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"Four-Eyes and Communist Bureaucrats": *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress* by Dai Sijie

In Dai Sijie's novel, *Balzac and the Little Chinese Seamstress,* the aptly named character, Four-Eyes, is used by the author to satirize communist bureaucrats by being an example of a failed re-education attempt. The novel takes place during the cultural revolution in China. Chairman Mao has thrown out higher education and replaces it with lessons of industry and agriculture under the claim that he was promoting social equality. He also decides to send several young adults to be re-educated in remote villages and orders the burning of western literature. There, they are subjected to the labors the villagers face. This ranges from farming to working naked in a coal mine. The narrator and Luo are forced to go to one of these remote villages. There, they occasionally visit their old friend, Four-Eyes, who has also been subjected to re-education in a different village. When the duo visit Four-Eyes, what Four-Eyes could be described as doing was that "He was tilling the soil with the aid of a plough and a water buffalo... our friend was making slow progress ... one split second of inattention was enough for Four-Eyes to receive a blow to the face from the buffalo's tail ... He was so enraged... [He] was unable to distinguish us from the jeering peasants in the neighboring paddy fields" (Sijie 46-47). From the perspective of the villagers, who support re-education, Four-Eyes is a prime example of re-education in progress. Four-Eyes is learning how to properly till the soil. From a larger point of view, he is actually an example of a failed attempt. He was harboring books and ended up being released from re-education by working for a literary journal. Essentially, Four-Eyes city life was only paused. Re-education did absolutely nothing for Four-Eyes in terms of its original goals. Therefore, Four-Eyes is a prime example of the little success the re-education attempts of the communists bureaucrats experienced.