolution: ________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________


g) insurrection: ________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________


h) class: ________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________


i) overthrow: ________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________


Part 2: Analyzing

1. What do dinner parties, painting, and doing embroidery have in common? ________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________


2. What does Chairman Mao mean when he writes that these activities are “leisurely and gentle?” ________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________


3. What does Chairman Mao mean when he writes, “A revolution is an insurrection, an act of violence by which one class overthrows another.” ________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________


4. Now think of his first statement. Why is a “revolution not a dinner party?” ________________________________
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________________________________________________________________________________________
Physician’s Creed

Whenever a great physician treats diseases, he has to be mentally calm and his disposition firm. He should not give way to wishes and desires but must first develop a marked attitude of compassion. He should commit himself firmly to a willingness to make an effort to save every living creature.

A great physician should not pay attention to status, wealth, or age. Nor should he question whether his patient is an enemy or friend . . . He should meet everyone on equal ground, he should always act as if he were thinking of himself, he is not to ponder over his own fortune or misfortune and should thus preserve life and have compassion for it.

Whoever acts in this manner is a great physician for the living. Whoever acts contrary to these commands is a great thief of those who still have their spirits.

Ling’s father, Dr. Chang, is a doctor. Lings says, “he used to tell the young doctors who came to visit that [the Physician’s Creed] was the best guidance for anyone who wanted to be a doctor.”

Answer the following questions on a separate piece of paper.

1. After the last raid, how did Dr. Chang’s job change? How do you think he felt about this? Why do you think his job changed?

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2. According to the creed, ‘a great physician should not pay attention to status, wealth, or age.’ How is this different from Chairman Mao’s teaching ideas?

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____________________________________________________________________________________
One of the tactics that Comrade Li and the Red Guard use is to force children to draw a class-line between their family and themselves. After trying to escape, Nui is interrogated by five Red Guards and then draws a class line and denounces his parents and the Chang’s as his enemies.

1. What does it mean to “draw a class line?”

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________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

2. What does ‘denounce’ mean?

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________________________________________________________________________________________
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3. Why do you think Niu Wong draws a class line and denounces his parents and Ling’s family?

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________________________________________________________________________________________
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4. Is Ling right to hate him?

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________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________

5. What do you think would have happened to him if he didn’t draw a class line?

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________________________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________________________
Fighting for Food

One of the last chores Ling’s Mother teaches to her is going to the market. This is because she feels that Ling is “too young to fight for food.” Finally one cold Sunday morning, she takes Ling to the market. Answer the following questions about this event.

1. When they arrive at the store, Ling meets Aunt Wu. Who is Aunt Wu and what is her relationship with Ling’s Mother?

2. At the market, there is a front door and a back door. Who gets served at the back door?

3. At the back door, Ling sees Gao’s father, who had come to her school the previous week to announce Chairman Mao’s new instructions, “cut down on consuming and be hungry heroes for the sake of the Cultural Revolution.” He walks away from the back door with a large box of food including meat and eggs. Why does he not have to be a hungry hero?

4. On page 172, Ling’s mother says, “you are growing up, my dear”, and she has tears in her eyes. Why does she say this?
Discussion Questions

1. At the beginning of the novel, Ling was a very picky eater. As the Chang family has less and less food available, how has her relationship with food changed?

2. On page 112, Nui shows Ling a letter with a map. Why does he say “It’s our only hope?”

3. On page 113, why would Ling like to go to America?

4. What is the “three piece treasure” everyone had to show at the school gates each morning? What happened to Ling’s old math teacher when he forgot his button at home?

5. What is Ling’s reaction when she sees “DEAR MOTHER, DEAR FATHER, BUT NOBODY IS AS DEAR AS CHAIRMAN MAO,” on a huge poster outside of the hospital? (page 124)

6. Why did the three janitors no longer need to do their work? What did they do instead? (page 125)

7. Ling’s father saved a drowning man from the river. Why do all the workers walk away after they see his face? (page 131)

8. On page 135, Mr. Ji says to father, “they can kill me, but not the truth, dark clouds have concealed the sun for too long.” What does he mean?

9. “Nui looked around our living room and took a step toward the portrait of Chairman Mao, which hid the Golden Gate Bridge.” (page 142) What does Ling do in this moment? Nui, still had an opportunity to expose the picture, why do you think Nui does not reveal the picture after all?

10. On page 147, why does Ling envy the baby mice she hears?

11. On page 149, Ling realizes that her Mother had been taking their belonging to the black market to trade. What was she trading for?

12. On page 157, what happened to the boy who refused to draw a class line between himself and his dead mother? What did his grandmother than do?
Figurative and Descriptive Language

1. After the Red Guard raids the Chang's apartment for the first time, Ling asks her mother why the family has to paste so many small portraits of Chairman Mao in every room. Her mother replies, “It's like the incense we burn in the summer to keep the mosquitoes away.” What does Ling’s Mother mean? (page 104)

2. Why does Ling’s Mother say, “you are two melons on the same vine” to Ling and her Father? (page 136)

3. The night of the second raid, Nui is among them. Ling says. “Nui roamed around like a hungry dog sniffing out a bone.” Why do you think the author used this simile to describe Nui's actions? How is this in contrast to the Nui who used to laugh and joke with Ling? (page 140)

4. Illustrate one of the following ‘descriptive scenes’.
   a) Page 110: “The apartment smelled of sandalwood. Broken dishes, torn clothes, and paper were spread around crippled furniture. Someone had sliced the painting of the French girl with braids pinned around her head. Now her face was cut in half.”
   b) Page 119 / 120: “Rumbling thunder followed slashes of lightning. The chilly wind whipped the electric wires around the courtyard. Shivering in my raincoat, I tried hard to keep my eyes open in the cold rain.”
   c) Page 148: I kept it hidden between layers of my bed’s cotton batting. The streetlight threw tree branch shadows on my bed, as if spreading long ghost fingers. Peeling the top two layers back, I was shocked to find the blouse missing.”
   d) Page 170: “The salesman wrapped a piece of meat in a dried lotus leaf and dropped it into my basket. The meat felt as heavy as a rock. I tried to move my feet, but they didn’t feel like they belonged to me.”