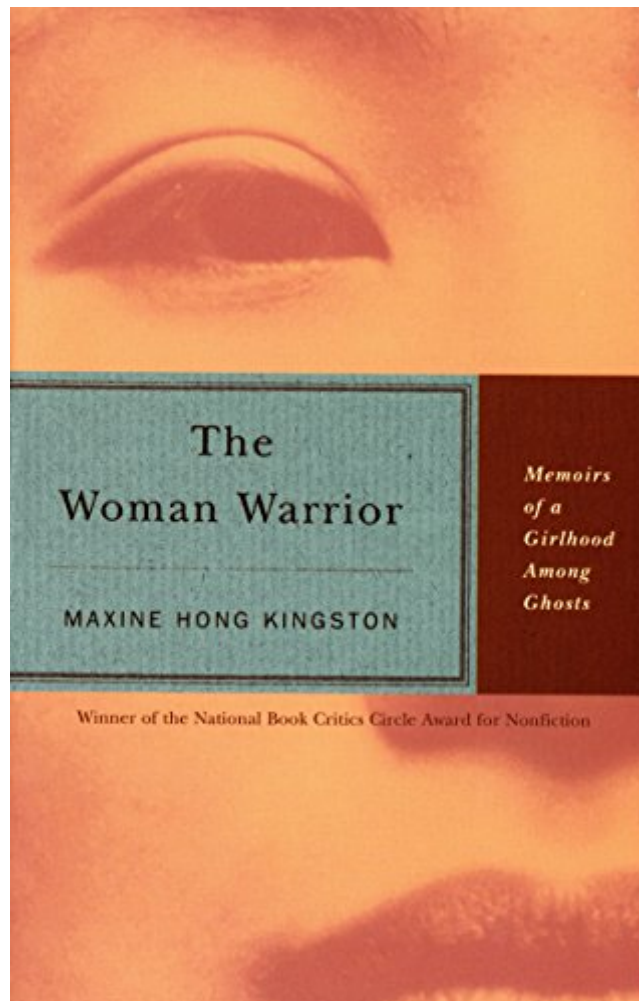


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The Woman Warrior: Memoirs Of A Girlhood Among Ghosts (Vintage International)



Synopsis

A Chinese American woman tells of the Chinese myths, family stories and events of her California childhood that have shaped her identity.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Woman Warrior, by Maxine Hong Kingston, captures readers with her own interpretation of what it was like to grow up as a female Chinese American. As a little girl, she came to America with her family. Despite being in a new country, she had to deal with the old traditions from her homeland. Kingston hears different legends which she pieces together to create her woman warrior. It becomes her source of strength in a society that rejected both her sex as well as her race. The book, divided into five interwoven stories, is at times confusing as it jumps around. Nevertheless she does a great job explaining her life while growing up. The first story, called "No Name Woman," tells of her paternal aunt who bears a child out of wedlock and is harried by the villagers and by her family into drowning herself. The family now punishes this taboo-breaker by never speaking about her and by denying her name. However, Kingston breaks the family silence by writing about this rebel whom she calls "my forebear." The next story is called "White Tigers." It is a myth about a

heroine named Fa Mu Lan, who fights in place of her father and saves her village. This story became the Disney movie, *Mulan*. "Sharman" is a story of Kingston's mother. It explores what it was like to study as a woman to become a doctor in China. "At the Western Palace" is about Kingston's aunt who comes to America and discovers that her husband has remarried in America. Finally, the last story, "A Song for a Barbarian Reed Pipe" is about Kingston's own experience in America when she first arrived. She explains what it was like to be a newcomer in a strange culture.

In the novel, *The Woman Warrior*, Kingston addresses several themes including the relationship of boys vs. girls in the Chinese culture, the process of naming, a warrior spirit within women, ghosts as representative of people, the symbolism of talk-stories, and the significance of a voice for speaking as well as writing. While Kingston explores these various themes, she also incorporates her own memoir and testimony. As a Chinese-American, she reveals the complex duality of an identity shaped by two cultures. As a woman, she reveals her fears and struggle to maintain her freedom, along with her desire to earn love from her Mother. As a writer, she reveals a voice she constantly silenced during her youth -- a voice which empowers not only her own identity through writing, but also acknowledges the identity and existence of an aunt who dared to be an individual. Language provides Kingston an avenue into rebellion and strength and yet at the same time, through her language, she inevitably separates herself from her traditions and heritage. Throughout her memoir, Kingston struggles to assert her own identity and liberate her voice. "I shut my mouth, but I felt something alive tearing at my throat, bite by bite, from the inside" (200). This soreness within her throat grows with time along with the need to not only release her identity, but furthermore, to share this identity with her mother. "Maybe because I was the one with the tongue cut loose, I had grown inside me a list of over two hundred things that I had to tell my mother so that she would know the true things about me and to stop the pain in my throat" (197). Kingston needs her mother to help release the language inside her.

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