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The Examination (Sunburst Book)



Synopsis

Fifteen-year-old Hong and his older brother Chen face famine, flood, pirates, and jealous rivals on their journey through fifteenth century China as Chen pursues his calling as a scholar and Hong becomes involved with a secret society known as the White Lotus.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The Examination, written by Malcolm Bosse, is a gripping adventure novel with two main characters, brothers, with two different ambitions. The story is set in the Ming Dynasty, sometime after the rule of the great emperor of Yangle, but "his successors had grown weak, until now the whole country was again facing disaster"(Bosse 89). Lao Hong, 15, the younger brother, is "born under the sign of the Tiger...People declared that in every respect young Hong was true to his birth sign"(1). Hong is reckless, loyal, hot-tempered, compassionate, and with little respect for authority. Throughout the book, Hong showed all these personalities. Lao Chen, 17, the older brother, was born under the sign of the ox, which made him "patient and stubborn, with a gift for language"(1). His language is very advanced and sophisticated. Chen often uses poetry to try to prove a point in an argument. They live in a poor village in Sichuan. Their mother has died before the book starts, and their father has become a drunk and a gambler. In the beginning, Hong, knowing his family is poor and that order to take Chen to the examinations in order to be a scholar, fights with crickets and wins a match, earning them a sizeable sum of silver. Chen has already placed first in the county examinations, and received the rank "Flowering Talent". Before they set out on their journey, many

villagers entrust them with important letters that will prove to be pivotal to the story. They set out for their trip, to Chendu, the provincial capital, knowing well that they may never return to their village. They walk steadily for two weeks, and they meet a man one night during their stay at a barn, who tells them that a famine wiped out his whole family. This exposes to the brothers the horrors of the countryside.

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