

Dear Jung Chang:

I was deeply moved by your story "Wild Swan". Just like you, I was also born in China, only many years later, so I don't know that much about the past. My mom took me to the place where Mao ZeDong's body was kept in a glass case, still lifelike over the many years. I hadn't read your book at that time yet, so I thought that he was the great leader who formed China.

A few years later, I stumbled upon your book. As I read it, I was fascinated by what Mao did in order to *get* the results that he wanted. I was surprised that he started the Cultural Revolution in order to receive power and respect from his people; that he claimed peasants were supposed to be respected more than high officials because peasants always listened to what Mao tells them to do, but high officials sometimes argued back. Also, I learned that Mao let Red Guards destroy homes and punish people for things they didn't do.

Same as you, my parents told me that he was a good man and that he should be known for his bravery and intelligence. I was taught that we should respect him. I know it's very hard to oppose something after you've been taught to believe it all your life, like how you tried several times before actually daring to oppose Mao in your mind. But after I've read your book, my thoughts are altering about how "great" Mao was. Now, hurt swells up inside me like the throbbing pain of a bruise when I read about the way Mao treated everyone who opposed his thoughts. Now, I, too, lament over how your family and many others have suffered because of him, and I wonder if Mao's plan was to form China to make it a better place for everyone, or to form China so he could have more power.

I realize that there isn't just a good side to someone and a bad side to another. Your story opened up my mind to what some people can really be, like Mao. Even if he did form China, even if he was a great leader of the past, could anyone be that perfect? I know it's hard to change my mind about Mao because I believed him to be a great leader who formed China, but it's true. He started the Cultural Revolution, and he made all those innocent people suffer. Thank you for writing such a moving novel that changed the way I think about China's past.

Yours truly,

Lucy Zhang