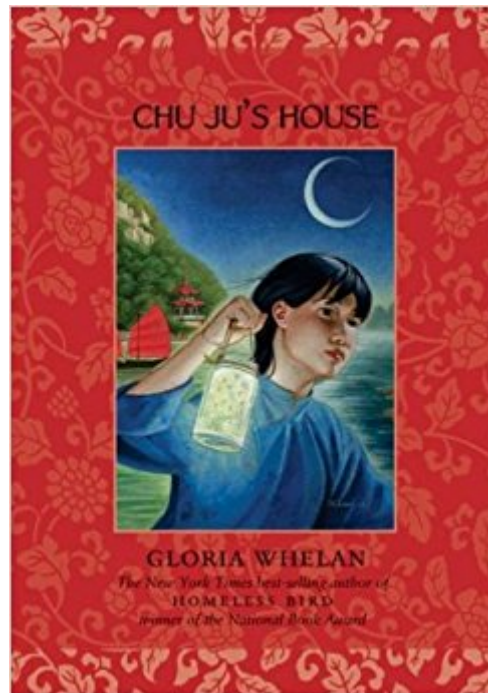




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# Chu Ju's House



## Synopsis

One girl too many . . . When a girl is born to Chu Ju's family, it is quickly determined that the baby must be sent away. After all, the law states that a family may have only two children, and tradition dictates that every family should have a boy. To make room for one, this girl will have to go.

Fourteen-year-old Chu Ju knows she cannot allow this to happen to her sister. Understanding that one girl must leave, she sets out in the middle of the night, vowing not to return. With luminescent detail, National Book Award-winning author Gloria Whelan transports readers to China, where law conspires with tradition, tearing a young woman from her family, sending her on a remarkable journey to find a home of her own.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 240 pages

Publisher: HarperCollins (April 1, 2004)

ISBN-10: 0060507241

ASIN: B001SARDGK

Product Dimensions: 5 x 0.9 x 7.1 inches

Shipping Weight: 11.2 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 stars 29 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #7,984,642 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #61 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > New Baby](#) #368 in [Books > Teens > Historical Fiction > Asia](#) #784 in [Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Runaways](#)

## Customer Reviews

Grade 5-8-In present-day rural China, 14-year-old Chu Ju's mother gives birth to her second child, another girl. When her grandmother makes plans to sell the baby, Chu Ju decides to leave home. Perhaps then her family will keep little Hua and her parents will try again for a boy. After finding work on a sampan and becoming like a daughter to the fisherman's wife, she tells her story, and the woman is so horrified that she wants her to return home immediately. Forced to move on once more, the teen ends up in the household of Han Na, whose son wants to leave the rice paddies and go to Shanghai. Here Chu Ju proves her worth, making the paddy more productive using modern techniques she learns from her neighbor and friend Ling, caring for Han Na as she becomes increasingly weak, and rescuing her unfortunate son from jail in the city. Finally, having achieved a sense of self-worth, she goes back to see her family, but only to visit as she has made a life on the

land bequeathed to her by Han Na. Whelan skillfully shows the mixture of past and present that is characteristic of rural China. She conveys the feelings of a nation on the brink of change, a country whose young people are trying out new ways of doing things, yet are clear about what traditional values are important to retain. Barbara Scotto, Michael Driscoll School, Brookline, MA Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Gr. 6-9. When Chu Ju is 14 years old, her mother gives birth to a second daughter. Rural China policy restricts families to two children, and when Chu Ju's bitter grandmother convinces the parents to put the new baby up for adoption, leaving space in the family for a possible boy "to care for us in our old age," Chu Ju runs away. She wanders, finding sporadic work and shelter, until she comes upon a loving home with an aging farmer and becomes a skilled farmer herself. As in *Homeless Bird* (2000) and *Angel on the Square* (2001), Whelan tells a compelling adventure story, filled with rich cultural detail, about a smart, likable teenage girl who overcomes society's gender restrictions. Whelan skillfully weaves in just enough cultural context to support the story, while her atmospheric details bring the green Chinese landscape to life. Most compelling, though, is brave, clearly drawn Chu Ju, whose intelligence and good heart win her land, family respect, and the promise of romance by the story's end. Gillian Engberg Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

I was surprised to like this book as much as I did. I was expecting the best part of the book to be the time period/subject matter because there are surprisingly few books for children that cover Communism and especially Communism in China. The premise that a girl would run away to keep her parents out of trouble when they had another baby girl born in the house was something I thought our students should learn about--especially since we have several adopted children from China in our grade level who were themselves victims of the one-child policy. But I was also concerned that such mature subject matter could be covered tastefully. Gloria Whelan did it. Not only was the book very real (and yet not scary), but it was a great piece of literature! The main character grows, reforms, and learns as she goes. The plot has movement and twists. There are metaphors and foreshadowing. The setting and geographical information included in the book was phenomenal--plants, animals, businesses, cities, rural life, weather... I also liked how she covered the religious background and changes without polemic. The kids learned a lot about traditional religion and Communism without feeling like they were being lectured to death. Every few chapters, there were all kinds of comprehension questions that could be asked to make my 4th-6th graders

really /think/. And that's the point of literature, right?The whole story was likeable and full of suspense--we read it aloud slowly and the kids wanted to know what was going to happen next. We were not disappointed either, as the story has a good ending. Sometimes authors really bomb in that area, but this one had a really fitting ending--not tragic, not overly sentimental. It ended on a good note but still keeping with the real historical circumstances that China in the 70s would have been having. Way to go, Gloria Whelan. I think this story will appeal to almost everyone interested in this area.

Read in daughter's book club. The era the book was written for doesn't seem to match the plot/setting, a bit confusing. Those growing up in China during the time the book was set indicated that the culture described is older and not what they experienced. Expect more from historical fiction for things like timeline matching culture and events. Unfortunate, otherwise a good book if it were set 40 years(?) earlier. I'd defer to residents of the areas described on the accuracy or lack-thereof though.

Reading this book was a journey with my class. I had assigned a reading group this book and needed another copy for myself...how simple to click and find it on kindle! Challenging to keep up the assignment with the pages they were reading but sure handy when I needed the book instantly!Chu Ju was a remarkable story of a young girl who gave up the life she knew to save the sister she didn't know. Her journey through various life styles was mind boggling and so mesmerizing. The students who read this book found it to be one of their favorites!None of us wanted the story to end. This was a reading assignment for advanced fifth graders.

Whelan was criticized for not having first hand information about the foreign settings and customs in her stories and only using second hand research. Even if the situations she describes are not common or even plausible, she writes beautifully, her stories are exciting and I appreciate the range of cultural and historical situations that she describes. I buy her books for an 11 year old granddaughter, but I read them first and I have enjoyed them thoroughly and appreciate the exposure my granddaughter is getting to other places in the world. This particular book describes one Chinese girl's attempt to deal with China's "one child policy," which does permit two children per family in rural areas. It is fine for one of the two children to be a girl, but when a second girl is born, and grandmother insists that she be given away so that the family can still have a chance to have a boy, Chu Ju boldly runs away to save her baby sister and in the course of her adventures

encounters other slices of Chinese life--a houseboat on the river, the silkworm industry, rice paddy farming, and of course the repression of dissenting thought.

grate book

I love how descriptive this author is. I feel like I'm getting a true glimpse of life in China, as well as this girl's journey.

Excellent conditions.

I agree with JGH. My daughter, adopted from China, was assigned this book in 5th grade as part of the language arts-social studies multi-cultural program. My daughter (an avid reader) came home from school insisting (which she never does) that I read the book. I sat with her in the playroom and as I read aloud, she could not sit still and kept asking to go to the bathroom (odd since she INSISTED that I read the book). I soon learned why. In chapter 2, the Grandmother negotiates with another woman from the village to SELL the infant girl. None of the book reviews say that! I was FURIOUS, but kept reading. This material led to several heated and long email exchanges with the principal. I gave my child the choice to read a different book, but she did not want to be excluded from reading group, so we continued to read the chapters together. However, by the time we got to chapter 4, I was done. In chapter 4, Chu Ju awakens in a field to meet another girl who tells her to leave immediately because the owner will beat her too. Within this same chapter, the author mentions selling girls as wives, etc. As soon as I read that, I decided that my daughter would NOT read this book. My daughter is now reading Grace Lin's *Dumpling Days*, a much more appropriate cultural text for a 10 year old adoptee. She's not happy about being excluded from reading groups, but her behavior has improved since she has stopped reading the horrid *Chu Ju's House*. If you see this text on your child's reading list, speak up AGAINST it. No matter how heroic the character, it does NO child good to hear this information at such a young age.

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