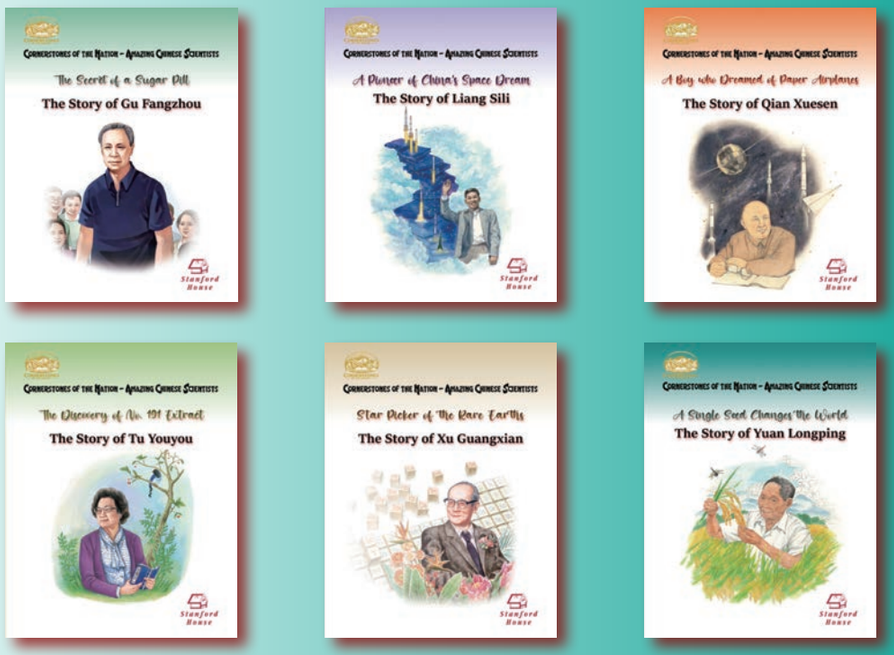
CORNERSTONES OF THE NATION

Stories of Chinese Scientists for Children
Planting the Seeds of Science in Young Hearts

This beautifully crafted series brings to life the stories of Chinese scientists, blending science, scholarship, and art in a child-friendly way. With vivid illustrations and heartfelt storytelling, the books encourage children to dream big, nurture curiosity, and carry forward the spirit of scientific dedication—shaping the foundation of what is to come.



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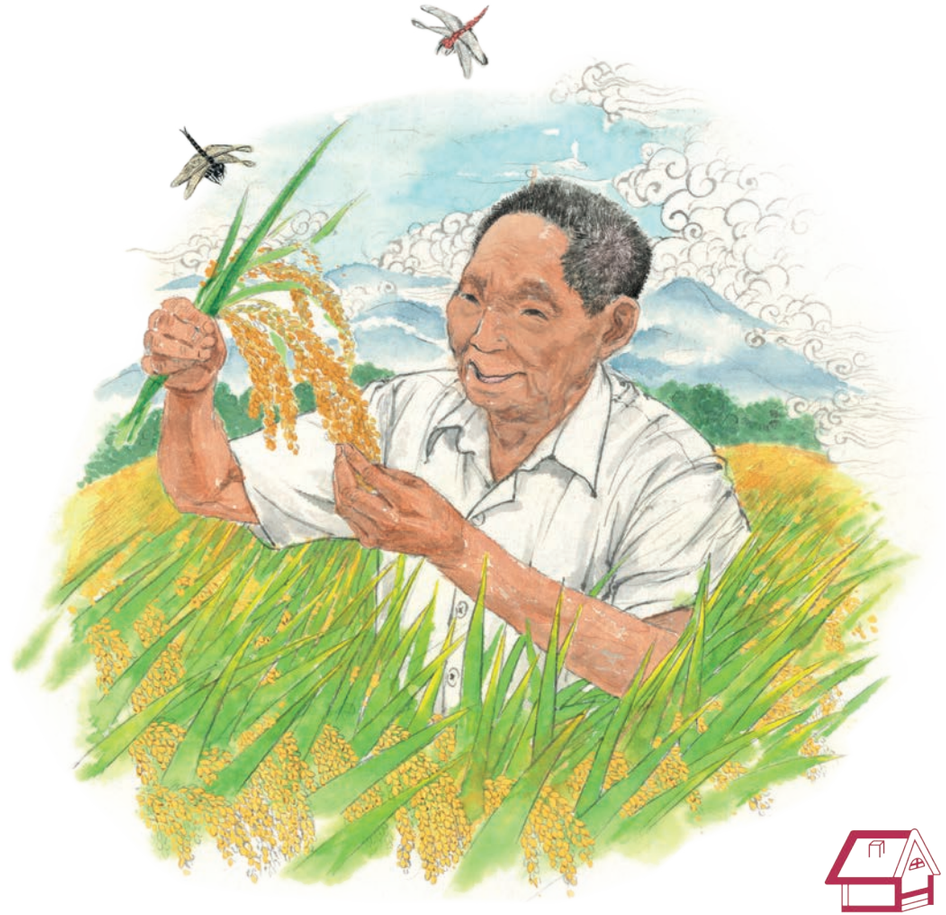
CORNERSTONES OF THE NATION

Cornerstones of the Nation – Amazing Chinese Scientists

A Single Seed Changes the World

The Story of Yuan Longping



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(Cornerstones of the Nation - Amazing Chinese Scientists)

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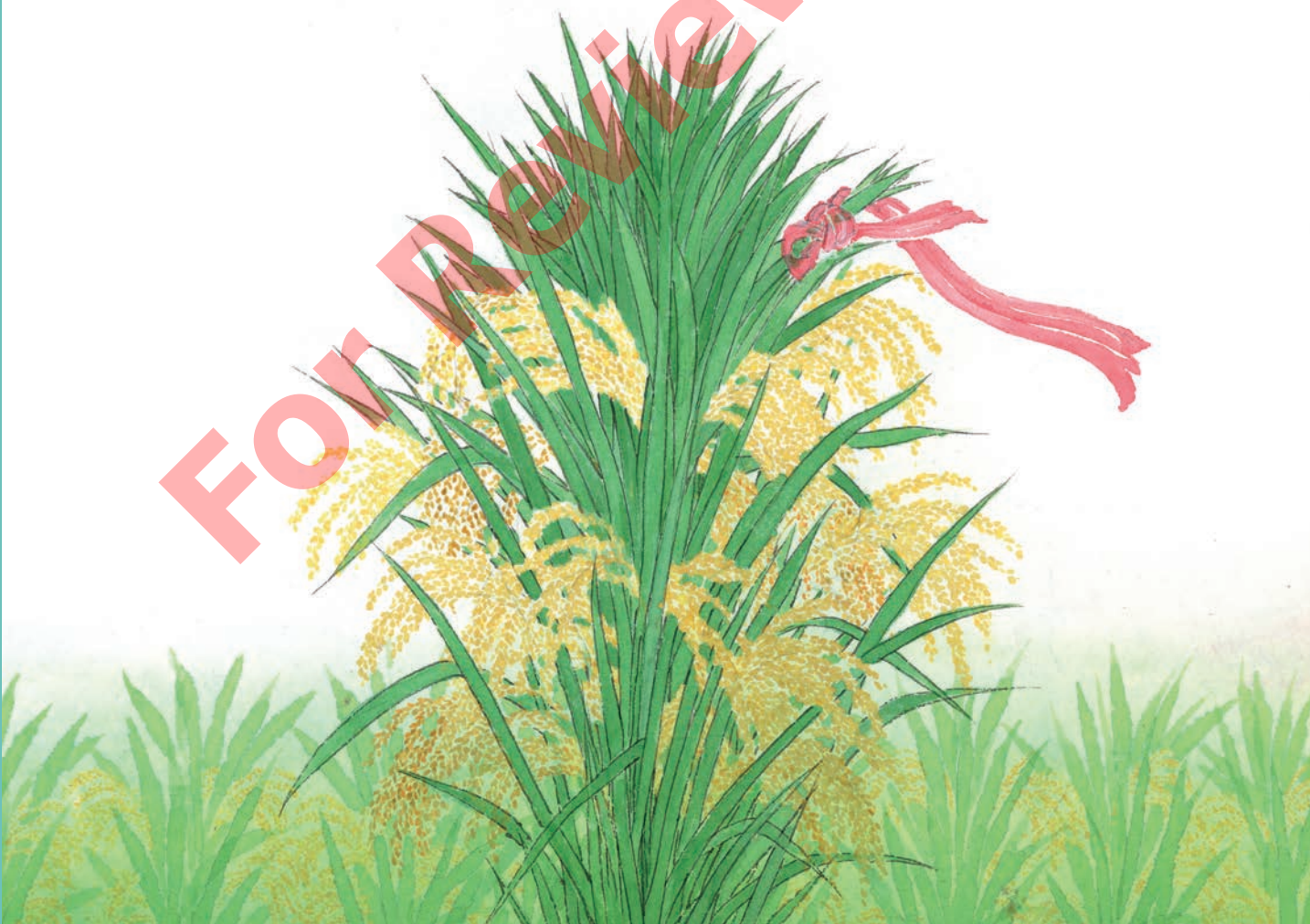
Cornerstones of the Nation – Amazing Chinese Scientists

A Single Seed Changes the World

The Story of Yuan Longping



Preface

Looking Back at China's Journey

In the past, China faced poverty, wars, and hardship. Today, the nation is strong, peaceful, and full of life. This change was possible because many scientists dedicated their whole lives to helping the nation. They worked with courage, honesty, and determination, even when facing failure. These scientists are called the 'Backbone of the Republic', and we should always remember them.

Why Tell Scientists' Stories to Kids

Children are the future. To inspire them, we need role models. Chinese scientists are perfect examples because they show bravery, creativity, and love for their country. This picture book series was created to share their stories in a way that children can enjoy and understand.

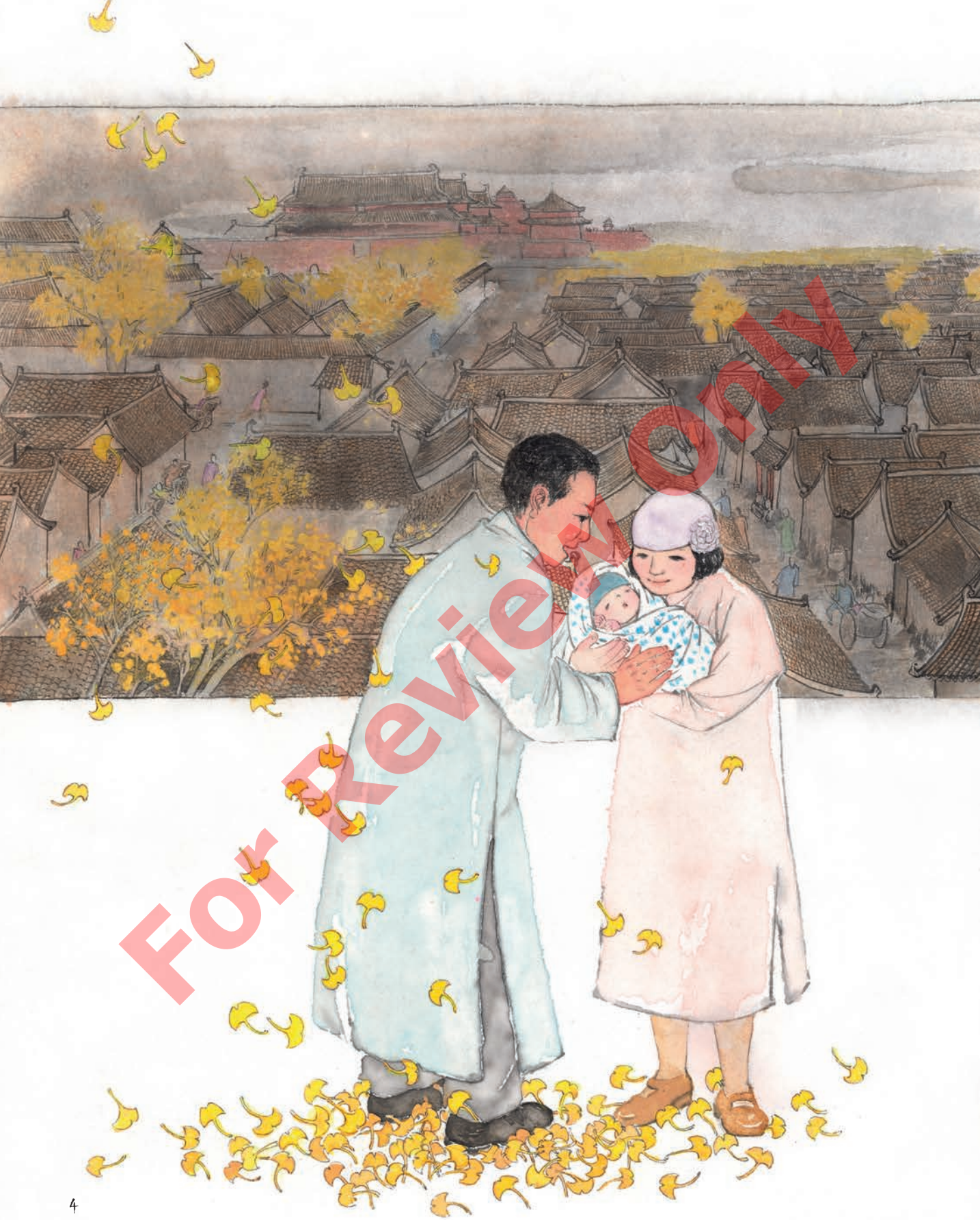
Message to Readers

This series of picture books was created to share those stories with children. Each book tells the life of a great scientist—how they grew up, what challenges they faced, and how their discoveries changed China and the world. The words are simple, the pictures are bright, and the lessons are powerful.

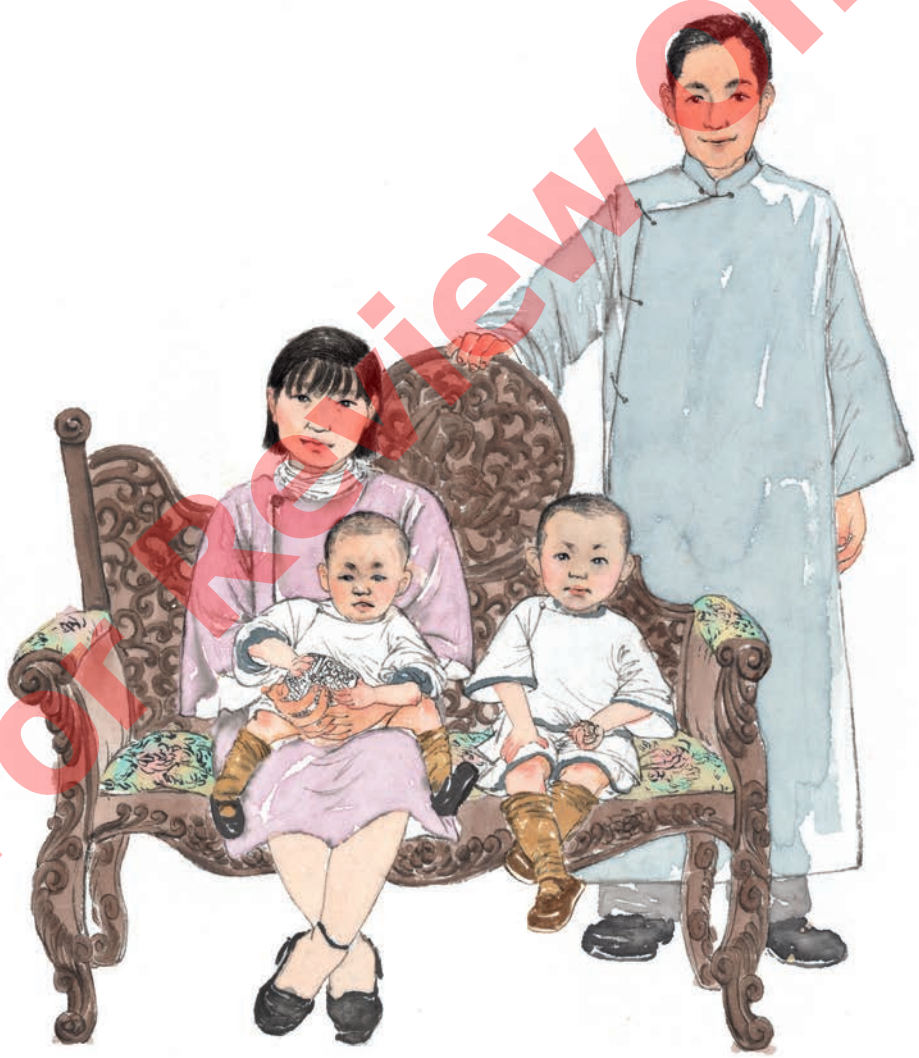
In the series, you will meet six amazing scientists:

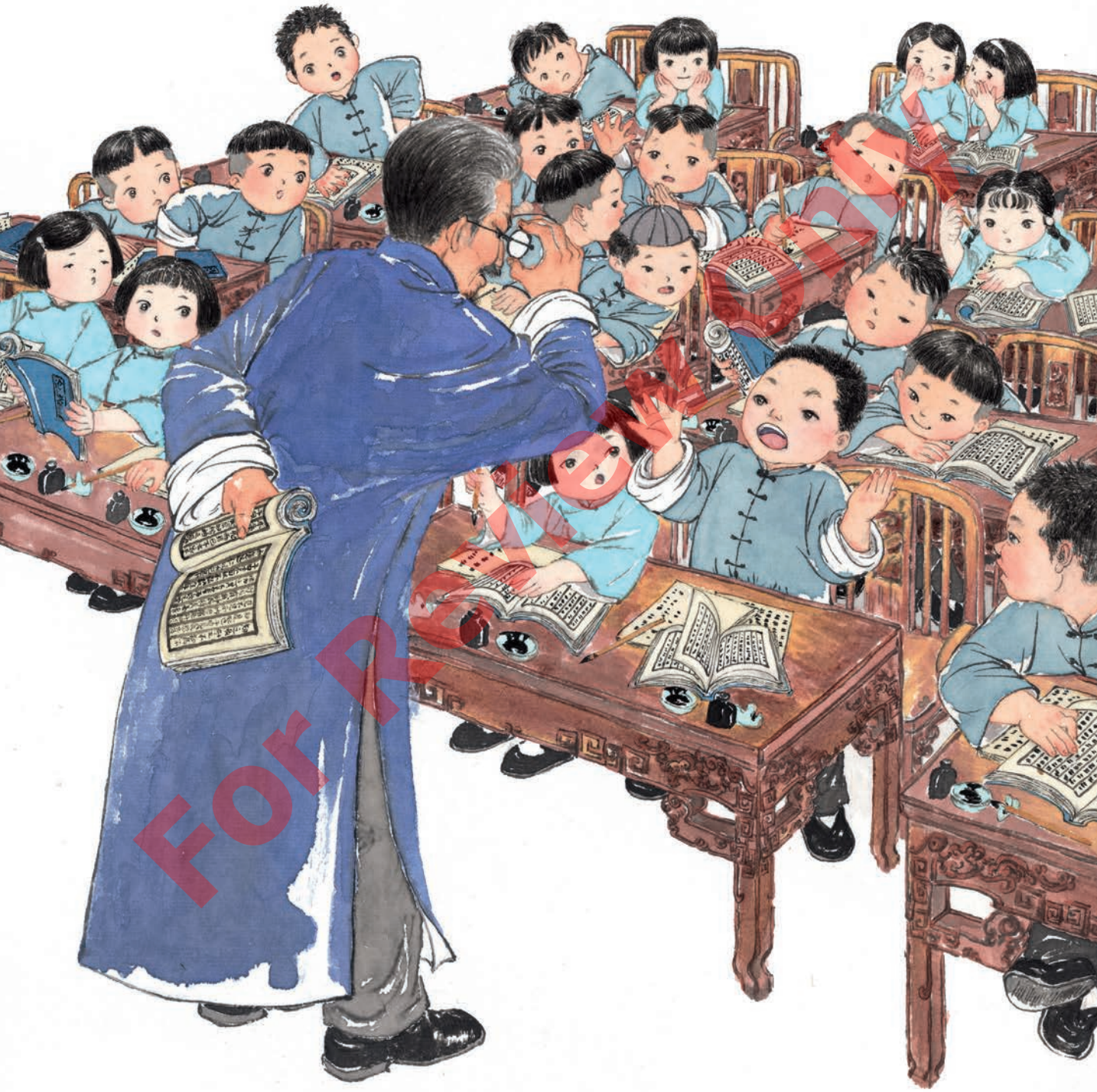
- Gu Fangzhou（顧方舟）, the 'Father of China's polio vaccine'
- Liang Sili（梁思禮）, a pioneering space scientist
- Qian Xuesen（錢學森）, the 'Father of China's Space Programme'
- Tu Youyou（屠呦呦）, the first Chinese Nobel Prize winner who discovered a new treatment for malaria
- Xu Guangxian（徐光憲）, the 'Father of Chinese Rare Earth Chemistry'
- Yuan Longping（袁隆平）, the 'Father of Hybrid Rice'

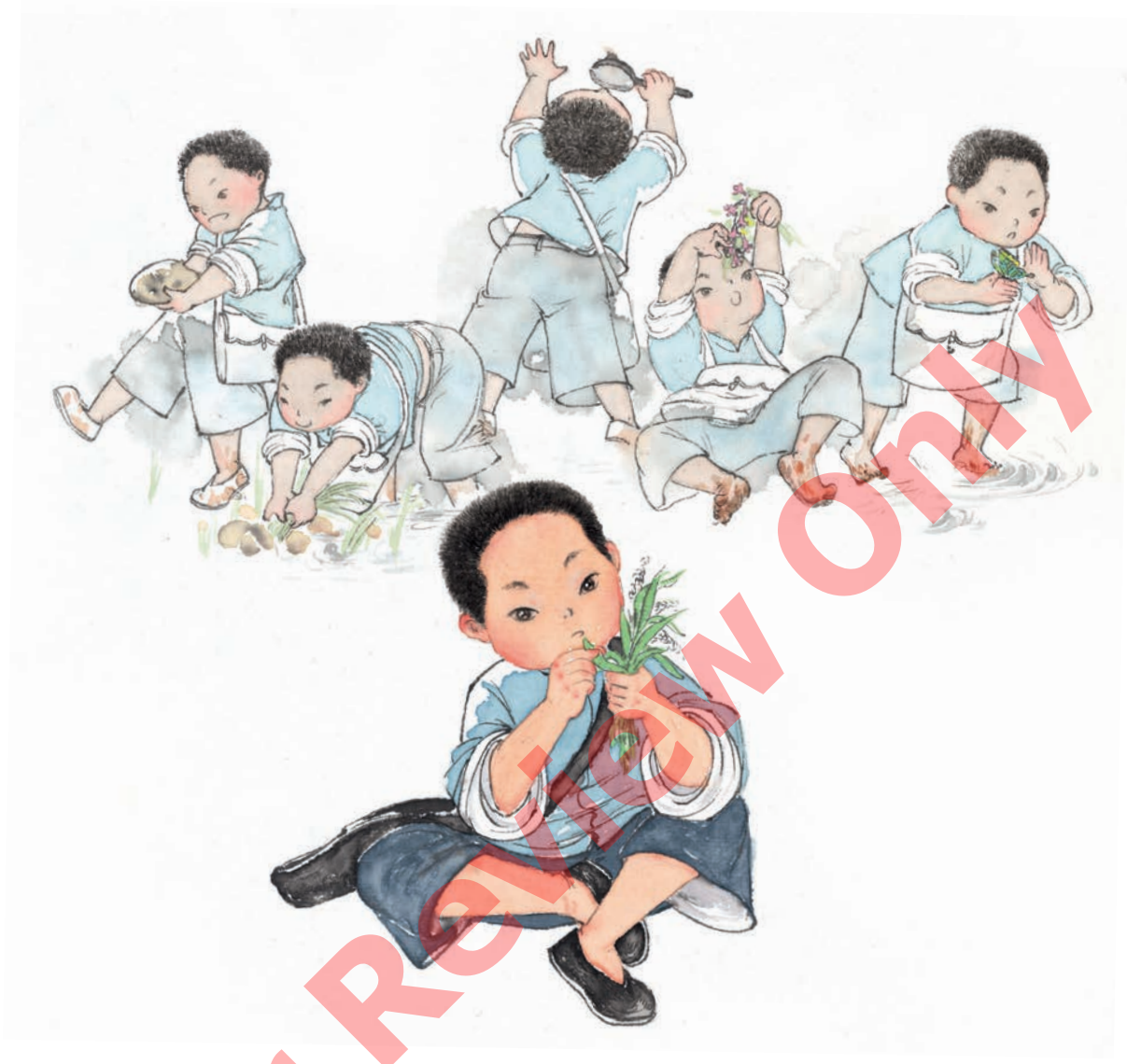
Each of them shows us that science is not just about experiments—it is about courage, imagination, and caring for people.



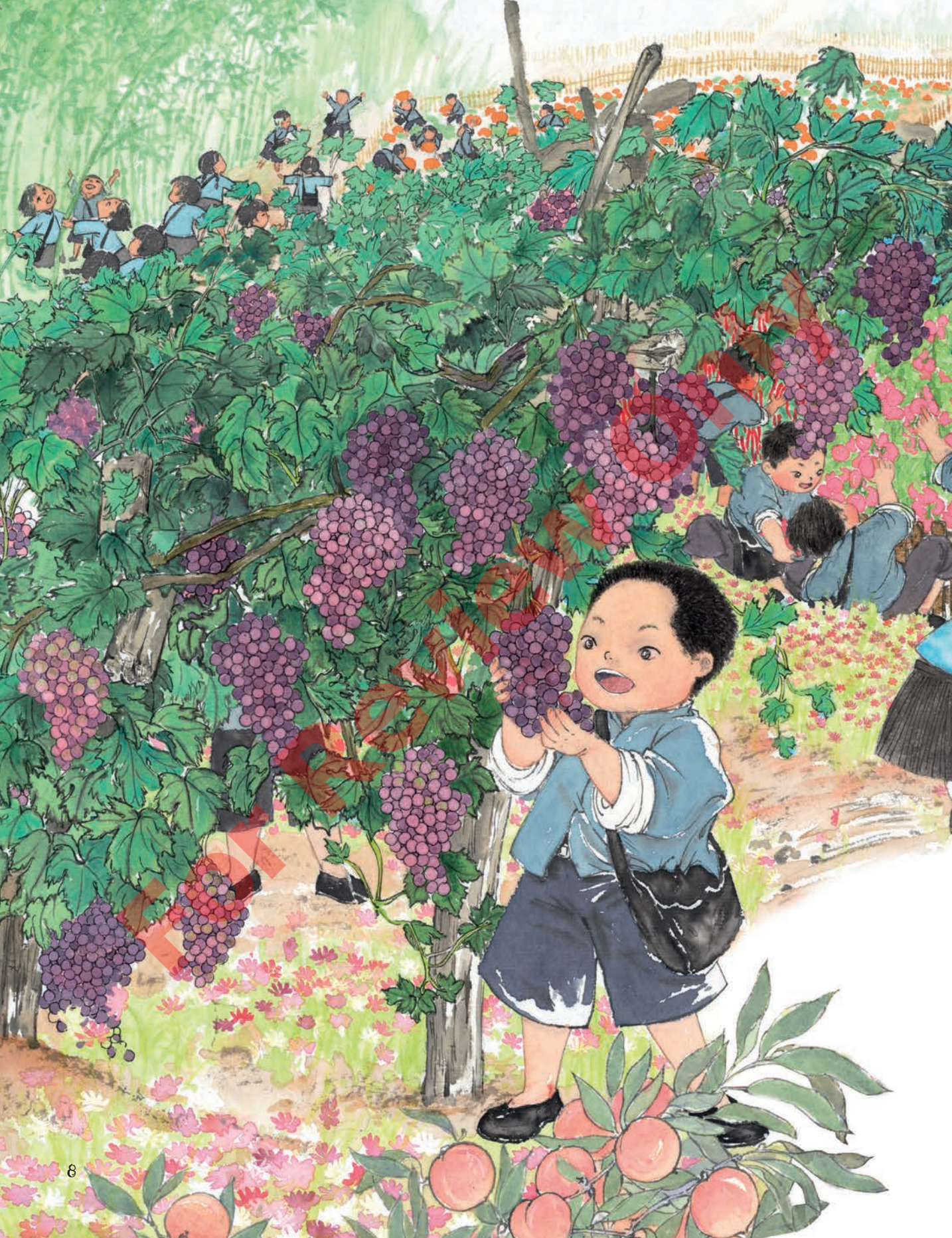
In the early autumn of 1930, a baby boy was born in a hospital in Beiping (today's Beijing). His father named his second child, Yuan Longping.

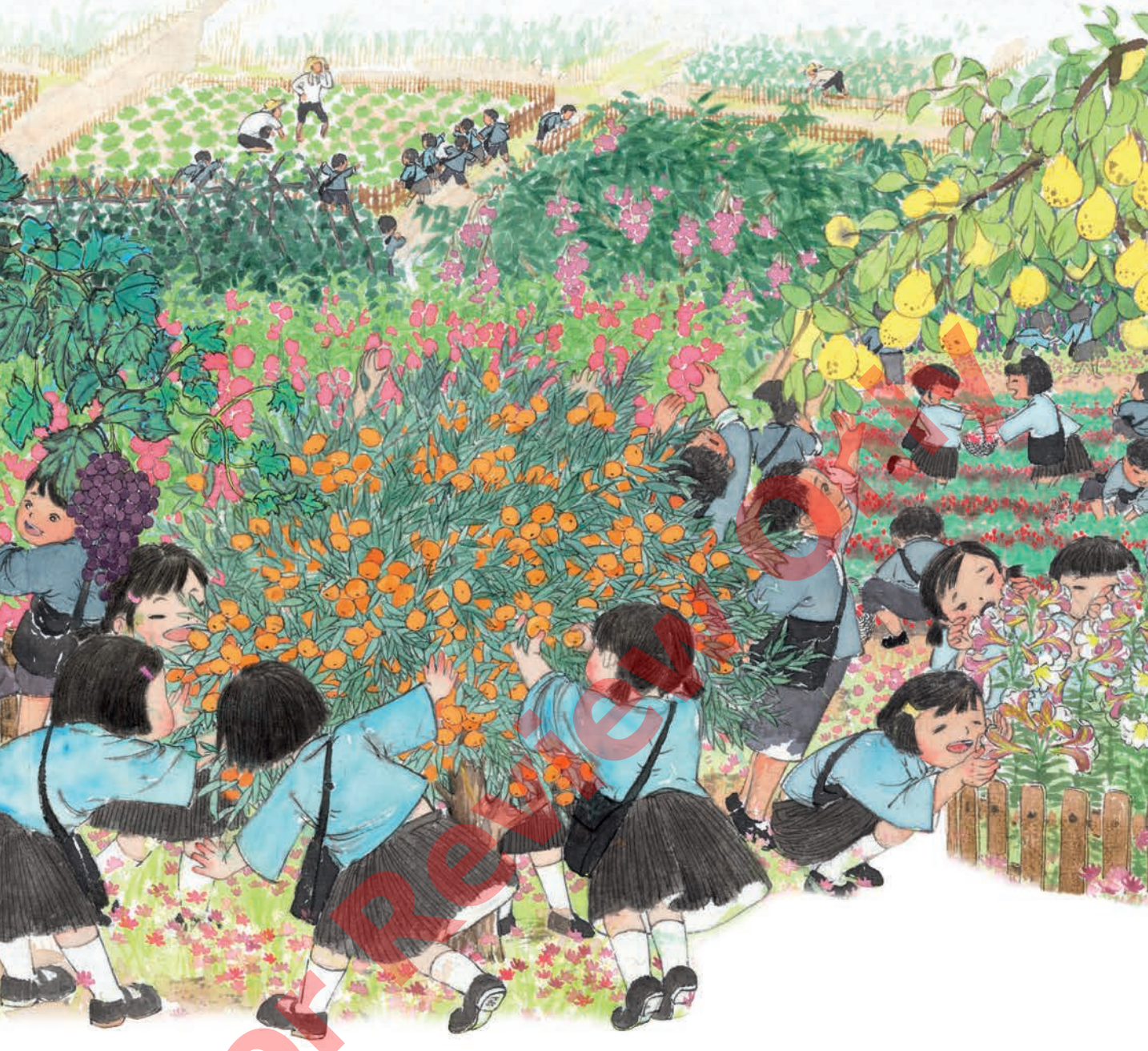






As a child, Yuan Longping was playful and curious. He loved asking questions—sometimes ones even his teachers could not answer. When teachers stopped him, 'Don't overthink it, Yuan Longping!', he did not listen. If there wasn't an answer, he decided he would find it himself.





At the age of six, Yuan visited a beautiful garden with his classmates. Golden pears hung from the trees, purple grapes draped from the vines, and flowers bloomed everywhere. That day planted a dream in his heart: a love for nature and a wish to study agriculture when he grew up.

YUAN LONGPING (1930-2021)

A Chinese agronomist and inventor, the 'father of hybrid rice'

Early Life (1930-1949)

Yuan Longping was born in 1930 in Beijing, where his family nicknamed him Er Mao because he was the second child. His childhood was shaped by war and constant moving, as his family lived in places like Tianjin, Jiangxi, and Hubei. Despite the hardships, his parents gave him the best education they could. Yuan attended several schools in Wuhan, Hunan, and Chongqing, and by 1949 he entered Southwest Agricultural College to study agriculture, following his dream of helping people by producing more food.

Becoming a Teacher (1953-1960s)

After graduating, Yuan was assigned to teach at Anjiang Agricultural School in Hunan, a remote place surrounded by mountains. It was here that he began his research into crop breeding. In 1961, while working in the rice fields, he discovered unusual rice plants that gave him the idea that hybrid rice might be possible. By the mid-1960s, he and his students formed a small research group to study male-sterile rice plants, even though many experts believed hybrid rice could never succeed.

Breakthroughs in Hybrid Rice (1970–1973)

In 1970, Yuan's assistants discovered a wild male-sterile rice plant in Hainan. This was a turning point, opening the door to hybrid rice research. Just three years later, in 1973, Yuan announced the success of the three-line hybrid rice method. This breakthrough proved that hybrid rice could be developed and grown, leading to much higher yields and changing the future of food production in China.

Recognition and Global Impact (1978–1990s)

By the late 1970s and early 1980s, Yuan Longping was recognised internationally as the 'Father of Hybrid Rice'. He received awards from UNESCO and other organizations for his contributions to science and food security. In the 1990s, he continued to share his knowledge worldwide, even serving as a chief advisor for the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization. His work helped countries beyond China grow more rice and fight hunger.

Later Achievements (2000–2018)

In 2000, China stopped receiving food aid and became a donor nation, a powerful symbol of Yuan's success. He and his team developed the two-line hybrid rice method, which simplified breeding and increased yields even further. Yuan also worked on super hybrid rice and salt-tolerant rice, which could grow in coastal lands. Throughout the 2000s and 2010s, he received China's highest science awards and continued leading research teams, even in his 80s.

Final Years and Legacy (2017–2021)

Even in his late 80s, Yuan Longping remained active in research, leading progress on salt-tolerant rice and new breeding techniques. He often spoke of his dream of rice plants so tall and plentiful that people could sit in their shade—his famous 'Rice Dream'. Yuan passed away in 2021 at the age of 91, leaving behind a legacy of courage, persistence, and innovation that continues to inspire millions.