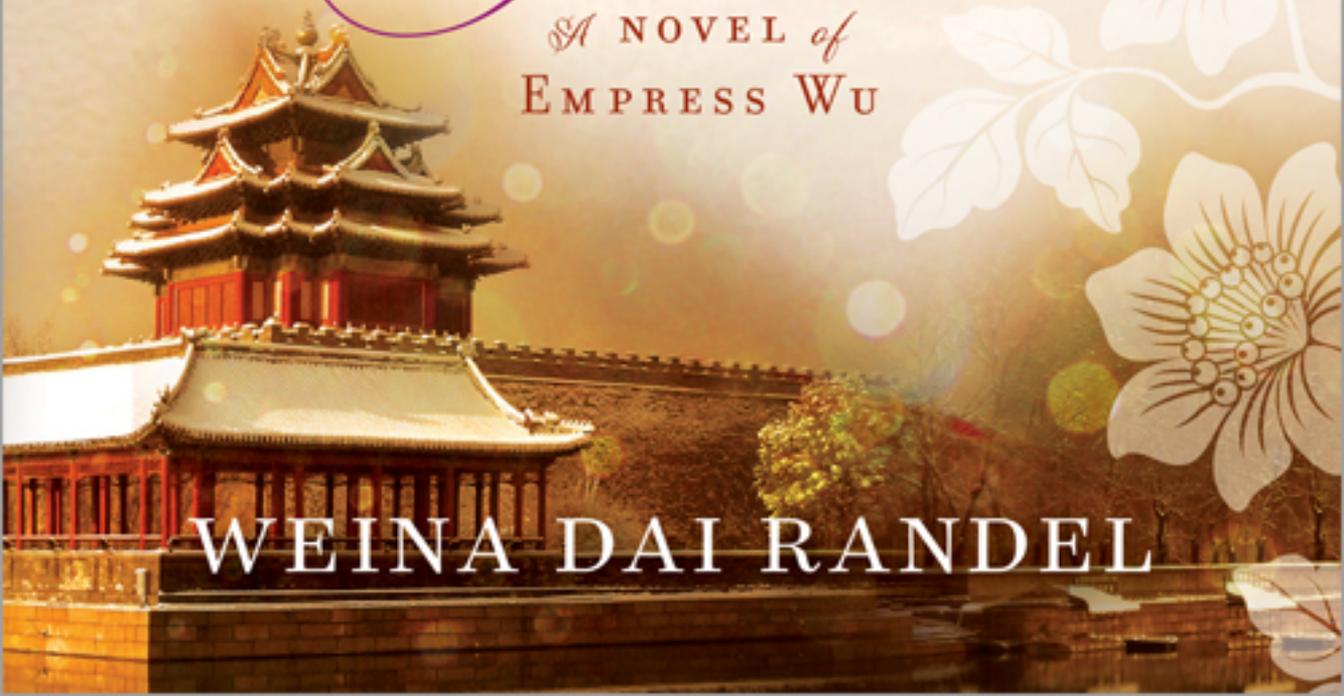


“A rare and
beautiful treasure.”

—ELIZABETH CHADWICK,
New York Times bestselling
author of *The Summer Queen*,
The Winter Crown, and
The Autumn Throne

THE
Moon IN THE
Palace

A NOVEL of
EMPRESS WU



WEINA DAI RANDEL

READING GROUP GUIDE

1. How much did you know about the palace women in ancient China before you read this novel? In what ways do you think the palace women in China were similar to those in Europe?
2. Discuss the many facades of love in the novel and how it manifests itself in the following characters: Mei, Pheasant, Jewel, Emperor Taizong, Taizi, and the Noble Lady.
3. Discuss the theme of deception. How does the Emperor deceive the kingdom? How does Jewel deceive the Emperor and the other women?
4. The novel opens with the monk's prediction of Mei's destiny. How would you define the concept of destiny? How does Mei perceive her destiny?
5. Compare the relationship between Mei and Jewel and the relationship between Mei and the Noble Lady.
6. For nearly two thousand years, Confucius's instruction of five virtues—filial piety, tolerance, courtesy, faith, and wisdom—determined the values of ancient China. Describe how filial

piety is demonstrated in Mei and how it motivates and suppresses her.

7. Have you heard of Sun Tzu's *The Art of War*? Do you think the master's insight in strategies set up a tone for this novel? Do you think the master's teaching helps Mei in the Inner Court? How?
8. Silkworm farming was an important industry in ancient China, and silkworms were often revered, but Mei is forced to destroy them in the novel. Do you agree with what she did?
9. Discuss the relationship between Mei and Pheasant. When does their relationship begin to grow? At what point does it begin to deepen and change?
10. How would you describe Jewel's character? Do you consider her to be a sympathetic figure or an evil one?
11. Discuss the intricate relationships within the imperial family. How do these relationships affect the Emperor and his sons?
12. What do you think the title *The Moon in the Palace* means?
13. The descriptions of nature, animals, birds, and sceneries are very rich in this novel. Discuss the symbols of the sun, snow, and rain. Where do you see them? What do you think they symbolize?
14. If you were one of the Emperor's hundreds of concubines confined in the Yeting Court and Inner Court, how would you attempt to rise within the palace hierarchy?