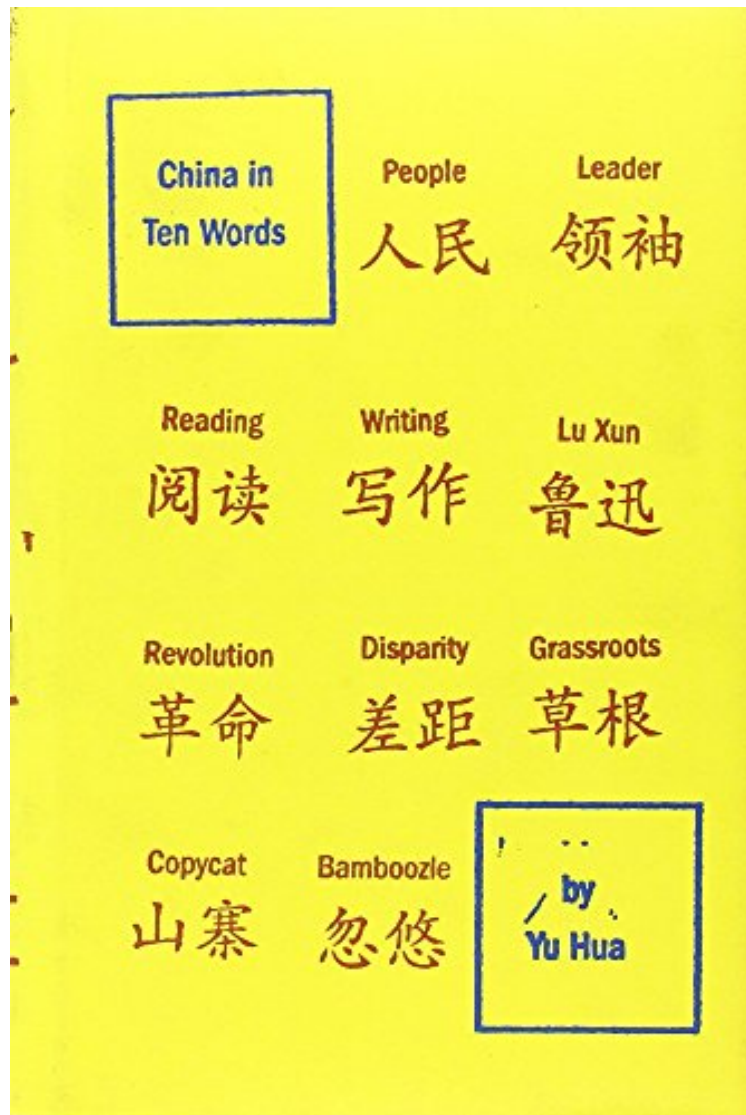


China in Ten Words

Yu Hua

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Yu Hua : China in Ten Words before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised China in Ten Words:

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Zhongguo!By taylor storey Fantastic book! I have now read 3 "popular" style books written about China, this is by far the best one. (The others were Dreaming in Chinese by Fallows- pretty good from a linguistics angle and Lost on Planet China by Troost - not horrible, but there's a lot better out there i'm sure). The author of this book, Yu Hua, is a prominent Chinese author who lives in Beijing/Hangzhou. He has written a number of very successful Chinese novels. This one, is ten essays on various parts of China. It is banned

in China. It's a Chinese person being honest about the Chinese government and history. This is a gold mine. Reading and Copycat were probably my two favorite essays. In the first, he talks about growing up in the cultural revolution and scrounging around for books to read. He almost never gets past Mao's little red book and Lu Xun's various writings. He does find some books that have been extremely battered, often only partially surviving to feed his literary desires. In Copycat he talks about the Chinese mentality behind making Copycat products. A couple of times he has had fictitious interviews of him published and he will confront a reporter on it and the reporter simply says "it's Copycat" and in the Chinese culture, that justifies it. There are many good things for him to say about China as well. This book was well written, engaging and so helpful for someone living in China to understand it a bit more. I enthusiastically recommend it to anyone looking for a thoughtful, accessible, historical and contemporary read on modern China. 46 of 48 people found the following review helpful. What's in a Word? By A. Jones Great writing, great story-telling, and insightful commentary on contemporary cultural events of China through the use of ten essays on the meaning of ten words. The author uses his own life history and his brilliant skills to bring the meaning of these words to life, in the context of his life and the lives of Chinese citizens. He uses his sharp mind and warm heart to analyze political policy and human interaction. I learned so much about the life of the author, but also gained a much deeper understanding of the rapidly changing Chinese culture and political landscape. I recommend this book to anyone interested in China's history or culture, or to anyone interested in how the meaning of one word can change radically when used in a different cultural context, or to anyone interested in reading a fascinating life story. A marvelous read on so many fronts. 7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. In-depth look at China and a great Chinese author. By suburban dissident Equal parts autobiography and social commentary, Yu Hua's *China in Ten Words* makes explicit much of the underlying commentary in Yu Hua's corpus of fictional works. In treating China's past as he experienced, its tumultuous present and uncertain future, Yu Hua lays bare many of the experiences from his own life and draws on that insightful eye that fueled novels like *To Live*, *The Chronicle of a Blood Merchant*, and *Brothers*. One of the most interesting things about the book is how Yu Hua is able to trace common threads from China's extremist communist past into the present climate of breakneck paced development and economic growth. While this is quite apparent in the words Yu Hua picks that have only emerged within the last few decades, it is even more so in the terms that have changed dramatically in the move from Cultural Revolution China to the present. This is a great book for any China fan. Yu Hua's commentary on modern China, as always, brings to life, in vivid ways, the different social ills facing contemporary society and the myriad ways people adapt to face their new environment. Additionally, for fans of Yu Hua himself, this book provides priceless background information to his fictional work. It was a little much for those new to China, but it is well worth it.

From one of China's most acclaimed writers, his first work of nonfiction to appear in English: a unique, intimate look at the Chinese experience over the last several decades, told through personal stories and astute analysis that sharply illuminate the country's meteoric economic and social transformation. Framed by ten phrases common in the Chinese vernacular—people, leader, reading, writing, Lu Xun (one of the most influential Chinese writers of the twentieth century), disparity, revolution, grassroots, Copycat, and Bamboozle—*China in Ten Words* reveals as never before the world's most populous yet oft-misunderstood nation. In *Disparity*, for example, Yu Hua illustrates the mind-boggling economic gaps that separate citizens of the country. In *Copycat*, he depicts the escalating trend of piracy and imitation as a creative new form of revolutionary action. And in *Bamboozle*, he describes the increasingly brazen practices of trickery, fraud, and chicanery that are, he suggests, becoming a way of life at every level of society. Characterized by Yu Hua's trademark wit, insight, and courage, *China in Ten Words* is a refreshingly candid vision of the Chinese miracle and all its consequences, from the singularly invaluable perspective of a writer living in China today.

How many tomes do you suppose it might take to describe the almost indescribable complexities of modern China's staggering growth pains and infinite ironies? Yu Hua does it with ten words. . . . A rich, sympathetic, yet unsparring portrait of a nation in near-constant transition. . . . The author manages to make palpable the follies of the nouveau riches, the grotesque plight of the rural poor, the corrupt and tragicomic missteps of the ignorant charlatans who make up the passing parade of local politicians, as well as the blazing brutality of what took place on the Square that night when the army rolled over student demonstrators in their tanks. Miraculously, he does all this without seeming to oversimplify. Clearly, Yu Hua was the man for the job. . . . He knows, in other words, whereof he speaks. But mostly he was qualified to undertake such a project because of his gift for compassion. . . . Pitched at a level of heartbreak that may be almost unbearable for Western sensibilities, the final two chapters, "Copycats" and "Bamboozle," are nevertheless essential reading for anyone who hopes to get a sense of both the ingenuity and breathtaking chicanery that together drive so much of life in modern China. Barnes and Noble A discursively simple series of essays explaining his country's recent history through 10 central terms. . . . Caustic and difficult to forget, *China in Ten Words* is a people's-eye view of a world in which the people have little place. Pico Iyer, *Time (Asia)* One of China's most prominent writers. . . . In his sublime essay collection, Hua explores his often spartan childhood during the Cultural Revolution in the 1960s and 1970s and the rampant corruption of modern China. Newark Star-Ledger *China in Ten*

Words is a series of 10 essays that follow particular themes Yu Hua deems to be integral to understanding his country's experience. Using words such as leader, revolution, disparity, and copycat, he manages to chart some of his country's amazing transformations. . . . His style, far from being academic, is engaging and sardonic. He writes as though he's having an intense conversation with the reader. I highly recommend this book for anyone hoping to gain some perspective on this complicated country. Valerie Senyk, *The Record* There's no shortage of books promising to explain the most populous nation in the world to Western readers, fat, solemn tomes crammed with names, numbers, events and predictions. *China in Ten Words* by Yu Hua, on the other hand, is a slim volume, and a lot of it concerns Yu's childhood in a backwater town during the Cultural Revolution. You'll find a few statistics scattered over these pages, but far more of those peculiar modern yarns that reside in the netherland between gossip and news report. Nothing tells you more about a people than the stories they like to swap: the old peasant patriarch who could not countenance the price of a BMW 760Li until the dealer explained that it took two cows to supply the leather for each of its seats, the female Mao impersonator who spends hours perfecting her makeup and learning to walk in elevator shoes. . . . Yu has a fiction writer's nose for the perfect detail, the everyday stuff that conveys more understanding than a thousand Op-Eds. . . . Perhaps the most bewitching aspect of this book is how funny it is, especially in the first few (and most autobiographical) chapters. . . . Yu has an exquisite, cosmopolitan sense of irony; in Allen H. Barr's sensitive translation, he comes across as an Asian fusion of David Sedaris and Charles Kuralt. . . . Yu's revelation that the Chinese often find their own society bewildering, self-contradictory and ridiculous ought to be unsettling, but instead it's reassuring. We know these people; like us, they're improvising into the future, with only the faintest idea of what they're doing, and with a propensity for scrambling the signposts even before they've figured out the way. Laura Miller, *Salon* Lexical innovations, evasions and revisions give *China in Ten Words* its form. Each essay is devoted to a particular word: its origins, its devaluation or appreciation in meaning, starting with people (as in *serve the people*) and ending with *bamboozle*, an arc that, for Yu Hua, seems to pretty much sum up the past half-century of Chinese history. . . . This is a tale told by a raconteur, not an academic. . . . The most powerful and vivid sections reach back to Yu Hua's childhood during the Cultural Revolution. . . . It is a cautionary tale about the risks of subterfuge, of trying to sneak something past one's father or, perhaps, one's ever-vigilant government. The *New York Times Book Review* If Yu Hua never wrote anything else, he would rate entry into the pantheon of greats for "Reading," an essay in his new collection *China in Ten Words*. Nothing I've ever read captures both the power and subversive nature of youthful reading as well. . . . Yu, whose novels include *Brothers* and *To Live*, has picked 10 words to serve as launching pads for his explorations of the social complexities and staggering contrasts of contemporary China. . . . For American readers curious about the upheavals of China, this may be the right moment to discover Yu Hua. Jim Higgins, *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel* An outstanding set of essays on the general topic of why modern China is the way it is, each essay centered on a Chinese word or phrase. . . . Very much worth reading. James Fallows, *The Atlantic* It's rare to find a work of fiction that can be hysterically funny at some points, while deeply moving and disturbing at others. It's even more unusual to find such qualities in a work of non-fiction. But *China in Ten Words* is just such an extraordinary work. . . . *China in Ten Words* convey[s] a great deal of information and insight in just over 200 pages, with ten chapters that focus on a wonderfully diverse set of terms, from *Reading* to *Revolution*, and *Leader* to *Bamboozle*. As expected, Barr captures the loose, colloquial, and occasionally anarchic flavor of the author's prose. . . . In Yu Hua's book, each of the terms he singles out for attention—*revolution*, *writing*, *disparity*, *grassroots*, *copycat*—function more as a counterpart to Proust's famous *Madeleine* than as an object of dispassionate linguistic analysis. They serve above all as spurs to memory—opportunities to tell illuminating stories about the past. . . . Moving deftly between the humorous and the disturbing, as he does throughout the volume, Yu Hua pokes fun at himself for being so swept up in the personality cult mania of the time, recalling how he suspected the fates of giving him a raw deal by forcing him to be born into a Yu rather than a Mao family. . . . Courageous. Los Angeles of Books blog, *The China Beat* Yu is one of contemporary China's most celebrated but controversial writers. With much wit and elegance, he reminisces here in separate pieces (only one has been previously published) about his country's experiences over the past several decades, using personal stories as well as a piercing, critical examination of China's political, economic, and social transformation from what was essentially a Third World state into a superpower. . . . His commentary is wide and varied, touching on everything from the country's severe economic and social disparity since the Cultural Revolution of the 1960s to his own rise from uneducated, small-town teeth puller to one of the most highly regarded writers of his time. Verdict: A marvelous book for those interested in contemporary China, by one of China's foremost intellectuals. *Library Journal* Moving and elegantly crafted. . . . Offers rare insight into the cause and effect of China's economic miracle, focusing close attention on the citizens of the world's most populous country. With an intimate tone and witty prose, Yu looks at the effects that seem so glorious and searches for their causes, whatever discomfort that may entail, training his incisive eye on the quotidian as well as the grand. . . . His book describes his particular experience, but hints at something much more expansive. *Publishers Weekly* In this era of the China Boom, when Communist Party officials are so inclined to erase the travails of their country's past from public consciousness, Yu Hua's insistence on remembering comes as an almost shocking intrusion into a willful state of amnesia. His earthy, even ribald, meditations on growing up in small-town China during Mao's Cultural Revolution remind us of just how twisted China's progress into the present has been and

how precariously balanced its success story actually still is. Orville Schell, Arthur Ross Director of the Center on U.S.China Relations, Asia Society At times humorous, at times heartbreaking, and at times fierce, these ten moving and informative essays form a small kaleidoscopic view of contemporary China. The meticulous translation has rendered them all the more hip, penetrating, and engaging. Written with a novelists eye and narrative flair, *China in Ten Words* will make the reader rethink the China miracle. Ha Jin, National Book Awardwinning author of *Waiting* A series of essays that combine memoir and trenchant social critique. . . . Sharply observed tales about everyday life. The translation preserves both his simple, direct style and subtle sense of humor. . . . Engaging. . . . Yu Hua's essays say much about the continuing enigma that is China. Kirkus sAbout the Author Yu Hua is the author of four novels, six collections of stories, and three collections of essays. His work has been translated into more than twenty languages. In 2002, he became the first Chinese writer to win the James Joyce Award. His novel *Brothers* was short-listed for the Man Asian Literary Prize and awarded Frances Prix Courier International. *To Live* was awarded Italys Premio Grinzane Cavour, and *To Live and Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* were ranked among the ten most influential books in China in the 1990s by Wen Hui Bao, the largest newspaper in Shanghai. Yu Hua lives in Beijing. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. From the Introduction In 1978 I got my first job as a small-town dentist in south China. This mostly involved pulling teeth, but as the youngest staff member I was given another task as well. Every summer, with a straw hat on my head and a medical case on my back, I would shuttle back and forth between the towns factories and kindergartens, administering vaccinations to workers and children. China during the Mao era was a poor country, but it had a strong public health network that provided free immunizations to its citizens. That was where I came in. In those days there were no disposable needles and syringes; we had to reuse ours again and again. Sterilization too was primitive: The needles and syringes would be washed, wrapped separately in gauze, and placed in aluminum lunch boxes laid in a large wok on top of a briquette stove. Water was added to the wok, and the needles and syringes were then steamed for two hours, as you would steam buns. On my first day of giving injections I went to a factory. The workers rolled up their sleeves and waited in line, baring their arms to me one after another and offering up a tiny piece of red flesh, too. Because the needles had been used multiple times, almost every one of them had a barbed tip. You could stick a needle into someones arm easily enough, but when you extracted it, you would pull out a tiny piece of flesh along with it. For the workers the pain was bearable, although they would grit their teeth or perhaps let out a groan or two. I paid them no mind, for the workers had had to put up with barbed needles year after year and should be used to it by now, I thought. But the next day, when I went to a kindergarten to give shots to children from the ages of three through six, it was a different story. Every last one of them burst out weeping and wailing. Because their skin was so tender, the needles would snag bigger shreds of flesh than they had from the workers, and the childrens wounds bled more profusely. I still remember how the children were all sobbing uncontrollably; the ones who had yet to be inoculated were crying even louder than those who had already had their shots. The pain that the children saw others suffering, it seemed to me, affected them even more intensely than the pain they themselves experienced, because it made their fear all the more acute. This scene left me shocked and shaken. When I got back to the hospital, I did not clean the instruments right away. Instead, I got hold of a grindstone and ground all the needles until they were completely straight and the points were sharp. But these old needles were so prone to metal fatigue that after two or three more uses they would acquire barbs again, so grinding the needles became a regular part of my routine, and the more I sharpened, the shorter they got. That summer it was always dark by the time I left the hospital, with fingers blistered by my labors at the grindstone. Later, whenever I recalled this episode, I was guilt-stricken that I had to see the childrens reaction to realize how much the factory workers must have suffered. If, before I had given shots to others, I had pricked my own arm with a barbed needle and pulled out a blood-stained shred of my own flesh, then I would have known how painful it was long before I heard the childrens wails. This remorse left a profound mark, and it has stayed with me through all my years as an author. It is when the suffering of others becomes part of my own experience that I truly know what it is to live and what it is to write. Nothing in the world, perhaps, is so likely to forge a connection between people as pain, because the connection that comes from that source comes from deep in the heart. So when in this book I write of Chinas pain, I am registering my pain too, because Chinas pain is mine.