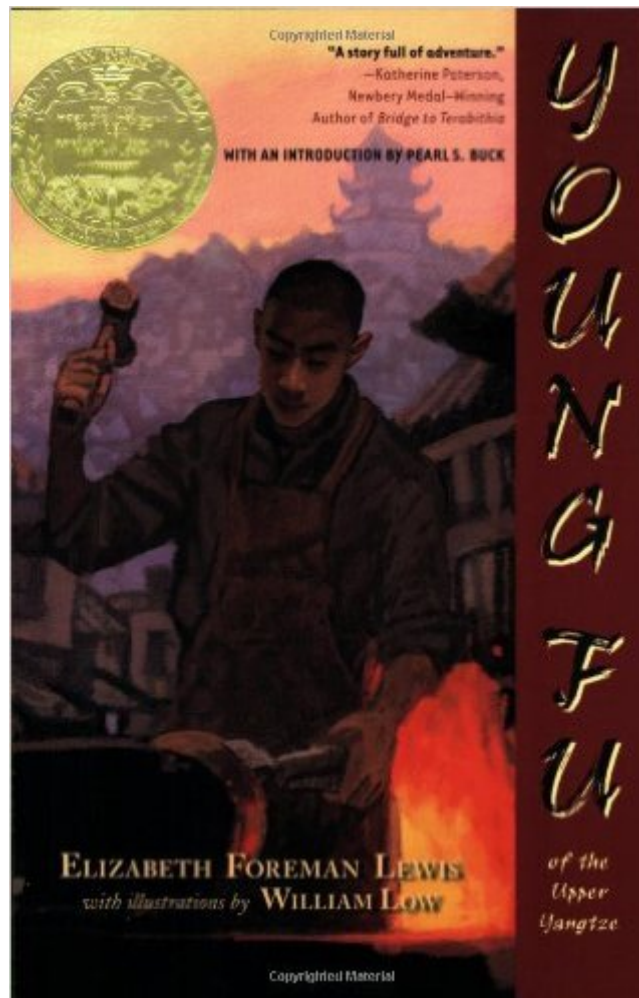


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# Young Fu Of The Upper Yangtze



## Synopsis

When Young Fu arrives with his mother in bustling 1920s Chungking, all he has seen of the world is the rural farming village where he has grown up. He knows nothing of city life. But the city, with its wonders and dangers, fascinates the 13-year-old boy, and he sets out to make the best of what it has to offer him. First published in 1932, *Young Fu of the Upper Yangtze* was one of the earliest Newbery Medal winners. Although China has changed since that time, Young Fu's experiences are universal: making friends, making mistakes, and making one's way in the world.

## Book Information

Paperback: 320 pages

Publisher: Square Fish; Reprint edition (April 29, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0312380070

ISBN-13: 978-0312380076

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.9 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

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## Customer Reviews

This book is the story of a thirteen year old boy from the farms of central China who, with his widowed mother, moves to the big city, Chungking (now spelled Chongqing). Because life on the farm is so uncertain, and, in fact, rather dangerous because of banditry, Fu will be apprenticed to Tang, a master coppersmith. The book portrays a turbulent time, after the fall of Imperial government, and before a new order could arise, a time of war and disunity. I often read this book with my sixth grade class. The author is Western (she left America for a career as a teacher and missionary in Shanghai, Chungking, and Nanking) and sometimes this bias shows through, as does her distaste for rabble-rousing young revolutionaries (early communists?), though perhaps her sentiments would be shared by many modern Chinese. Still, the book makes fascinating reading. It introduces the reader to a China that has passed into history (thank goodness - it was such a violent time), yet many authentic cultural ideas and customs that are presented in the book persist, such as payment of debts on New Years, crooked streets catching ghosts, etc. There are even a few Chinese expressions. Some are translated into English (like FangXin - let down your heart) and

others are kept in Chinese, such as Tuchun (a military governor). The book is well-written, though quite episodic. This episodic nature can be an advantage, though, since it may be possible to shorten the book when presenting it to a class by skipping some chapters. Also, in the back of the book is an appendix, keyed to the chapters, that explains some differences between the China of today and the China of the 1920's. The characters are well drawn.

Set in the turbulence of the early 20th Century this lengthy YA book presents China in political, social and cultural upheaval. The author, who was personally familiar with life there, depicts the gradual coming-of-age of her teenage protagonist, Young Fu. At 13 the rural farm boy arrives with his mother to start a new life in the great city of Chunking. Apprenticed in advance to a firm but kindly coppersmith named Tang Young Fu starts learning the basics of that artistic trade, while Fu Bebe clings to time-honored traditions (the Four Olds)--consistently reproaching new ways of speech, dress, behavior and transportation. To ensure the favor of the gods (one in the kitchen, and one in a street shrine) she spends precious cash on incense. Young Fu grapples with many adolescent challenges during the next three years: bandits and beggars (both of whom have their own Guilds which demand extortion for protection), hazing of new apprentices and country folk in general, marauding soldiers, a river in flood, a hospital in flames, buying from slick merchants, gambling with professionals, and the greatest of all evils: opium smuggling. As he matures over the fifteen chapters to near manhood Fu manages to impress his demanding but fair master with his honesty, creativity, ingenuity, courage and morality. Even as a youth this resilient fellow can claim a Foreign lady and an elderly scholar as his Friends. Readers are introduced to Chinese words and customs, as well as snippets of Chinese history and many proverbs which reflect centuries of wisdom and observation of human nature. Young Fu's world experiences the turmoil of the Chinese Nationalists who are grimly determined to reform the entire country, by wresting power from rival warlords.

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