



***Red Scarf Girl: A Memoir of the Cultural Revolution* by Ji-li Jiang**

Purpose: This summer reading assignment marks the beginning of our journey into Honors World History. Throughout this course, we will study several revolutions. A revolution is a major and often sudden change in a country's government or society. Revolutions can dramatically affect how people live, think, and are treated. Over the year, we will explore the many ways revolutions shape nations and influence people's lives. One important example is the Cultural Revolution in China, a period of upheaval that lasted from 1966 to 1976. During this time, many innocent people were harshly persecuted, and Chinese society experienced widespread political and social disruption. By studying events like this, we will connect the revolutions of the past to movements and changes that continue to shape the world today.

Description of the Book: The memoir *Red Scarf Girl* tells the true story of a 12-year-old girl, Ji-li Jiang. It shows how the Cultural Revolution affected her life and forced her and her family to live in constant fear of arrest. When her father is imprisoned, Ji-li faces a life-changing decision: she must either denounce him and turn her back on her family, or refuse and risk her future. Through this story, we will explore the history of the Cultural Revolution and better understand important ideas such as conformity, obedience, responsibility, prejudice, and belonging. We will also examine how these factors influenced the choices people, especially young people in China during the 1960s, were forced to make.

Content Note: *Red Scarf Girl* includes descriptions of difficult and sensitive topics. Students will encounter scenes that include bullying, violence, and references to death and suicide. Students are encouraged to email Mrs. Soliván at asolivan@presentationhs.org if they have any concerns.

Overview of the Summer Reading Assignment & Due Date: All Honors World History students are required to read *Red Scarf Girl* and complete all parts of the assignment. On the first day of class, you must bring a printed copy of this packet, a paper copy of the book, and your completed project. If your final project is digital, you must have a working link ready to share.

Timelines: [Modern Chinese History](#) since 1949 and the [Cultural Revolution Timeline](#) 1966-68 highlight key historical events to support your understanding as you read.

Key Vocabulary Terms: A glossary of key terms related to the Cultural Revolution is included at the back of the book. Students are encouraged to refer to it as they read.

Pronunciation: At the beginning of the book (page XI), there is a guide that explains how to correctly pronounce Chinese words.

Map: Places of Interest in *Red Scarf Girl*.



Have questions? If anything is unclear, feel free to email Ms. Soliván at asolivan@presentationhs.org. She's happy to help!

Part 1: Background Information

Overview: To understand Ji-li's experiences and why many Chinese youth were inspired to join the Cultural Revolution, it is important to first have a basic understanding of the ideas promoted by Mao Zedong and the People's Republic of China (PRC).

1. Read the [background reading](#) on the Rise of the People's Republic of China. Then, answer the three questions below in your own handwriting using complete sentences.
 - a) What ideas and goals did the Communist Party stand for?

b) Why did the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) gain support from millions of Chinese people instead of the Nationalist Party?

c) Briefly describe (in 3–4 sentences) how the Communist Party rose to power in China.

2. Understanding key terms that Ji-li Jiang uses in her memoir will help you better understand the book. For each term listed below, **use the glossary at the end of the book** to write a definition in your own words. It is important to rely on the glossary, not the internet, so you can understand the terms as they are used in the story.

Term	Definition in Your Own Words
class status & “revolutionary” vs. “unreliable” family labels (pp 276-277)	
capitalism (pp 275)	

Term	Definition in Your Own Words
reactionary (pp 283)	
bourgeois(ie) (pp 275)	

Part 2: Annotating the Text

Expectations: Annotating a text means actively reading by marking important ideas, writing short notes in the margins, and using symbols to show what is important, confusing, or interesting. Good annotation strategies include summarizing parts of the text in your own words, circling unfamiliar words, starring main ideas, and using colors to organize your notes. The purpose of annotating is to help you understand the text better, stay engaged while reading, and remember key information for later.

You are expected to annotate your copy of Red Scarf Girl by marking sections of the book that help you answer the reading questions. You may do this by using sticky notes or by physically writing and highlighting in the text. In addition, for each response in Parts 3 and 4, you must include the page numbers that support your answer. You will use your text during our discussions of the book in class.

Part 3: Reading Questions

Directions: The chapters of Red Scarf Girl have been divided into 6 main sections. For each section, you will be given two prompts and asked to respond to **one** of them. Your response must be written in **complete sentences** and completed by hand in the space provided, either using an Apple Pencil on a digital copy or pen/pencil on paper. For every response, include the **page numbers** referenced in your answer and clearly mark the section in your text.

Part 1 Includes the Prologue through chapter “Writing Da-zi-bao” (pp. 1–51)- In the space below, respond to **one** of the following prompts.

Prompt 1: On page 1, Ji-li recites this Chinese saying popular in the 1960s: “Heaven and Earth are great, but greater still is the kindness of the Communist Party; father and mother are dear, but dearer still is Chairman Mao.” What do you think the above quotation means? Why might Communist leaders during the Cultural Revolution have encouraged people to place their loyalty to the government and Mao Zedong above loyalty to their own families? Explain how this kind of loyalty could help the government reach its goals.

Prompt 2: On page 25, Ji-li says, “But Grandma, we have to get rid of those old ideas, old culture, old customs, and old habits. Chairman Mao said they’re holding us back.” What are some examples of Four Olds provided in this chapter? Do you think old ideas, culture, customs, or habits have the power to hold people back? Why or why not?

Which prompt are you responding to? _____ List the page(s) from *Red Scarf Girl* that you used to respond to the prompt, and annotate those sections in the text. _____

Your Response to the Prompt:

Part 2 Includes “The Red Successors” (pp. 52–71), “Graduation” (pp. 72–79), and “The Sound and Drums of Gongs” (pp. 80–99). In the space below, respond to **one** of the following prompts.

Prompt 1: Using the statement from Xing Lu, “During the Cultural Revolution, one’s class status became the criterion for drawing lines between enemies and friends, and indeed, between good and evil,” explain what this idea means in your own words. Then, include two quotations from pages 52–99 of *Red Scarf Girl* that show how class status affected the way people were treated and judged.

Prompt 2: How do characters react to the “sound of drums and gongs,” and why do their reactions differ? What role do government authorities play in the searches, and where can victims go for protection? What can people do when a government uses violence against its own citizens? Use at least two quotes from the text to support your answer.

Which prompt are you responding to? _____ List the page(s) from *Red Scarf Girl* that you used to respond to the prompt, and annotate those sections in the text. _____

Your Response to the Prompt:

Part 3 Includes chapters “The Propaganda Wall” (pp. 100–117), “A Search in Passing” (pp. 118–139), and “Fate” (pp. 140–155). In the space below, respond to **one** of the following prompts.

Prompt 1 On page 126, Ji-li reflects, “I wondered what I would be doing if I had been born into a red family instead of a black one.” Respond to her question by explaining how her life, experiences, and beliefs might have been different if she had been born into a “red” family. Use specific examples and include a supporting quote from pages 100–155 in your response.

Prompt 2 How did the Red Guards use fear and humiliation during the Cultural Revolution? What effects did these actions have on victims, bystanders (people who see something happen but do not get involved), and perpetrators (people who harm others)? Include specific examples and a quote from pages 100–155 to support your answer.

Which prompt are you responding to? _____ List the page(s) from Red Scarf Girl that you used to respond to the prompt, and annotate those sections in the text. _____

Your Response to the Prompt:

Part 4 Includes “Junior High School at Last” (pp. 156–172), “Locked Up” (pp. 173–190), and “An Educable Child” (pp. 191–205). In the space below, respond to **one** of the following prompts.

Prompt 1: On page 177, Ji-li’s father is pressured to confess to crimes he did not commit, and his family debates whether he should confess. Which argument is most convincing? Write a one-paragraph response in the role of an advisor. Begin by briefly explaining Ji-li’s dilemma, then offer guidance and suggestions about what she should consider or do. Support your advice with evidence from the text.

Prompt 2: On page 190, Ji-li is asked to betray her family in order to secure a “bright future.” Write a one-paragraph response in the role of an advisor. Begin by briefly explaining Ji-li’s dilemma, then offer guidance and suggestions about what she should consider or do. Support your advice with evidence from the text.

Which prompt are you responding to? _____ List the page(s) from Red Scarf Girl that you used to respond to the prompt, and annotate those sections in the text. _____

Your Response to the Prompt:

Part 5 Includes chapters “Half-City Jiangs” (pp. 206–217), “The Class Education Exhibition” (pp. 218–229), “The Rice Harvest” (pp. 230–243), “The Incriminating Letter” (pp. 244–259), and “Sweeping” (pp. 260–264)

In the space below, respond to **one** of the following prompts.

Prompt 1: What was Ji-li’s experience during the Cultural Revolution in *Red Scarf Girl*? How would you describe Ji-li’s role—bystander, perpetrator, upstander, and/or victim? A bystander is someone who observes without getting involved, a perpetrator harms others, and an upstander speaks out or helps. Use evidence and two quotes from the text to explain your answer.

Prompt 2: Based on *Red Scarf Girl* (1966–1968), do you think the Cultural Revolution was a success? What were its goals, and how well were they achieved? Support your answer with evidence and two quotes from the text.

Which prompt are you responding to? _____ List the page(s) from *Red Scarf Girl* that you used to respond to the prompt, and annotate those sections in the text. _____

Your Response to the Prompt:

Part 6 The Epilogue Pages (pp. 265–272)

Prompt 1: Ji-li explains that many of those who physically and/or emotionally tortured others during the Cultural Revolution were never formally judged and punished. She writes, “Those who persecuted others, even beat or tortured them, were victims too, after all” (p. 270). What do you think she means by this statement? Do you agree or disagree that the perpetrators of violence (people who caused harm to others) were also victims? Should former Red Guards be responsible for the harm they committed? Why or why not?

Prompt 2: On page 266 of *Red Scarf Girl*, Ji-li says, “Without a sound legal system, a small group or even a single person can take control of an entire country.” What does she mean by a “sound legal system,” and why was China’s system in the 1960s unsound? How can a strong legal system prevent dictatorship or rule by a small group? Do you think your society has a sound legal system? Why or why not?

Which prompt are you responding to? _____ List the page(s) from *Red Scarf Girl* that you used to respond to the prompt, and annotate those sections in the text. _____

Your Response to the Prompt:

Part 4: Bring Your Ideas to Life - Project Choices

What should your project explain?

Ji-Li Jian stated, “I hope that by sharing my story with you, not only will you remember the darkest time in modern Chinese history, but also that you will realize that this kind of tragedy is universal, and similar tragedies are actually still happening every day. The importance of learning history is not the history itself, but how we apply history’s lessons to our own lives to prevent further tragedies from occurring.”

In her book *Red Scarf Girl*, Ji-li struggles with questions about loyalty, responsibility, equality, justice, political violence (violence caused by political conflict), and the pressure to obey authority and conform during the Cultural Revolution. The memoir also explores ideas about revolution, the role of government, and the role people play in society. **Your task is to respond to the both of the prompts below-**

- *Prompt 1-* A legacy is the lasting impact that an event leaves on people, society, and future generations. The legacy of the Cultural Revolution includes its long-term effects on China's government, education, families, and culture, as well as the ways people remember and learn from that time today.

[Here are several quotations](#) that reflect how people experienced and remember the Cultural Revolution. Choose one quotation and write a response. In your response, discuss:

- a. What you find interesting or important about the quotation;
 - b. Whether you relate to or agree with the ideas expressed, and why;
 - c. What the quotation suggests about the legacy of the Cultural Revolution and how people should remember that period in history.
- *Prompt 2-* What advice would you give people today to help prevent tragedies like the Cultural Revolution from happening again? Use examples from *Red Scarf Girl* to explain how people can learn from the past and make better choices in the future.

What are your project choices?

You have different project choices to show what you've learned and to answer the questions above. Each option has its own directions and requirements. Click the links on each project title to see the details. Choose the one that fits your strengths and interests best.

- [Found Poem](#)
- [Podcast](#)
- [Da-zi-bao \(Big Character Poster\)](#)