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Bob Jonas

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Charlie Evers is a tenth grade student at an international school in Shanghai, China. He will never finish his last research assignment. Ignoring all warnings about Chinese Internet censors, he navigates to sites that look informative, but shred the government on politically sensitive issues. As a teenage American student he thinks he is safe. The illusion of safety is ripped away when Charlie is taken. Imprisoned onboard an old river boat, a seven-day journey up the Yangtze River catapults him deep into China's turbulent past, to a buried mountain fortress. This is the headquarters of ChinAlive, a Democracy movement he never imagined, with a mission the world thought long dead -- the overthrow of the Chinese government. The life Charlie Evers took for granted is over. His new life--that of a conspirator, terrorist, and refugee--is certain to earn him a date with the executioner. But his death will not be free. Charlie's family will be charged for the bullet if they wish to reclaim his body--but only if they are still alive.

Chinalive Details

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From Reader Review Chinalive for online ebook

The Styling Librarian says

I like how this book's preface features a folk tale... and then begins officially with a kidnapping. I appreciate how you have a great glimpse at the life of an expat living in China. Bob Jonas knows how to keep up the pace through a book that has tricky twists and turns introducing his fictional account of three teenage boys who are drawn into a dark yet hopeful organization with a mission to change history for what they believe to be better. For a little while, I was quite curious about the time period but then it was clarified since there is the activity of the 2008 Olympic Games in China in connection with the book. There are many dark elements throughout this book and it is long enough that a sixth grader who is a fan of Alex Rider series would enjoy this book. It was fascinating to read about cultural traditions, political issues, and many other topics that naturally came up through the book. The book reminded me of Zach's Lie by Roland Smith and the Alex Rider Series by Anthony Horowitz... This is a story that certainly feels real, makes you anxious, and is quite the page turner...

I had a few favorite pieces of the book that gave me "aha" moments, here those are:

Bob Jonas on book release day!

"Expat is short for the word expatriate. And that refers to any person who lives temporarily, or forever away from their home country." Charlie liked it. In addition to being an American, he was now an expat. Expat Charlie, Charlie the expat. It sounded cool."

"Guanxi was a Chinese custom. The literal translation meant connectedness- who you know or how much power your family had to get things done- legally or not."

"I have a chance to do something more important with my wealth than I had ever dreamed. This project, in various forms, has grown for many years, threading itself in an accelerated way over the Internet. The key piece that had been missing was the communications link- the best way to bring everyone together..."

Sandra (Page by Page) says

For complete review, check my bookblog, pagebypage-sc.blogspot.com

I received this book from Goodreads Giveaway.

This book has a very interesting prologue, it starts with an ancient Chinese tell tales of how the Yangtze River is created. The Yangtze River is the longest river in Asia and the third longest in the world. This river is going to be mentioned a lot through the novel, so you might want to check it out in the internet before reading the novel. You know, just so you get how magnificent and beautiful Yangtze River is, and probably your imagination can't provide such beauty unless you really see the photo first (FYI, I didn't check the river picture first and surely my poor imagination kind of ruined everything). I really feel it will be better if Bob Jonas put some pictures or even illustration, whatever, of the Yangtze River.

Reading the novel, I met a familiar writing pattern. Bob Jonas writes in a kind of similar way like Dan Brown. He uses a back-and-forth plot and not using first person point of view only, I always thought it's a tricky way in writing and delivering a story but Dan Brown always pulls that off. In *ChinAlive*, the plot becomes really really complicated and shattered. And the using of omniscient point of view is not helping

the story either. Not very neat in delivering the story, in my opinion though.

For the story idea itself, I like it okay. It's not really as complex as I thought in the beginning of the book, but *ChinAlive* deals with China politic issue which could be sensitive and a bit controversial for Chinese people (I'm being a smartass now, ignore me) so I don't see how it fits in the middle-school book or even children book shelf. In this novel, Jonas also plays with sophisticated technology and I was quite impressed by it. Unfortunately, the feeling went poofff several times when narrator decided to mention that those technology are just like what we can find in James Bond movie. It really kills the mood I guess, because the description and elaboration is really good and flowing and all, the images were pretty vivid and grand in my head, but when it said, "It was like something out of James Bond movie," it flattened all my amazement.

What I found most interesting in reading *ChinAlive* were the tiny details on culture and habit of Chinese people and the description on how expatriate lives in China. The Yangtze River as a big part in the story is also a refreshing point. But, regrettably, there are still many typos found in this novel and they're pretty inconvenient. All in all, *ChinAlive* is okay but sure could be way better.

Marlene Santos says

I had the chance to read the book *ChinAlive* because I won a Goodreads' giveaway. When I started the book I didn't know what to expect, but once I started I immediatly loved it.

I confess I don't know a lot about China, its culture, politics and other stuff, so I learned quite a lot.

The characters are very real and very well developed, either the American or the chinese ones. The plot is also very well developed and flows extremely well.

I think the story is amazing and I would highly recommend it to everyone, but especially young adults. Why not being adapted to the cinema???

This novel deserves nothing less than 5 SHINING STARS...

Mike says

An exciting, jet-fueled adventure that's ideal for middle school; the great blend of adventure, comedy, and political agenda will capture readers' attention. Jonas' influences are clear; his smart, savvy, and worldly boys are comparable to heroes from Roland Smith or Ben Mikaelson. Jonas does a great job blending the many action sequences with character backstory and Chinese political history, wrapping it all together in a "James Bond" plot that'll make you book a flight to the Yangtze River to see for yourself!

Ruth says

Bob Jonas has introduced us to a world we know little about. This Exciting YA novel begins when a high school ex pat is kidnapped from school and thrown into a van. He has no idea where he is headed and little hope of escape. With that event we are drawn into a world of political activists heroically working to change the dictatorial world of the Chinese rulers by sabotaging the Olympics. Please read this if you're ready for a modern adventure.

Crystal Vancleef says

Full of action, a plethora of characters, history, geography, and technology, ChinAlive is sure to grab a reader's attention! As a middle school teacher, this book will definitely be added to my list of books to recommend to my students, especially the boys. Jonas keeps the action moving as he introduces new characters, both young and old (relatively speaking), and brings the varied stories together in an exciting ending. While I wouldn't classify this as a historical novel, it contains interesting historical and geographical information that's relevant to the story, and puts the events of the book into context for the reader. It reminded me quite a bit of Anthony Horowitz's Alex Rider series, which my students love, so they are sure to love this.

Cherity says

I won this book in the Goodreads giveaway.

I liked it a lot, it was very dynamic with a plot that keeps you on your toes till the end. It's really well written, I especially liked how the shifts between narrators and characters has been done.

I learned more about Chinese culture, especially about the Yangtze river.

There were several things I didn't like. First, the typically American idea that democracy can and should be forced on people, and poor oppressed undeveloped nations simply cannot survive without the help of smart and wealthy Americans. Almost all the key figures in the ChinAlive movements are Americans, and some of them haven't even bothered to learn Chinese, but they think they know what's best for Chinese people. It's pretty disgusting, actually. Also, throughout the book not speaking English fluently is shown as a shameful thing (for people who haven't even been outside China or haven't had access to proper education), but living in China for years and not knowing Chinese is shown to be completely acceptable. I think that it's promoting ignorance and colonial attitudes.

John L says

I won this book in Goodreads' Giveaway and I liked it! It's well written and fast-paced with many explanations so it's easy to understand even if you know nothing about what the characters are talking about. I liked the transitions between narrators and characters. I liked the twists and the thrills.

Before I read this book, I don't know a lot about China but after reading this I find myself googling the Yangtze River, Fengdu, China's Internet Censorship, even the 2008 Beijing Olympics.

Junying says

As a norm, A YA book is not amongst my chosen holiday reads, however, the title of ChinAlive grabbed my attention on GoodReads and I put it on my to read list for 2014. New year, new challenges, hence trying something different.

For a few days as I basked in the sunshine of Madeira and went about exploring one of my favourite islands, propped up on the massive Queen-size bed in the evenings, resting my tired legs while becoming increasingly absorbed in an adventure along China's longest river, the Yangtze.

What a thrilling read it has proved to be. As many of my readers know, I'm originally from China and I was brought up drinking the waters from a tributary of the Yangtze, melted from mighty Himalayas travelling through my home city Chongqing all the way to South China Sea.

ChinAlive is an ambitious undertaking by the author, which follows three teenage boys in their involuntary involvement far beyond their years. Without revealing the plot of the book, which I hope that you will get your hands on after my review, I would tell you how much I have enjoyed the stories - as a reader, I was taken on an unforgettable journey, through many places which I was familiar with, yet see it through the eyes of the protagonists, be it an expat from Utah, or a computer geek from San Francisco, or a Chinese school boy who wanted to perfect his English. It is riveting to see what these boys went through in their pursuit to find answers, playing roles which they have yet to unravel.

I give ChinAlive 5 stars, for the author's efforts to bring China's history, her culture, politics and people into this kaleidoscope of life in the 21st century. Although it is fiction, the questions of the book are loud and clear - does the Chinese people want democracy? Or is it a Western privilege which has eluded China? Any of you who have read or seen what had happened in Tian'anmen Square in 1989 would know what the answers should be. In a country where economic development far outstrips political freedom and enlightenment, Mr Jonas's book serves a timely reminder, asking: What do the majority of Chinese people REALLY want?

Coincidentally, I see quite a few parallels between Bob Jonas's book and my first book of Journey to the West trilogy. ChinAlive began with one of the ancient Chinese legends Yu who wrote history by combatting the disastrous flooding, readers of The Same Moon would know that one of my protagonists was named after the same legendary hero. There are other shared themes about what happened in China in the last fifty years or so, which naturally had a special impact on me as a reader.

I would recommend ChinAlive without any reservation. It is highly engaging, hugely informative, and above all, a thrilling ride into the mysterious East, its past, present and future. If you know little about China, your knowledge will be instantly enriched. Even if you think you know China, as I do, you will learn a little more, as I have done.

My hat is off to Bob Jonas for penning such a great read for all ages, not just YA. It will be my Book of the Month, coinciding with the forthcoming Chinese New Year, so do check it out :).

I wish the author every success in producing more thrilling literary works in the future!

Brytani says

Chinalive by Bob Jonas was a good read. It follows a teenage boy, Charlie Evers as he uncovers hidden secrets and societies all surrounded by the Chinese Government and the Yangtze River. Charlie is an American student living with his family when he is kidnapped on a river boat to find that this all had to do with his father and a school project.

This novel was slow at first but very quickly picked up pace. Background stories are plentiful as well as explanations making it easy to understand the world the story takes place in. The story occasionally switches perspectives between Charlie and both friends and enemies. I was slightly confused due to struggling to keep the characters straight but once I got the hang of it the book was very understandable.

Overall a good read which provides insight on China and history as well as causing questions to arise about all countries and secret societies or rebellions that may exist in them.

Emily says

I received this book in a goodreads giveaway! :)

I was so surprised reading this! You see, I've never read a book that is set in China, and secondly, I tend to get quickly bored when it comes to politics. So knowing this was a book about politics in China (however interesting it sounded) made me put off reading ChinAlive for months. I actually went into this book being prepared for having to struggle a little through it!

Now, the reason I was so surprised was this: I liked it. I liked it a lot.

There are constantly things happening, and as you read you start fearing all the things that could go wrong with these characters that we get to know. All the characters relationships feels real and genuine and not forced at all! There's no drama that is simply there as page-fillers, no wandering off the path that is called a "plot", no unnecessary BS. And I just really, really enjoyed that!

Erik This Kid Reviews Books says

Summary – 15-year-old Charlie Evers was warned about the internet censors in China. He'd lived there most of his life (since he was 5, and before that, he was an American citizen) and he had learned a lot about China/Chinese culture in those ten years. He also learned that living in China is much different than in America. He got carried away on a research project, and he ended up touching illegal topics on the internet because of his curiosity. Charlie's dad is "away for work" but his mom is worried. Next thing Charlie knew, the police were knocking on their door and he and his mom were questioned. Charlie thought that was pretty rough but then he was kidnapped by a group he was researching on the internet! His kidnappers promise Charlie that they will reunite him with his dad. They take him up the Yangtze River to the middle part of China. What he learns changes his life forever. Charlie finds that his mom has also been taken and that his dad is somehow involved with the rebel group that kidnapped him. Charlie learns that there is a revolution going on in China, but right now, Charlie is just hoping to stay alive and find his parents.

What I think – This is a super-fueled adventure! The book is set in 2008 when the China had the summer Olympics. I love the setting because I learned a lot and it is about a part of the world, I don't read very much about. I love Mr. Jonas' writing style. The plot he came up with has a lot of obstacles and that made it fun to read.

HERE IS A MAJOR SPOILER SO DON'T READ THIS PART IF YOU DON'T WANT TO! I only had one little problem with the plot. It was the way Charlie was kidnapped and treated before being reunited with his dad. Charlie's dad is a high-ranking member of the rebel force trying to change China for the better, so I

don't get why he was treated so badly when they were bringing him to his dad. Another kid character stumbled onto the rebel plot and he was just told to keep quiet. Plus I thought Charlie's dad would have been ANGRY about the whole thing, but it was like that's just the way it is, that part seemed kind of forced, but that was only a minor point.

OKAY YOU CAN READ AGAIN :P I like how there is an educational touch to the whole story. On Mr. Jonas' website, I learned that he lived and taught in China and you can tell that he is very knowledgeable about the country. I learned what an EXPAT was, about the Chinese culture and how the Chinese government operates. I loved learning about the Yangtze river and some of the geography of China. Charlie is a character you come to care for. He is a nice kid, thrust into a big situation. He handles it pretty well, once he got past the whole "You kidnapped me, to save me?". You can understand how he feels. He seems like a typical American kid and is a believable character. This book is rated as a YA book, but I thought the action and violence in it was no more than you read in some of the The 39 Clues books or the Alex Rider series (some characters die but in a justified way and it is not graphic), but there is quite a bit of cussing. I think if Mr. Jonas took out some of that, the book would be great for younger kids too.

I am definitely putting this one on my read-again shelf in my bookcase.

*NOTE I got a free copy of this book in exchange for an honest review

Jo says

A fantastic book, written by a dear friend! If you have ever lived in or traveled to China this book will ring with lots of truths. A great adventure story for young adults and young at heart adults! :)

Marie says

This book gives an interesting and unexpected background into Chinese politics and history. Centered around the Yangtze River-- Charlie Evers learns the hard way that what you do on the internet has consequences. Somebody/somewhere is paying attention to everything. Jonas does a fabulous job of bringing up this potential problem. A perfect classroom read for discussion on the internet pros/cons. His love of China and a hope for its future comes through despite the negative treatment of the current government towards anyone with thoughts of wanting a democratic country .

Estibaliz79 says

I received a free copy of 'Chinalive' here on Goodreads in exchange for an honest review.

So here it comes...

I don't think it's much of a surprise than I'm rating this book with 'only' two stars, judging by all the time it took for me to read it... because everyone that knows me knows too that I'm a quick reader, so when it's taking me so long to finish a book, something is failing there... and not only my English (which actually it's quite good when it comes to the 'reading' part :P).

I'd say this is a good book for children or very young adults, those that enjoy the adventures of the equally young characters without questioning the background, the real danger in the situations (actually, that's a very feeble drawback, because that's all thrillers are about) or how accurate is the telling of the real facts there.

One of my problems with the story is this is too simple at times... from characters to events. But the biggest problem here is I don't agree with the way fantasy and real events are mixed. I mean, you can accept the adventurous part of the story, even if most of the time it's just some teens been too bold and heroic... but if that's what you like you might as well read some good old 'Fabulous Five' adventures: at least their villains are not big Governments that actually exist.

I'm not saying the vision of the country the author is showing here is fake or wrong... because he has lived there and I haven't even visited, but I think he's maybe too audacious in his way of presenting facts. It's always difficult to speak for a whole country, specially when this is not even your own's...

Anyway, that is only a small part of the problem. If I had enjoyed better some other elements on the story, it would just be a mere anecdotic comment. But, in a whole, I hadn't. And actually the two stars are there because the book is quite well written (althought I still think it's kind of childish in its conception) and offers some nice facts about Chinese culture, specially the legend in the prologue. Nothing more, nothing less...
