

# Free Reading Tiananmen Square: A Novel by Lai Wen


Tiananmen Square: A Novel  
By: Lai Wen


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An epic, deeply moving coming-of-age novel about young love and lasting friendships forged in the years leading up to the Tiananmen Square student protests, for readers of *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* and *The Night Tiger*. As a child in Beijing in the 1970s, Lai lives with her family in a lively, working-class neighborhood near the heart of the city. Thoughtful yet unassuming, she spends her days with her friends beyond the attention of her parents. Her father is a reclusive figure who lingers in the background, while her mother, an aging beauty and fervent patriot, is quick-tempered and preoccupied with neighborhood gossip. Only Lai's grandmother, a formidable and colorful maverick, seems to really see Lai and believe that she can blossom beyond their circumstances. But Lai is quickly awakened to the harsh realities of the Chinese state. A childish prank results in a terrifying altercation with police that haunts her for years; she also learns that her father, like many others, was broken during the Cultural Revolution. As she enters adolescence, Lai meets a mysterious and wise bookseller who introduces her to great works: Hemingway, Camus, and Orwell, among others that open her heart to the emotional power of literature and her mind to thrillingly different perspectives. Along the way, she experiences the ebbs and flows of friendship, the agony of grief, and the first steps and missteps in love. A gifted student, Lai wins a scholarship to study at the prestigious Peking University where she soon falls in with a theatrical band of individualists and misfits dedicated to becoming their authentic selves, despite the Communist Party's insistence on conformity and a new world opens before her. When student resistance hardens under the increasingly restrictive policies of the state, the group gets swept up in the fervor, determined to be heard, joining the masses of demonstrators and dreamers who display remarkable courage and loyalty in the face of danger. As 1989 unfolds, the spirit of change is in the air. . . Drawn from her own life, Lai Wen's novel is mesmerizing and haunting a universal yet intimate story of youth and self-discovery that plays out against the backdrop of a watershed historic event. Tiananmen Square captures the hope and idealism of a new generation and the lasting price they were willing to pay in the name of freedom.

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# Étape 1 -

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