

Girl Power: Feminist Interpretations of Lisa See

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Sponsored by the Office of Student Research

Snow Flower and the Secret Fan

This book was written by Lisa See and tells the story of a young Chinese girl in the nineteenth century. It recaps an accurate history for Chinese women during this time period and how they were viewed as worthless.

Throughout the book we watch Lily grow up, and she depicts all of her experiences and her culture. She describes the emotions of growing up unwanted and unappreciated. She also explains the agony of pain during foot binding that women suffer in order to reshape themselves to be beautiful in the eyes of society.

Theory

This book demonstrates feminist awareness and advocacy and why it is important in the lives of women.

According to Hélène Cixous, "Women must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies- for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Women must put herself into the text- as into the world and into history." Lily is given the opportunity to tell us her life story and her experiences through the eyes of a woman.

Another important theorist who can be connected to See's novel is Susan Bordo. As the adherence to cultural beauty is a major theme throughout the book, Bordo's analysis of why women and their bodies are viewed as less valuable than male bodies and the consequences of it explains why women saw the need to bind their feet and go through tremendous amounts of pain for the sake of appearance. Maintains Bordo, "Female bodies have become docile bodies-bodies whose forces and energies are habituated to external regulation, subjection, transformation, and improvement."

Too many times women believe that something is wrong with their bodies and seek the need to fix themselves because society has told them what is beautiful and that is what makes them valuable.

Significance

This text is important because it relates women's experiences and how women band together to survive in a harsh world. The story captures what was seen as beauty in nineteenth-century China and how this disciplining of the body only happened to women, solely because they were women. We see women going through pain today to be beautiful. If more people understood feminism and read books like Snow Flower and the Secret Fan, then maybe they would realize how harmful society can be.