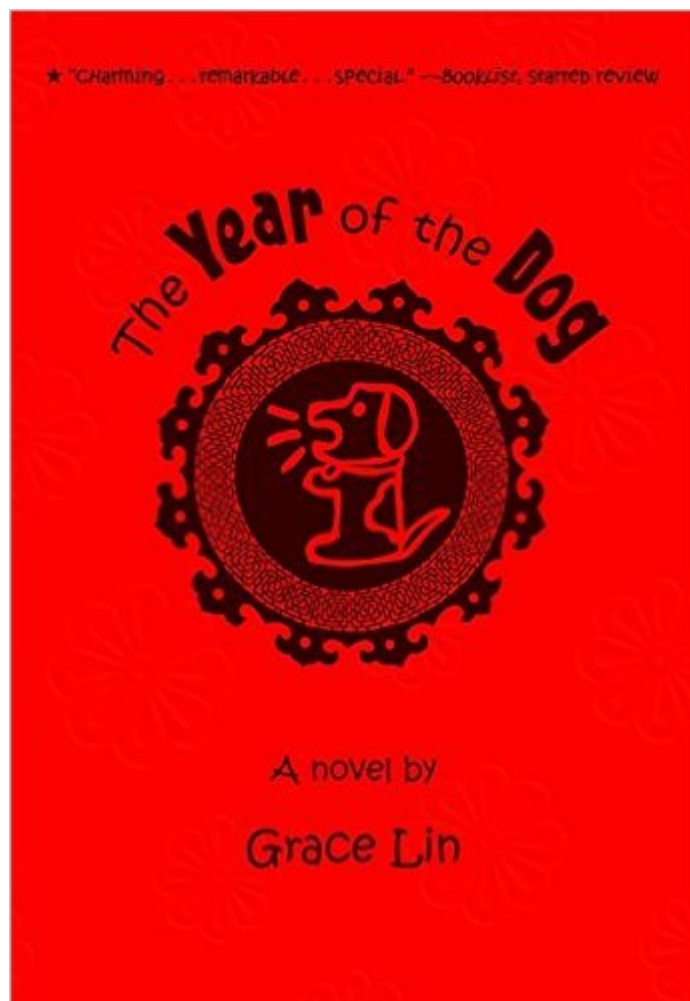


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The Year Of The Dog (A Pacy Lin Novel)



Synopsis

It's the Chinese Year of the Dog, and as Pacy celebrates with her family, she finds out that this is the year she is supposed to "find herself." Universal themes of friendship, family, and finding one's passion in life make this novel appealing to readers of all backgrounds. This funny and profound book is a wonderful debut novel by a prolific picture book author and illustrator and has all the makings of a classic.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 690 (What's this?)

Series: A Pacy Lin Novel

Paperback: 160 pages

Publisher: Little, Brown Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition (May 2, 2007)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 031606002X

ISBN-13: 978-0316060028

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.5 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (67 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #16,852 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #2 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Holidays & Celebrations > Chinese New Year #9 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories > Asian & Asian American #552 inÂ Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Friendship

Age Range: 8 - 10 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

This year I have decided to read as many really good children's books published in 2006 as humanly possible. This means that I pay particularly close attention to the books my co-workers (other children's librarians) promote loudly. One of the first titles this year that received such promotion was a little politely perfect story by the name of, "The Year of the Dog". So delicate as to come across as almost fragile, this is one of those books that makes stories out of a minimum of words. You will not find any excess to this story. No long-winded exposition or sentences written solely for the purpose of filling the page. Instead, this is a finely honed and delicately crafted title that is bound to be enjoyed by vast hoards of children, should it ever fall into their hands. You job?

See that it does. It's the Year of the Dog, and Pacy has just learned that this is the year she's supposed to "find herself" and make new friends. This means that a person will need a lot of luck, and fortunately she has that in spades. For example, there's a new girl in school. A new girl who's exactly Pacy's age and who, just like her, is Taiwanese-American. Her name is Melody and instantly she and Pacy become best friends. Together, the two experience everything from school tryout and a book contest to figuring out which boy they like and what to dress up as for Halloween. As the year goes by, there's plenty to do and plenty to learn. What really gives this book a push past other children's books out there is just how kid-friendly it is. Whether she's discussing a science fair project or trying out for the school play, Lin seems to have an uncanny knack for tapping into the heads of children. The characters befriend one another, have small fights, and go through the usual steps of kids of that age. There is a gentleness to Lin's storytelling too. You know that when the new Taiwanese girl comes to class, she's not going to reject Pacy's advances for friendship. And then there are the tiny pen-and-ink drawings that illustrate the story. From the step-by-step instructions of "How to draw a dog" (the same one you see on the book's cover) to The Wizard of Oz curtain call or a single twinkie, Lin's pictures fill out a precise little story with precise little illustrations. Now I made the serious mistake of reading, "The Year of the Dog", while my plane sat for four hours on a New Orleans tarmac through both lunch and dinnertime. I would like to advise you to never ever read this book if your tummy is grumbling. From the moment the book opens on Chinese New Year to feast after feast after feast, you're going to find your salivation glands filling mighty fast while reading this story. Have you ever read the descriptions of food in the Laura Ingalls Wilder's, "Little House" books? Well that's the kind of evocative description you're going to discover when Lin talks about some of the tastiest Taiwanese dishes out there. For Taiwanese kids growing up in America, it's tough to figure out the politics of something as simple as their own culture. Are they Taiwanese? Chinese? Lin does a magnificent job of simplifying the situation for children without downplaying the importance of the topic or making it seem unimportant. She even makes the daring choice of having her main character teased for not being Taiwanese enough. Issues like this are given enough room so that the kids reading the book can think through the difficult situations and maybe find fault with the narrator's perceptions. For example, Pacy at one point says that could never be a character in the school production of, "The Wizard of Oz", because who's ever heard of a Taiwanese munchkin? Lin shows this to be a silly concern without having some didactic character push their way onto the page and deliver the obligatory you-can-be-whatever-you-want-to-be speech all too common in children's literature. Consider this author capable of something a little classier and a little smarter than great grand sweeping statements such as that. It's rare to find any book as small and intelligent

as this little novel. For those readers who like chapter books but still need pictures, "The Year of the Dog" fills a definite need. Probably one of the more beautiful books to come out this or any other year. It's required reading.

I never heard my Asian-American daughter say these words until she read "Year of the Dog." All the elements of a 4th-grader's life are there - family, friends, school projects, holidays, camp, disappointments, achievements, learning about yourself - and are told with gentleness, humor, truth, and terrific illustrations. We've loved all Grace Lin's picture books, and are delighted that she's now writing chapter books. Hoping for a sequel in time for next Chinese New Year!

The Year of the Dog would be a GREAT read aloud or literature circle book in second through fifth grade classrooms. Teachers and children can discuss: "What culture(s) are you a part of" and "How do you feel about trying to fit in?" Grace's mom shares wonderful short stories throughout the book to help Grace learn and understand where she is from. But my favorite thing about this book is that I can use it as a mentor text to teach writing. Grace struggles coming up with a writing idea (as many kids do) and experiences writer's block. She finally realizes that she should write about her own life as a Chinese-American. Grace talks about the many revisions she has to make as she writes her picture book. This book is a must for elementary teachers.

We're huge fans of Grace Lin's work in this European-American family. "Where the Mountain Meets the Moon" and "Starry River of the Sky" we loved so much that I read them before bedtime TWICE each. The words flow beautifully, the stories are wonderful... and this book is almost as good--which means it's fantastic.

Grace Lin's debut novel, "The Year of the Dog", centers around a little girl named, well, Grace Lin. The author admits this book is based on her childhood as a budding artist and Taiwanese American growing up in Upstate New York. "...this is the book I wished I had growing up," Lin relates on the back cover flap. The clever storyline interweaves old traditions with new ones. The book is structured with stories inside of stories. Interludes such as "How My Name Changed from Pacy to Grace" and "Mom's First Day of School" meld backstory with the plot of a remarkable little girl with a big heart. What makes this book highly relatable to young girls is the protagonist's real-life quest to find herself. Using the Chinese Year of the Dog as the framework for the story, Lin builds the book around an entire year filled with celebrations, school projects and relationships. I would have liked to

see more external dialogue about how others viewed the little girl, Grace. The author made it sound as if only the protagonist herself was conflicted. I was left wondering if her non-Asian classmates, teachers and community were always as accepting of her as she portrayed them to be. She dismissed this topic by creating her best friend, Melody Ling, the only other Asian-American girl in school. As a non-Asian American, I found the illustrations enlightening. For instance, Lin depicts her grandmother with her tiny feet which, according to Chinese tradition, had been bound as a child. She shows the picture of a pioneer doll which no doubt had blonde hair and blue eyes. The classic misunderstanding of what both mother and daughter mean by a china doll underscores the painful realization of being caught between several cultural worlds. This book is instructive and empowering for young girls. I recommend it as a resource for anyone struggling to find herself in today's motley world. Christine Louise Hohlbaum, American author of "Diary of a Mother" and "SAHM I Am: Tales of a Stay-at-Home Mom in Europe", lives near Munich, Germany, with her husband and two children. Subscribe to her parenting newsletter at [...]

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