



## The Moon Pearl

*Ruthanne Lum McCunn*

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In the tradition of *Thousand Pieces of Gold* comes *The Moon Pearl*, the story of Rooster, Shadow, and Mei Ju, who become fast friends while members of a girls' house, where young daughters are taught to become daughters-in-law. These girls, however, want neither to marry nor become nuns (the only options open to them at this time). They choose instead to support themselves through their skills in embroidery and silk production. Though ostracized by their families, attacked, and barely able to find sustenance and shelter, these sze saw, or self-combers as they will come to be called, manage to create lives that they alone control. An amazing true-life story, *The Moon Pearl* offers an empowering vision of womanhood in China.

## The Moon Pearl Details

Date : Published September 22nd 2001 by Beacon Press (first published 2000)

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Author : Ruthanne Lum McCunn

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## From Reader Review The Moon Pearl for online ebook

### Anna says

Meh. I was underimpressed. The premise sounded fascinating ("spinsters" in 1830s China - bucking societal trends and making a living on their own, while providing each other with financial, emotional and social support), but the plot was pretty simplistic and the characters were two-dimensional. It seemed like a Disney version of something that could be better.

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### Ginger says

Excellent book. An interesting glimpse into a part of Chinese life I was largely unfamiliar with- the "girls' houses." Young girls would spend the days with their family then spend the night at the girls' houses where the younger ones fetched and carried for the the older ones as training for serving their future mother-in-law.

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### eggimaru says

Tiga Dara Berhati Baja ini mengisahkan persahabatan dan tekad kuat para gadis menuntut kebebasan. Pesan moral yang sangat kuat dibumbui latar belakang keadaan ekonomi Cina di masa lalu membuat novel ini menarik dan mendidik.

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### Jasmine says

The Moon Pearl has to be one of my most favorite reads in a while. A gripping historical fiction (I know—three words that usually never go together, right?), this book just drew so much out of me: sympathy, fright, disgust at times, and—I'd have to say is the ultimately dominant feeling after completing the book—pride. Knowing that the three main characters (Mei Ju, Shadow, and Rooster) all found their inner peace in one way or another at the end, despite them being subject to all of society's excoriations and condemnations, really made me just... proud. It's a strange thing to describe as proud, I suppose, but it's also this "YES!" feeling I have, having finished the book, and knowing that the girls (basically) kicked society's butt.

I usually rate a book on how I feel at the end: Did I want it to end? Did I want to cry because it ended? Did I even finish? ... And I'd have to say this book deserves a five: It left me with nothing but a content, fulfilling happiness. True, I didn't want it to end (because I find many books' endings either terribly abrupt or just lame), but this book's last few chapters were a story so beautifully woven together I almost couldn't accept it as ended. I have a feeling that in the next few days, when I have free time, I'll reach for The Moon Pearl but realize I've finished it. Oh, that's another thing about this book: It was easy for me to pick up where I left off, and though the story flipflops between characters in the beginning, everything ties together wonderfully at the end.

... Jeez, I feel like this review did this book absolutely no justice. But hey, I loved this read. I'll definitely

come back and reread it if I ever get the chance! :)

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### **Fonnell says**

What beautiful written words. I picked this up because I take classes from the authors husband. He's so proud of her....Well I can see why! The stories just grab you in. I've read three of her books now and hope to keep going.

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### **Pam says**

This was the October 2002 Book club book and everyone liked it. 19th Century China, good historical fiction inspired by three real girls who lived in a girls' house in the Pearl River Delta. They defy the customs of the time and attempt to earn their own living in the silk worm trade. Interesting information on worm farming and on the Chinese customs of the time. They are treated very badly by many of the people including their own families. The novel goes on and tells what happens to each girl.

I wasn't writing reviews at the time so my memory is somewhat foggy but I do remember that I found it most interesting.

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### **Sarah says**

A beautiful insight into early China, where three young girls choose to remain unmarried and care for themselves. A side-story line involves the miserable life of a married girl, who is unlucky in marriage. It was really compellingly written, but I felt like the ending left a little to be desired.

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### **Cameron says**

This book, though mostly fictional, is actually quite educational. It taught me a lot about what it was typically like to be a woman in China during the early 19th century. Much information was included about marriage in China and the lifestyle led by many in rural areas. The characters often expressed there feeling through the mourning cries they had been taught in the "marriage schools" they attended a girls, which I felt helped give me a feel for the cultural setting.

McCunn's writing style is fairly simple (often a bit too simple). I found this annoying at times yet realize that this style makes it an accessible book for people with less developed vocabularies. Overall I found this book to be insightful; depressing in its descriptions of the abuse many women go through (physical and emotional), yet slightly hopeful in its message of woman's progress. I did not adore The Moon Pearl but it is certainly worth reading.

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### **Erin says**

I don't know why I love stories about pre-revolution Chinese culture. Frequently the themes are too brutal to read comfortably. During this story I wondered if the entire 19th century world turned "Victorian," in the sense that they seemed to believe society was better off if girls & women were mostly confined to their homes & terrified of men / sex.

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### **Nicolette Bernhardt says**

This truly was an amazing story about 3 Chinese women who fought against diversity. This is a must read for every woman. These characters reminded me that strong women do exist and that friendship can be everlasting.

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### **Brooke says**

A story of young girls as they choose to fight the standards of society and make vows of spinsterhood rather than marry in rural China in the 1930's. I'd probably just give this book 3 1/2 stars, but it was a good, easy to read, historical fiction book. I found the writing not necessarily beautiful or rich and the changing points of views were sometimes confusing, but I was able to read it quickly and it captured my attention. Overall the historical part was educational and it gave me a lot of reasons to be thankful that I was born in America and given the power of choice when it comes to marriage. Glad I read it!

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### **Megan says**

A good story, well told, with interesting characters and historical details. The book provides an intriguing look at marriage practices and the plight of women in 19th century China (and an unfortunate reminder that circumstances aren't much better for women in many parts of the world today.) At times the author's modern sensitivities seemed to interfere somewhat (e.g., the main characters sometimes seemed a little more self-aware and liberated than they likely would have been in that era) but overall a well-researched story and a worthwhile read.

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### **Phair says**

In re-reading my journal entry I was not quite as taken with this book as I remembered (I gave it a 7+ out of 10) but it has certainly stuck in my mind whenever I think of books with a Chinese setting. I wrote that it was a quick read but that the ending seemed rushed. The author created a vivid picture of the culture and society. The book got a little confusing with the changing points of view but the sentence structure had a nice flow.

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### **Hko says**

plat verhaal maar boeiend door de inkijk in cultuur en gewoontes in het oude (?) China

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**Kayleen says**

I would give it it a star and a half just for the historical part of the book. I'm sure awful things like this happened in China but to heap it all on one character was a little much. I just seemed a little too formulaic for me. One character is in the worst situation possible and the main characters run the other way, understandably but I didn't really like it very much.

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