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**Character Guide**

**Men**

**Wang Lung:** A farmer about to start his own family

**Wang Lung’s father:** Approximately 70 years old, retired from work as a farmer

**Uncle:** Wang Lung’s father’s sly, younger brother

**Cousin:** Uncle’s son, close to Wang Lung’s age

**Old Lord Hwang:** A rich landowner; keeps many slaves and concubines

**Ching:** A small, quiet man; Wang Lung’s neighbor

**Elder brother:** Known as Nung En; “Nung” means one whose wealth is from the earth

**Second son:** Known as Nung Wen

**Liu:** A successful grain dealer in town

**Women**

**O-lan:** A kitchen slave in the House of Hwang

**Lotus Flower:** A “tea house” prostitute with bound feet

**Pear Blossom:** A young slave girl Wang Lung buys

**Uncle’s wife:** Overweight, lazy and manipulative

**Old Mistress Hwang:** Addicted to opium

**Cuckoo:** Old Lord Hwang’s clever chamber slave

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It is the early 1900s and the last emperor still reigns over China. Female foot binding is a sign of beauty, men may have multiple wives and concubines, and even peasant families may have slaves. The political and intellectual revolutions of 1911 and 1919 that will replace imperial rule with the Peoples Republic of China and transform the country are distant rumblings for ordinary people in the rural province of Anhwei (Anhui), where an honest farmer Wang Lung and his neighbors merely struggle to survive.

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