



# China in Ten Words

By Yu Hua



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From one of China's most acclaimed writers: a unique, intimate look at the Chinese experience over the last several decades.

Framed by ten phrases common in the Chinese vernacular, *China in Ten Words* uses personal stories and astute analysis to reveal as never before the world's most populous yet oft-misunderstood nation. In "Disparity," for example, Yu Hua illustrates the expanding 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. Witty, insightful, and courageous, this is a refreshingly candid vision of the "Chinese miracle" and all of its consequences.

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## Editorial Review

### Review

“Captures the heart of the Chinese. . . . If you think you know China, you will be challenged to think again. If you don't know China, you will be introduced to a country that is unlike anything you have heard from travelers or read about in the news.” —*The Wall Street Journal*

“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*

“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. . . . He comes across as an Asian fusion of David Sedaris and Charles Kuralt.” —Laura Miller, *Salon*

“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. . . . For American readers curious about the upheavals of China, this may be the right moment to discover Yu Hua." —Jim Higgins, *Milwaukee Journal-Sentinel*

"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." —*Los Angeles Review of Books* blog

"At times humorous, at times heartbreaking, and at times fierce, these ten moving and informative essays form a small kaleidoscopic view of contemporary China. . . . Written with a novelist's eye and narrative flair, *China in Ten Words* will make the reader rethink "the China miracle." —Ha Jin, National Book Award-winning author of *Waiting*

“A collection of 10 quietly audacious essays that blend memoir with social commentary. Yu Hua, who resides in Beijing—a significant detail, given how many important Chinese authors live in exile, where they can write more freely—builds each piece on the foundation of a familiar Mandarin term. The approach is smart literary politics: The Chinese adore their language and consider devotion to it an act of cultural patriotism. . . . The insight it offers and the force and authority it packs is of a kind that few, if any, of those louder, more attention-seeking must-read books can even pretend to match.” —*The National Post*

“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*

"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, Director of the Center on US-China Relations, The Asia Society

#### About 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 France's Prix Courrier International. *To Live* was awarded Italy's Premio Grinzane Cavour, and *To Live* and *Chronicle of a Blood Merchant* were ranked among the ten most influential books in China in the 1990's by *Wen Hui Bao*, the largest newspaper in Shanghai. Yu Hua lives in Beijing.

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#### 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 town's 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 someone's 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 children's 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'd had to see the children's 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 children's 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 China's pain, I am registering my pain too, because China's pain is mine.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **James Rose:**

Book is to be different for every grade. Book for children until adult are different content. We all know that that book is very important for us. The book China in Ten Words has been making you to know about other knowledge and of course you can take more information. It is rather advantages for you. The guide China in Ten Words is not only giving you a lot more new information but also to be your friend when you experience bored. You can spend your personal spend time to read your reserve. Try to make relationship using the book China in Ten Words. You never truly feel lose out for everything in case you read some books.

#### **Marlon Taylor:**

Now a day individuals who Living in the era wherever everything reachable by connect with the internet and the resources inside it can be true or not demand people to be aware of each facts they get. How a lot more to be smart in having any information nowadays? Of course the answer is reading a book. Studying a book can help men and women out of this uncertainty Information specially this China in Ten Words book because this book offers you rich data and knowledge. Of course the data in this book hundred per-cent guarantees there is no doubt in it you know.

**Patrick Myers:**

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