



**BOOKS FROM TAIWAN**





## BOOKS FROM TAIWAN

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# About Taiwan Creative Content Agency

**W**ith a diverse, open-minded culture, and freedom of speech, Taiwan encourages and inspires creators to develop innovative content. Taiwan also possesses an all-embracing culture, boasting a uniquely diverse history and a multicultural heritage, fostering a liberal, progressive, and stable society. As a global leader in the semiconductor industry, Taiwan has a mature, government-supported technological ecosystem that incubates innovative future content and allows local businesses to better connect with the globe. Balancing distinct cultural traditions and cutting-edge technology, Taiwan is ideal for innovators seeking to unleash their creativity.

Established in 2019 by the Ministry of Culture, the Taiwan Creative Content Agency (TAICCA) supports the development of Taiwan's creative content industry (CCI) such as film and television, future content, publishing, pop music, animation, gaming, performing arts, and visual arts by engaging in production, distribution, overseas market expansion, branding, talent cultivation, industrial research, and more. We promote innovative growth in the creative content economy.

# About Books from Taiwan

**B**ooks from Taiwan is an initiative funded by TAICCA (Taiwan Creative Content Agency) to introduce a select list of Taiwan publishing titles, ranging from fiction, non-fiction, children's books, and comic books, to foreign publishers and readers alike.

You can find information about authors and books, along with who to contact in order to license translation rights, and the related resources about the Grant for the Publication of Taiwanese Works in Translation (GPT), sponsored by the Ministry of Culture of Taiwan.

# Grant for the Publication of Taiwanese Works in Translation (GPT)

Ministry of Culture,  
Republic of China  
(Taiwan)

**G**PT is set up by The Ministry of Culture to encourage the publication of Taiwanese works in translation overseas, to raise the international visibility of Taiwanese cultural content, and to help Taiwan's publishing industry expand into non-Chinese international markets.

- Applicant Eligibility: Foreign publishing houses (legal entity) legally registered or incorporated in accordance with the laws and regulations of their respective countries.
- Conditions:
  1. The so-called Taiwanese works must meet the following requirements:
    - A. Use traditional characters;
    - B. Written by a natural person holding an R.O.C. identity card;
    - C. Has been assigned an ISBN in Taiwan.  
i.e., the author is a native of Taiwan, and the first 6 digits of the book's ISBN are 978-957-XXX-XXX-X, 978-986-XXX-XXX-X, or 978-626-XXX-XXX-X.

2. Applications must include documents certifying that the copyright holder of the Taiwanese works consents to its translation and foreign publication (no restriction on its format).
  3. A translation sample of the Taiwanese work is required (no restriction on its format and length).
  4. The translated work must be published within two years, after the first day of the relevant application period.
- Grant Items:
    1. The maximum grant available for each project is NT\$600,000, which covers:
      - A. Licensing fees (going to the copyright holder of the Taiwanese works);
      - B. Translation fees;
      - C. Marketing and promotion fees (applicants for this funding must propose a specific marketing promotion plan and complete the implementation before submitting the grant project results; those whose plans include talks or book launching events attended by authors in person will be given priority for grants);
      - D. Book production-oriented fees;
      - E. Tax (20% of the total award amount);
      - F. Remittance-related handling fees.
    2. Priority consideration is given to books that have received the Golden Tripod Award, the Golden Comic Award, the Taiwan Literature Award, books on Taiwan's culture and history, or series of books.
  - Application Period: Twice every year, from April 1 to April 30, and from October 1 to October 31. The MOC reserves the right to change the application periods, and will announce said changes separately.
  - Announcement of successful applications: Winners will be announced within three months of the end of the application period.
  - Application Method: Please visit the Ministry's official website ([https://grants.moc.gov.tw/Web\\_ENG/](https://grants.moc.gov.tw/Web_ENG/)), and use the online application system.

For full details, please visit: [https://grants.moc.gov.tw/Web\\_ENG/](https://grants.moc.gov.tw/Web_ENG/)

Or contact: [books@moc.gov.tw](mailto:books@moc.gov.tw)





**BOOKS FROM TAIWAN**

# WHAT'S THIS HOLE?

## 這是什麼洞？

*Our lives are full of holes that are all kinds of shapes and sizes. Follow along as a young boy explores the different things around him and discovers the worlds inside the various holes he finds!*

Look over here, what's this small hole in the ground? There's a colony of ants burrowing inside it. And what about this big hole in the forest? It's a roost where bats are sleeping soundly. Each of the different holes makes a different sound: clanging, gurgling, scuttling, and snapping. So, let's go and take a closer look and see what kind of hole it is!

Our lives are surrounded by all kinds of different holes, and this book's clever design uses the process of turning the pages to create different worlds inside and outside the holes. It makes for a gratifying reading experience that satisfies children's curiosity and imagination. The simple text, repetitive sentences and abundant onomatopoeic words make this the perfect book for reading aloud with children.



### Text by Tsai Yi-Chien 蔡宜倩

Tsai Yi-Chien won the Kang Hsuan Picture Book Award in 2023 for her debut picture book *What's This Hole?* She enjoys creating stories alongside her job at an organization that specializes in early childhood education. Just like children, she loves to observe the world around her and is curious about new things.



- **Category:** Picture Book
- **Publisher:** Kang Hsuan
- **Date:** 11/2022
- **Rights contact:** booksfromtaiwan@taicca.tw

- **Pages:** 36
- **Size:** 25 x 25 cm
- **Age:** 3+
- **Material:** Full English translation



## Illustrated by Hsueh Hui-Yin 薛慧瑩

Hsueh Hui-Yin is an illustrator, mother, and housewife. In 2021, she won the Taipei Public Library's Best Children's Book of the Year Award for Outstanding Illustrator, and her work was featured in the Bologna Children's Book Fair Illustrators Exhibition. She has published several picture books including *Sleepwalking*, *Mr. Alzheimer*, and *Dear Grandma*, as well as comic books such as *Big and Small: Everyday Battles Between Mothers and Children*. Her work is often featured on the covers of children's books, and her illustrations have appeared in various newspapers and magazines.

# The Whole Within the “Hole”

By Rachel Wang Yung-Hsin

*In everyday life, there are all types of holes – big ones, little ones, round ones, and long ones. Pay close attention as you join this boy to observe what each hole reveals!*

– cover introduction

Along with this picture book’s curious title, *What’s This Hole?*, the keyhole and question mark illustrated on its cover suggest exploration and discovery. Smiling through the portal, the young protagonist probes and inspects his surroundings at every turn, sharing his close-up perspectives with the reader. Together, we witness ants ferrying biscuits to their colony, mice chewing on cheese, bats dangling upside-down in a cave, rain sloshing through a street grate, Mama feeding a piggy bank, and steam puffing from a kettle on full boil.

These otherwise random, prosaic moments are nonetheless remarkable for the child, and his enthusiasm is captured through Baba’s camera lens, which happens to be another “hole” identified in the story. The penultimate spread shows accumulated snapshots that are records of the child’s encounters, and the exuberant joy is evident as he revisits these memories and recounts the details, asking aloud what might have been in a particular hole. In this light, it becomes apparent that each of the prior spreads is a story unto itself, adding a new dimension to the reading experience.

The colorful and endearing illustrations are reminiscent of childhood drawings that center each young creator’s unique point of view, which is key in this picture book. While this work is literally about holes, its underlying theme deals with apertures and the ways in which individual focal points – factual or fantastical – shape narratives in storytelling. Readers might wonder, for instance: Who left



out the cheese? Where did the mice come from? Did this really happen? Such playful questions may encourage conversations about what is possible and promote novel ways to engage with one's environment.

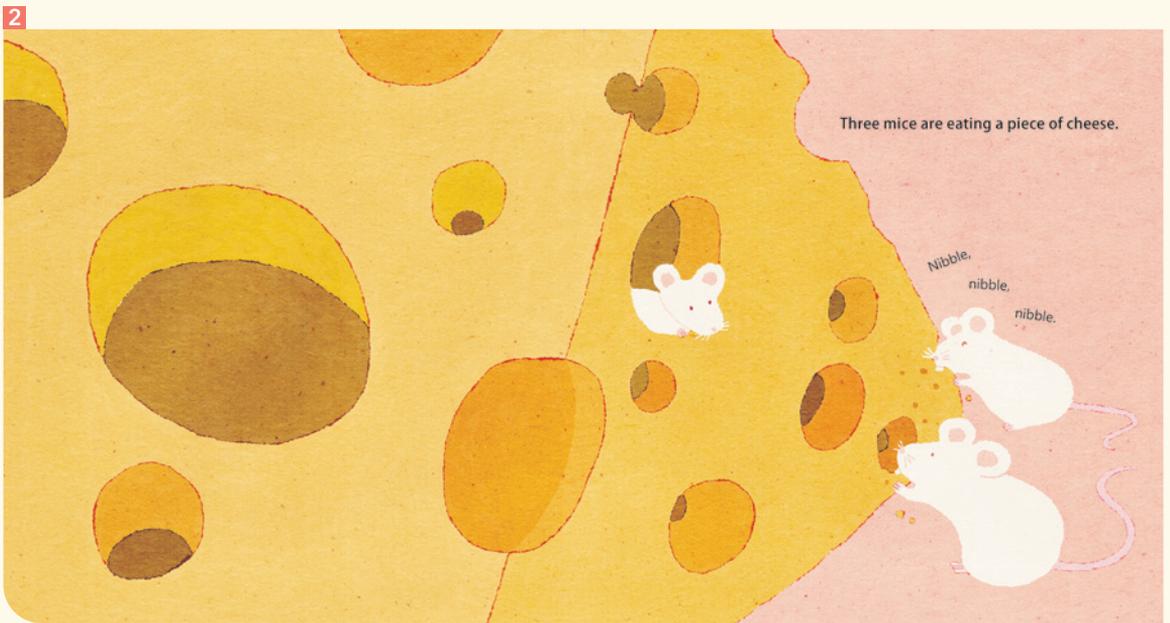
Designed as a read-aloud and for emerging readers, this picture book's text is simple and the recurring prompt: "Hey, what's this hole?" is

an invitation not only to examine the opening in question, but also to imagine to what or where it may lead. The intriguing final spread advances this spirit of inquiry and adventure by depicting numerous round holes and showing the child inside one of them, destination and surroundings unknown.



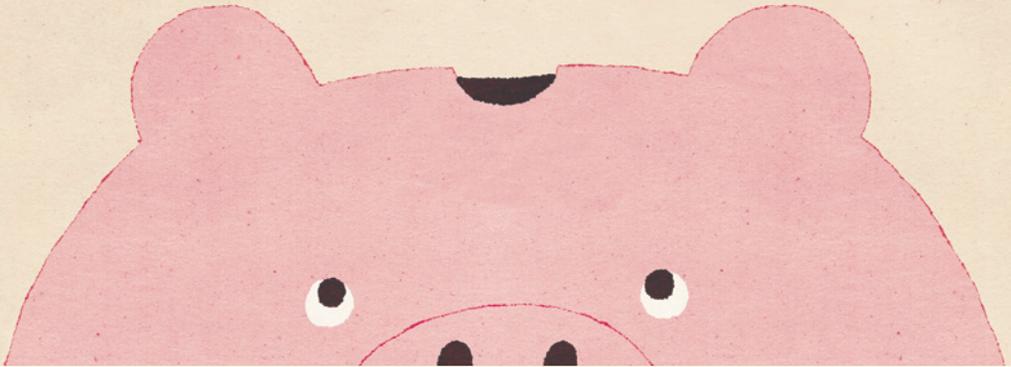


1



2

Hey, what's this hole?



3

4



Mum's putting 10 yuan in the piggy bank.

# WHO WANTS TO PLAY HIDE AND SEEK?

## 誰來玩躲貓貓？

*Let's search and count! But where has the sun gone? And how many octopuses are there? Who's going to play today? This book uses hide-and-peek in a creative new way to teach children how to observe and count the people and things around them.*

Every day, there are different objects hiding in the pages. On Monday, it's the sun, then on Tuesday there are two octopuses, and on Wednesday there are three chicks. Who's going to play hide-and-peek next? And can you find their hiding places?

Taking cross stitch as an inspiration, this book combines lots of small components to create big, engaging illustrations filled with objects that are great creative inspiration for children. Combining these images with a game of hide-and-peek encourages children to practice counting while observing the details and differences in the pictures, making this a fun interactive book for parents and children to read together.



### Liu Chen-Kuo 湯姆牛

Originally trained as a sculptor, Liu Chen-Kuo's books have won several awards, including the Golden Tripod Award for Best Illustration, and the Judge's Choice for the Feng Zikai Chinese Children's Picture Book Award. Liu Chen-Kuo has also been a featured illustrator at the Bologna Children's Book Fair, and his other titles include *The Scariest Day of My Life*, *Granny Lin's Peach Tree*, and *Kung Fu Frog, River River Lake*.



- **Category:** Picture Book
- **Publisher:** Global Kids
- **Date:** 12/2022
- **Rights contact:** booksfromtaiwan@taicca.tw

- **Pages:** 40
- **Size:** 19.5 x 25.1 cm
- **Age:** 3+
- **Material:** Full English translation

# Experimenting With Cross Stitch

Written by Liu Chen-Kuo & Sarah C. Ko

Translated by Sarah-Jayne Carver

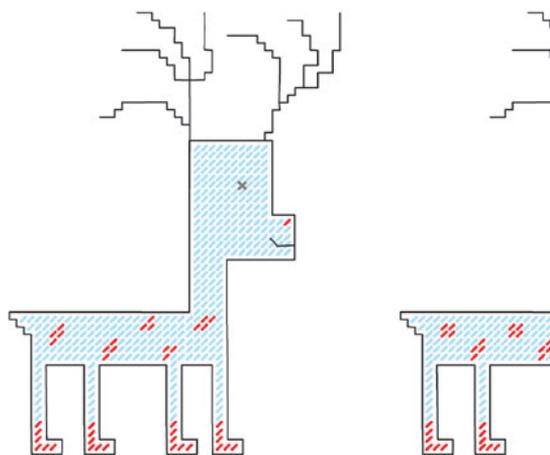
## Author-Illustrator Liu Chen-Kuo in His Own Words

My workplace is sometimes like an illustration lab. I like to experiment with different artistic disciplines such as sculpture, papercutting, contemporary ink painting, abstract drawing etc., and combine them with my original ideas about shape and color, then contemplate how I can use it all to produce new and interesting illustrations.

Years ago, I bought a guide to cross stitch patterns and it felt very warm and tactile which firmly planted the idea in my mind that I would use it in an illustration someday. Then, as I was creating a picture book for young children which eventually became *Who Wants to Play Hide and Seek?*, I had this instinct that I should experiment with cross stitch, so I started by drawing it on paper before trying it out on a computer, and then I ended up buying a cross stitch kit so I could actually make it for real.

When I finally had a few illustrations that had taken shape a few months later, I turned to my wife who was hard at work mopping the floor and asked, "Does the way I used cross stitch make the images feel warm and tactile?" She glanced at it, then her eyes widened and she said, "Yes, I think it does!"

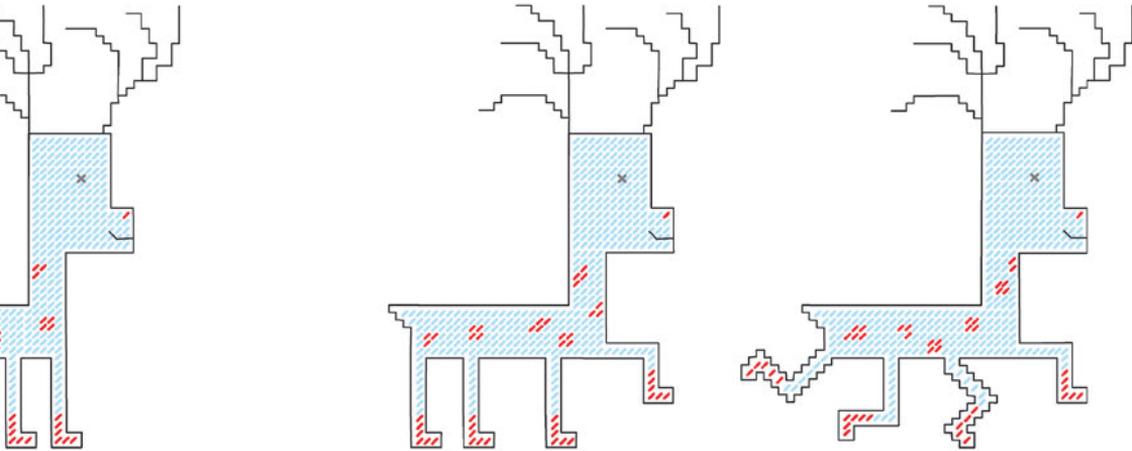
So, every day I started to patiently create the embroidery on my computer by using my mouse to thread each stitch. I often needed to wear farsighted glasses for this process so that I could alter the size of the squares. I thought about how to incorporate the rules of cross stitch and did a lot of calculations, asking myself questions like: how many squares would each of the octopus's eight legs take up? And how many squares there would need to be between them? Now that the book is out, I really hope you all enjoy the end result!



**A Recommendation from Children's Literature Critic Sarah C. Ko**

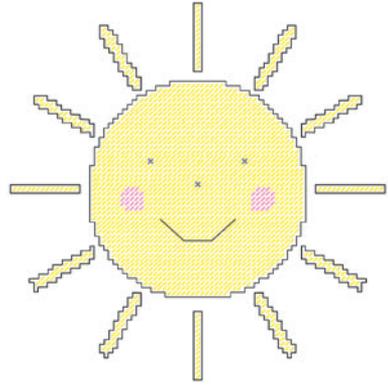
Veteran picture book creator Liu Chen-Kuo's new book *Who Wants to Play Hide and Seek?* masterfully demonstrates how to turn complexity into simplicity and has that all-important trait of a great children's picture book: it's simple without being monotonous, and clear without being superficial.

With smart humor and an elegant aesthetic, this little book takes babies and toddlers through a fun game of conceptual imagery: numbers, time, space, colors, shapes, similarities, differences, and so on. The texture of cross stitch is like a soft fabric which suits the sensory imagination of toddlers and creates a cozy atmosphere that can be enjoyed by adults and children alike. This is a book you can really play with, in the same spirit as the works of Eric Carle and Gomi Tarō, all the way through to its satisfying, and surprising, conclusion.



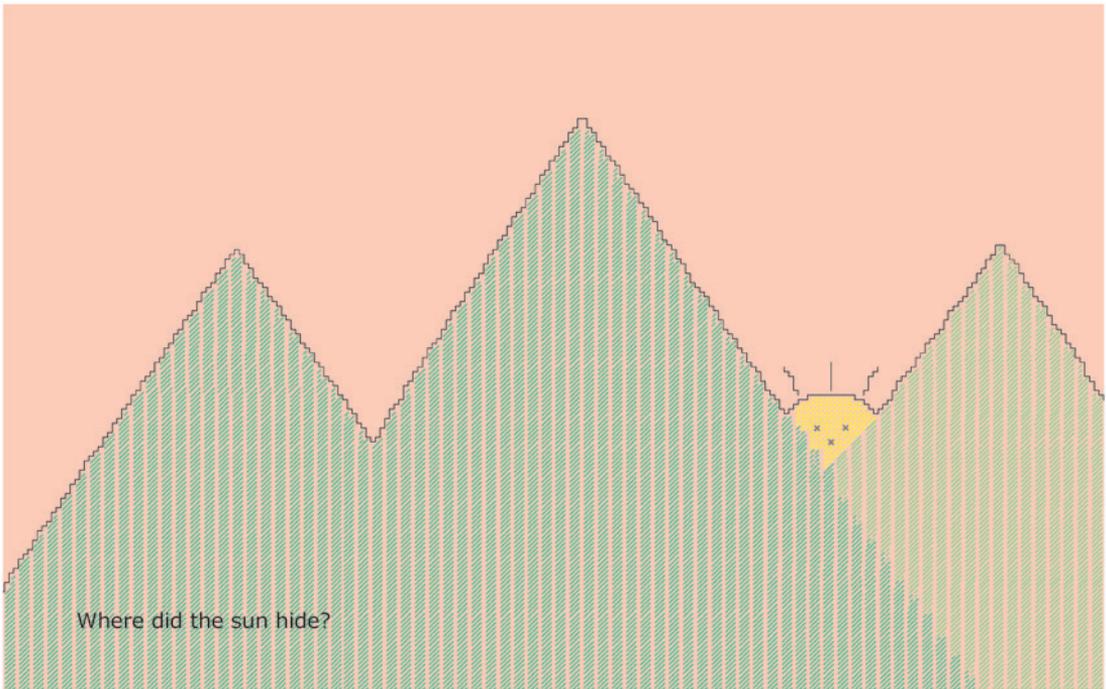
## Monday

The sun said:  
"I want to play Hide and Seek."



1

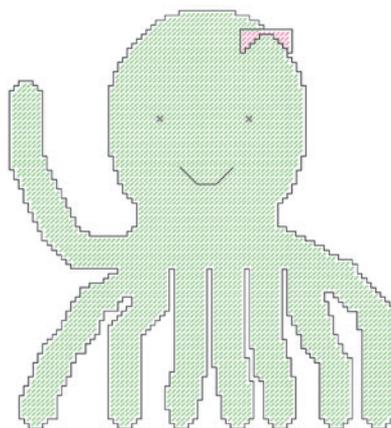
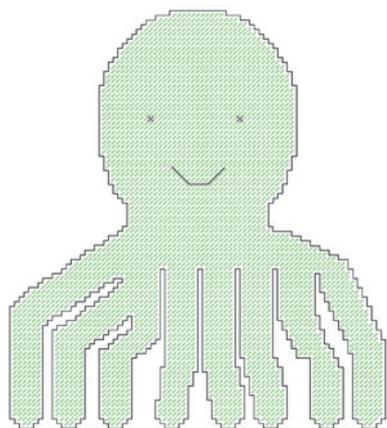
2



Where did the sun hide?

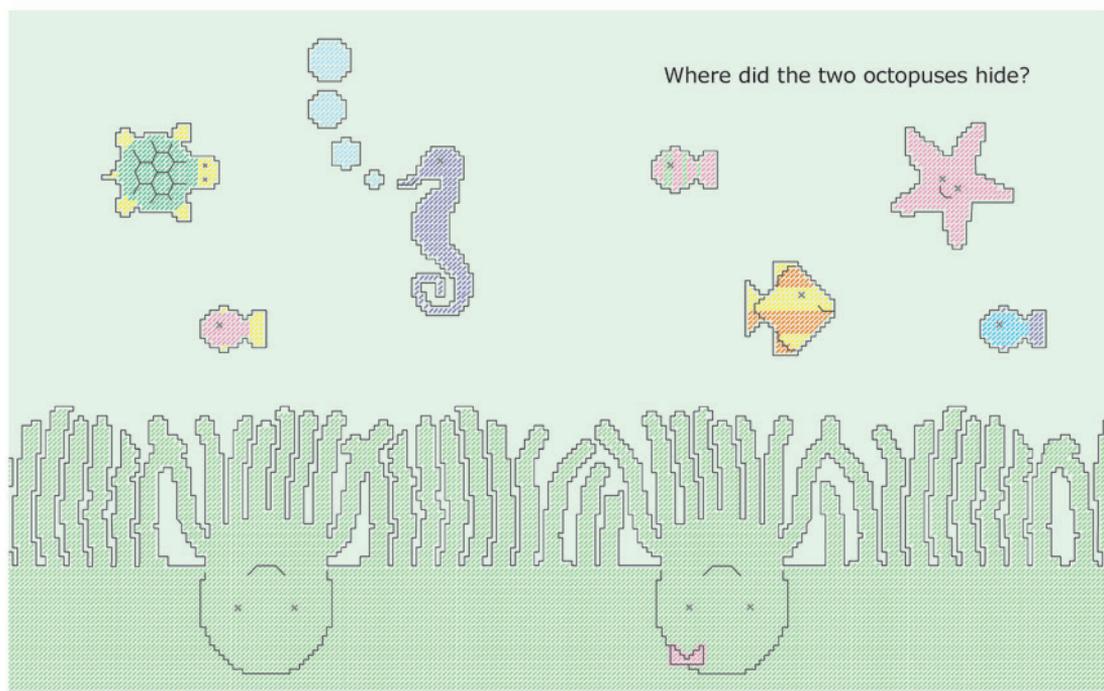
Tuesday

Two octopuses said:  
"We want to play Hide and Seek too."



3

4



# THE LITTLE PAPER BOATS THAT WENT TO SEE THE SEA

## 小紙船看海

*A children's literature classic in Taiwan, this book saw the nation's most famous children's author and illustrator join forces to create an adventure about the small paper boats that take the leap to sail down the river and out to sea.*

Deep in the mountains, a young boy takes a sheet of red paper and folds it into a tiny boat before placing it in a stream where it floats past villages and paddy fields, marveling at the bigger boats around it. Meanwhile, in the city a little girl creates a boat from a white piece of paper and places it in a gutter, where the water from the rainstorm washes it away into the river. When the two boats meet, they realize they both dream of seeing the sea, but will it all be smooth sailing from here?

*The Little Paper Boats That Went to See the Sea* is a classic in Taiwan and was a collaborative creation by the pioneering children's writer Lin Liang, and the innovative illustrator Cheng Ming-Chin. The first edition is now over forty years old, and while it has gone through many revisions over the intervening decades, the book is still beloved by adults and children alike.



Left: Cheng Ming-Chin  
Right: Lin Liang

### Text by Lin Liang 林良

Lin Liang (1924-2019) was a renowned children's author and national treasure in Taiwan. Alongside his writing, he also hosted radio programs and had previously worked as a primary school teacher, a journalist, and a newspaper editor. He had a gift for using simple words to express rich details and was extremely prolific, creating and translating more than two hundred books over the course of his career. Some of his most famous works include the essay collections *Little Sunshine* and *The Art of Plain Language*, as well as the children's book *I Am a Fox Dog*.



- **Category:** Picture Book
- **Publisher:** Linking
- **Date:** 10/2022
- **Rights contact:** booksfromtaiwan@taicca.tw

- **Pages:** 48
- **Size:** 17.5 x 19.5 cm
- **Age:** 5+
- **Material:** Full English translation

## Illustrated by Cheng Ming-Chin 鄭明進

Born in Taipei in 1932, Cheng Ming-Chin graduated from the art department of National Taipei University of Education and is an illustrator and picture book collector. He was an art teacher at a primary school for twenty-five years and an editorial consultant for several publishing houses. He also played a pioneering role in developing art education for children in Taiwan, and he has published several books on the subject, as well as titles about picture books from around the world. His best-known works as an illustrator include *The Little Paper Boats That Went to See the Sea* and *A Collection of Small Animal Nursery Rhymes*.

# The Art of Speaking to Children

Written by Chen Yu-Chin (Children's Literature Scholar)

Translated by Sarah-Jayne Carver

*The Little Paper Boats That Went to See the Sea* was written by the prolific children's book author Lin Liang when he was over fifty years old and features a simple, lyrical writing style. The story describes how a small red paper boat flows from a small brook in the mountains into a larger stream then into big river where it meets a little white paper boat in the city and the two of them go to look at the sea together. They see lots of skyscrapers along the way and finally drift towards the edge of a dock where they see a big ship and go out to sea with it. Both of them are so happy and realize that something has changed: now they are two small paper boats that have seen the sea.

Cheng Ming-Chin was forty-three years old when he illustrated *The Little Paper Boats That Went to See the Sea*. He had taught art at primary schools for a long time and had looked carefully at the recurring traits in children's drawings over the years. He included some

of the traits in his own illustrations, especially those from the "pictorial stage" which children typically experience between the ages of four and eight. At that age, children often draw things from memory rather than sketching the relative shapes and sizes of objects in front of them.

In the book, Cheng uses exaggerated proportions when depicting the little paper boats as a way of emphasizing the contrast between the main characters and the scenery around them. For example, the little white and red boat on the water appear disproportionately large relative to the scenery around them in an attempt to show that although the boats are small, they have an important role to play in the story.

Lin described Cheng's illustrations as a combination of two engaging components: overview and close-reading. "The overview



lets you enjoy the picture as a whole, while the close-reading is about appreciating the many individual things that make up the image. Illustrations that feature this combination of overview and close-reading tend to be more figurative which makes it easier for children to relate to them," said Lin. Cheng also employs techniques such as stone rubbing, tracing and blotting, as well as cutting and pasting, to enrich the details of his illustrations. Alongside the "pictorial stage" design elements, *The Little Paper Boats That Went to See the Sea* has other traits found in children's drawings, including simple shapes and clumsily-drawn lines etc. which naturally bring a distinctive vitality to the scenes.

*The Little Paper Boats That Went to See the Sea* was first published in 1975 as part of the "New Generation of Childhood Discovery" series which also featured another collaboration between Lin and Cheng: *Small*

*Animal Nursery Rhymes*. These two books have been read for nearly half a century and have been reprinted many times. Thanks to improvements in printing and bookbinding techniques, the illustrations have continued to become more detailed over the years and evoke a timelessness that has meant they still remain popular with young readers. This is because the book's two creators, one of whom wrote for young readers using the art of plain language while the other embraced elements of children's artwork in his illustrations, were both adults who knew how important it was to squat down and speak to children on their own level.

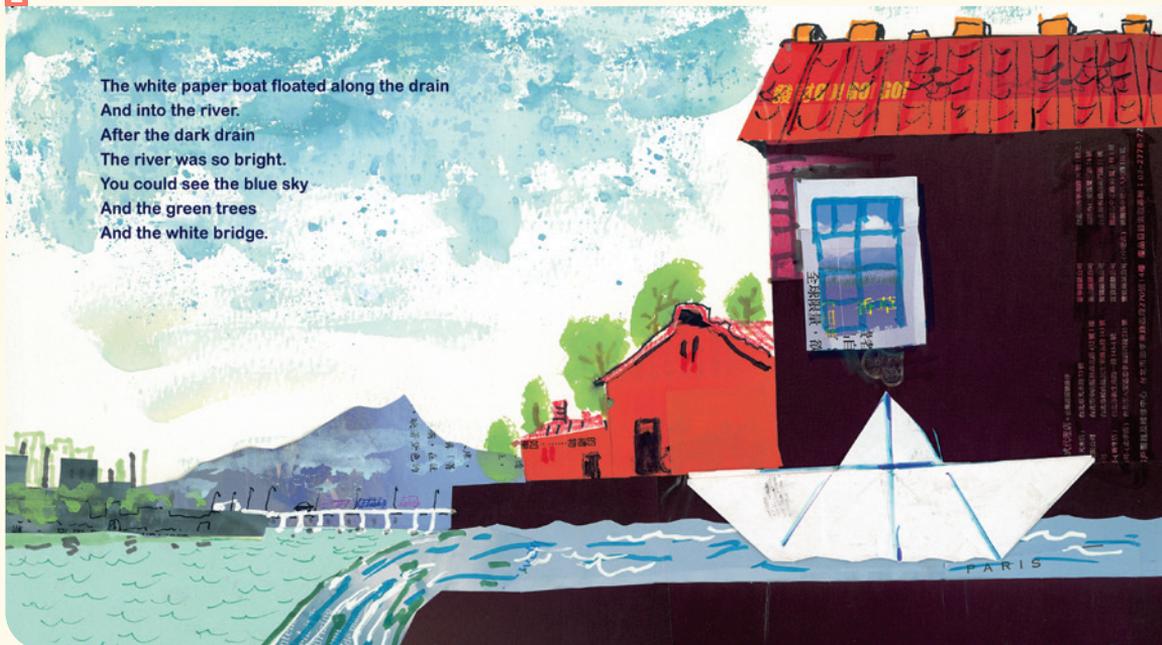


The white paper boat floated down the gutter  
 And on and on  
 Into a drain.  
 It was dark in the drain  
 And the water was dirty  
 And there were many things  
 Floating about  
 Floating about  
 That people didn't want.

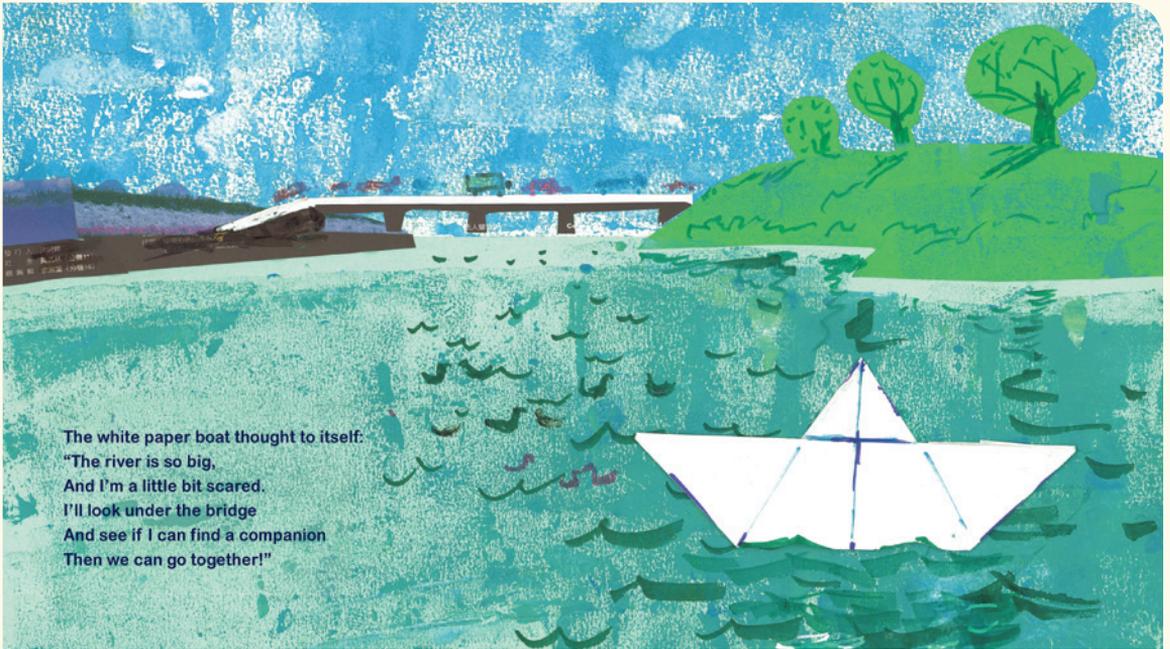


1

The white paper boat floated along the drain  
 And into the river.  
 After the dark drain  
 The river was so bright.  
 You could see the blue sky  
 And the green trees  
 And the white bridge.

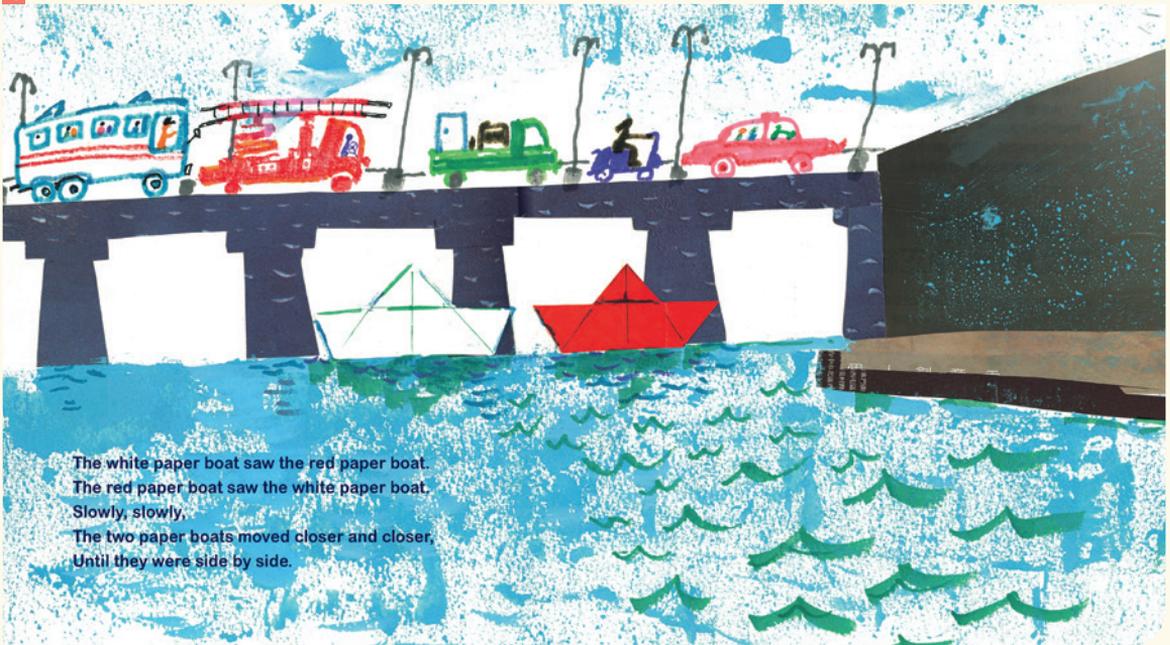


2



The white paper boat thought to itself:  
"The river is so big,  
And I'm a little bit scared.  
I'll look under the bridge  
And see if I can find a companion  
Then we can go together!"

3



The white paper boat saw the red paper boat.  
The red paper boat saw the white paper boat.  
Slowly, slowly,  
The two paper boats moved closer and closer,  
Until they were side-by-side.

4

# THE PRINCE WHO HATED GREEN CATERPILLARS

## 討厭綠色毛毛蟲的王子

*The young prince's birthday wish is to make his most hated color, green, disappear, but when the color's disappearance starts causing harm to the kingdom and its people, what should the prince do?*

It's the prince's eighth birthday coming up! He hates green caterpillars so much that he makes a birthday wish for the color green to disappear, and so all the experts and palace officials come up with a series of brilliant plans to make the color disappear from the kingdom.

One day, the prince is curious and slips out of the castle on horseback but gets lost through his own carelessness. Luckily for him, a benevolent girl saves him and takes him back to her house. While they're hiding out in secret, the two of them share their deepest fears and the prince discovers that the girl has been separated from her family. What will happen in the end? Can the prince help reunite her with her family?

This book uses a fairytale-style fable to explore human rights issues and diversity, which encourages readers to think about the importance of respect and empathy for others.



### Huang Yi-Wen 黃一文

Huang Yi-Wen is a freelance illustrator and the author of several award-winning picture books. She has devoted herself to the craft of storytelling after attending a picture book workshop by Liu Hsu-Kung since 2018. Using her gift for mixed media, Yi-Wen creates books that she hopes will appeal to children and adults alike. She is the recipient of a Golden Tripod Award as well as the 2022 Openbook Book Award in the children's book category. Her illustrations were selected for both the 2021 and 2022 Bologna Illustrators Exhibition. Her other works include *Secrets at the Zoo* and *Once Upon a Time a Train Came to the Island*.

# 討厭綠色毛毛蟲的王子

文圖 黃一文



- **Category:** Picture Book
- **Publisher:** Commonwealth Education
- **Date:** 11/2022
- **Rights contact:** booksfromtaiwan@taicca.tw
- **Pages:** 32

- **Size:** 20.5 x 29 cm
- **Age:** 5+
- **Material:** Full English translation
- **Rights sold:** Korean (Little Starfield)

# Optimism in a World of Inner Contradictions

Written by Huang Yi-Wen

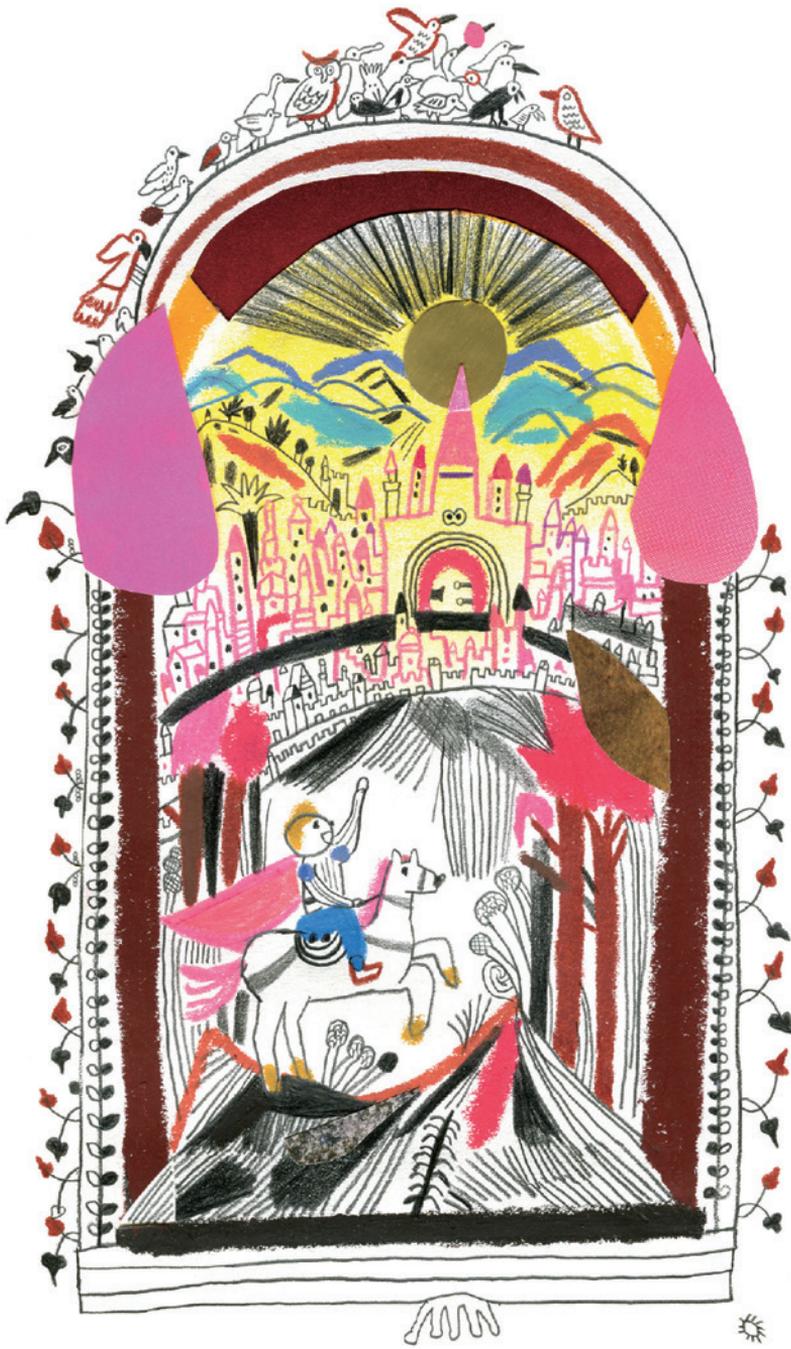
Translated by Sarah-Jayne Carver

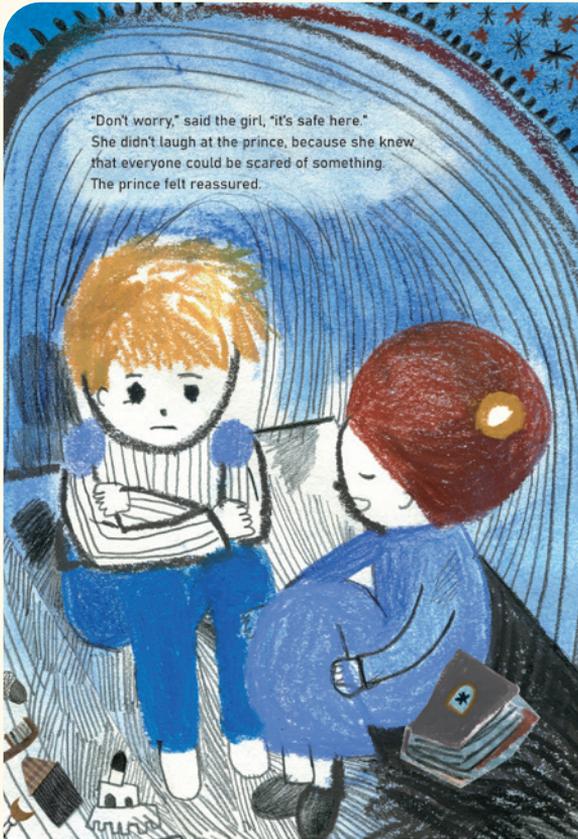
When I wrote my previous picture books, I started by making sure I had a clear layout of how the story would begin and end, then I got to work on illustrating the page that I was most excited about drawing. However, this was definitely not the case with *The Prince Who Hated Green Caterpillars*. Even though I'd already mapped out the plot, I wasn't sure about the characters' inner thoughts or how the story would end, so I couldn't skip around when working on the illustrations and I had to work through the book in order, starting with the first page and finishing with the last. That continuity made it easier to get into the world of the story, but I was still hesitant about sketching the characters' expressions right up until I drew the final line.

Not having a fixed plan was a new creative approach for me. From the moment I first came up with the story, I didn't try to find a clear-cut resolution to it, instead I tried to create a defined space where contradictions such as virtue and vice, kindness and ignorance, love and hate, salvation and persecution etc. could all coexist. Rather than keeping these opposing elements at a safe distance from each other in the story, they were all combined into one person. I was curious about whether it was possible that the good and evil could exist at the same time rather than hiding from each other like day and night, and what might

happen if they collided together. I wanted to design a moment after which everything would change, and that was the original intention behind this picture book.

What happens after these collisions? When we grow up, we realize there are a lot of questions in life that don't have answers. Can we understand each other even if our circumstances are different? Can we repair the damage we've caused? If this story needs a specific resolution, I hope that it's one of love, that it's a cheesy fairy-tale about how "from now on, we'll all live happily ever after." So, by the end of the story, in the prince's mind the best kingdom isn't the one without the color green, it's the kingdom that he promised to the girl.





"Don't worry," said the girl, "it's safe here."  
She didn't laugh at the prince, because she knew  
that everyone could be scared of something.  
The prince felt reassured.

1

2



"After a long time, the shouting and arguing gradually  
died down, and I climbed out of the secret hiding place,  
and peeked from behind the door..."  
The girl looked down as she remembered.

"Mum, Dad and other people were  
being taken away. A monster on  
horseback said they had committed  
crimes, and would do hard labour for  
the rest of their lives to pay back."



"A few months ago, Dad told me to hide in here..."





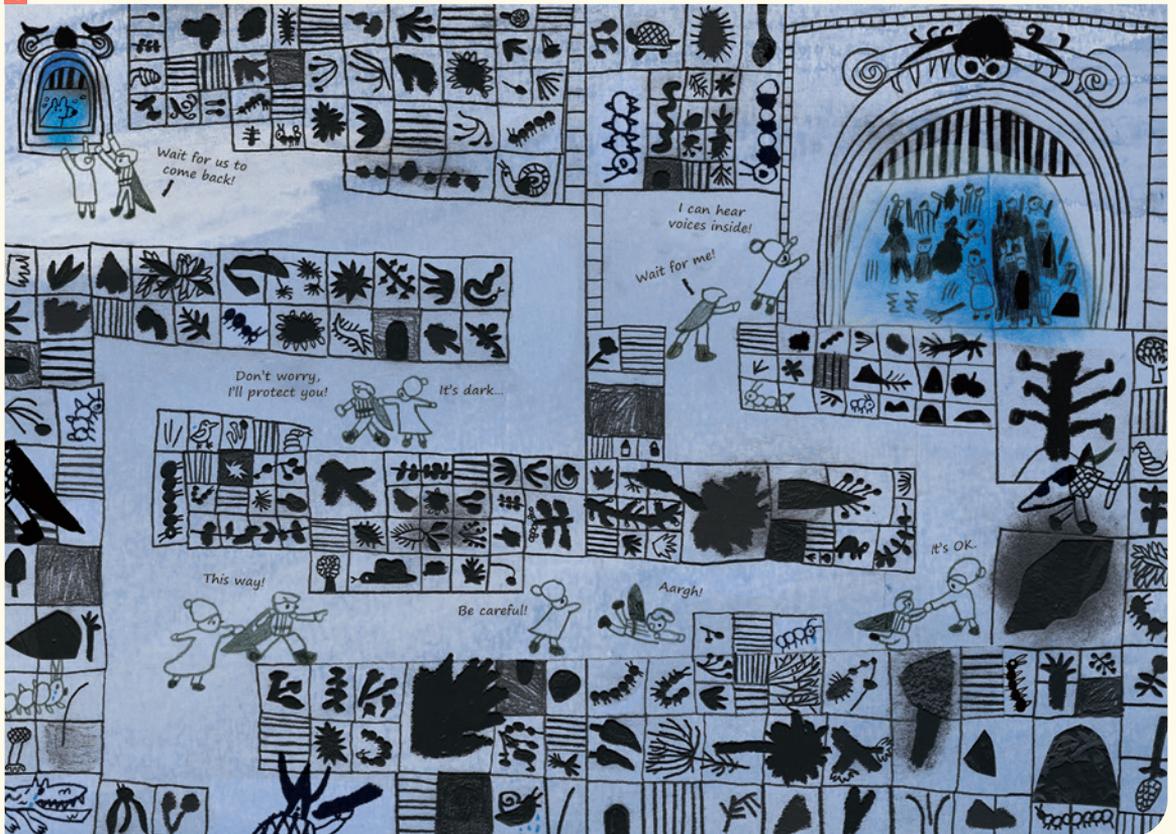
The prince responded excitedly, "I can save your family, and you can come and live in the best kingdom in the world."



They're locked up in a place with many chimneys.

3

4



Wait for us to come back!

I can hear voices inside!

Wait for me!

Don't worry, I'll protect you!

It's dark...

This way!

Be careful!

Aargh!

It's OK.

# WANG-WANG, THE ELEPHANT

## 大象忘忘

*Deep in the savanna roams an elephant called Wang-Wang. He's a newcomer who's haunted by the shadows of his past, but with the help and comradery of his friends, he manages to heal the trauma from his previous life.*

All the elephants who roam the savanna have incredible memories. The only exception is Wang-Wang, an elephant from a faraway place who is extremely good at forgetting which earns him the name "Forgetful". After spending a few days with him, the other elephants begin to realize that Wang-Wang is acting a bit strange and he speaks in a way that they don't understand. He doesn't even seem to remember how to do simple things like walking, foraging, and playing, plus he has trouble sleeping because he often has nightmares. What happened in Wang-Wang's past? And what can his friends do to help?

Author Wang Yu-Ching was inspired to create this book after reading about the abuse of circus animals, and uses warm, humorous words alongside Nan Jun's delicate illustration style to present the characters' inner worlds. By discussing post-traumatic stress disorder and trauma recovery, the book teaches children to accept and tolerate differences, as well as encouraging them to contemplate the relationship between humans and animals. This heartwarming, love-filled picture book is not only dedicated to the animals that have been subjected to pain at the hands of humans, but also to any child who has been forced to experience suffering while growing up.



### Text by Wang Yu-Ching 王宇清

Wang Yu-Ching has a PhD in children's literature and writes guides, blurbs, and reviews of children's books. He has won numerous awards including the Chiu Ko Young Adult Literature Award. He is best known for *The Daemon Times* series (Korean rights sold), and his other works have appeared in children's newspapers and magazines.



- **Category:** Picture Book
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- **Rights contact:** booksfromtaiwan@taicca.tw

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- **Size:** 29.5 x 20 cm
- **Age:** 5+
- **Material:** Full English translation



## Illustrated by Nan Jun 南君

Born in Pingtung, Nan Jun was inspired to pursue an illustration career all the way back in primary school after reading page after page of beautifully illustrated picture books. He continues to work by hand because he wants to have only one "draft". His work is retro in style and exquisitely executed. His picture books include *Wishing at 18 Degrees Below Zero*, *The Girl from the Tower*, and *Fox Hatches an Egg*.

# Life is a Circus

Written by Wang Yu-Ching & Nan Jun

Translated by Sarah-Jayne Carver

## Notes from the Author

This story isn't just dedicated to Tyke the elephant, but also to all animals that suffer at the hands of human society and every child who has ever been harmed, as well as to you and me. Tyke was captured from the wild and sold to a circus. Unable to bear the abuse she endured for over 21 years, Tyke tried to escape and killed a human in the process, then was eventually shot and killed.

When I read about the case it put me into a deep sense of despair. After reading more about circus animals, I was shocked to learn that animals had endured such unimaginable cruelty in the human world. I hope with all my heart that Tyke is in a better place, somewhere that she has freedom and dignity, where she has the care and support of her family so she can relax and just be an elephant.

We often hear that analogy that "life is a circus". In human society, we frequently find ourselves going against our own natures to fulfil the expectations of others, whether it be in life, or in school or work, and even in our dreams and genders. We are confined and tormented, and in spite of ourselves we end up performing all kinds of circus acts. A lot of the time, we not only perform but also become tamers ourselves, forcing others to perform as well, and forgetting that we were originally all peers, friends, and family.

Many people would agree that being a parent

is the most challenging job in the world. In a society where utilitarianism and credentialism are still rampant, we usually set out under a banner of love and care, but we become circus tamers without realizing it. As parents, do we really want what's best for our children, or do we just want to fulfil our own expectations? Are we willing to try and genuinely understand, respect, and accept our children's nature and true selves? It's the family members who truly make up a home. Our houses should be places full of the utmost comfort, reassurance, and tolerance, but what becomes of our homes and our children when we become tamers?

In real life, the injuries and repression we suffered leave a shadow, be it subtle or obvious, that never really fades. As much as we all want to have the strength and courage to be ourselves, the attitudes of those around us are still incredibly important. Indifference, neglect, and conformity don't just prevent healing but can even deepen the wounds, while genuine support, understanding, and companionship can nurture the faint flicker of healing and help us feel happiness again beyond the pain.

Even though human society inevitably makes tamers of us all, if we're willing to stop and look at ourselves, we can go back to being friends and family who impart warmth and strength, offering the kind of compassionate support that helps other people feel better. When we know we can all rely on each other, maybe then we can feel free to be ourselves and rekindle our own inner joy.

## Notes from the Illustrator

I once read a news story about the Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus canceling the elephant show that the company and its predecessors had been running for over 140 years and how they gave one final performance in May 2016. To this day, I still have vivid memories of that news story.

When I received the text for *Wang-Wang, the Elephant* several years later, I was shocked but also pleasantly surprised. What shocked me was how I kept associating the character in the book with the news story I'd read. Just like the herd of elephants in the article, Wang-Wang should have been running happily across wide open plains but instead he had been confined to a circus cage for reasons unknown, perhaps due to either poaching or illegal breeding, and spent his days performing the same acrobatic tricks over and over again for human entertainment.

I was pleasantly surprised that Wang Yu-Ching had been able to write *Wang-Wang, the Elephant* as a cute, fun book for children, while also including a lot of thought-provoking messages hidden beneath the story's surface. Even after I'd finished reading it, the text had left a lingering feeling in my heart. Perhaps it was because deep down I felt like *Wang-Wang, the Elephant* was a true story.

The circus is still a happy place for a lot of people, but I wonder if they would feel the same way if they found themselves in the animals' position? Is there a sad hidden story behind what the animals do to entertain the audience? I don't know and I can't say for sure since I'm not one of them, but it can't be a happy place for them.

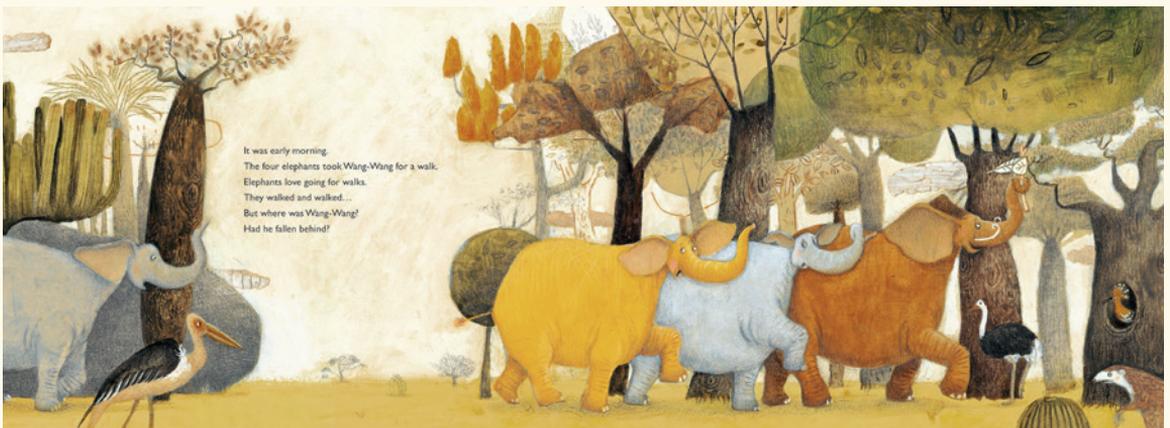
I once witnessed a circus show but the animal was a lion rather than an elephant. In the performance on stage, the lion was forced to into various movements and postures such as sitting on a chair or obediently lying down. It was forced to listen to the tamer's instructions, and why did it obey? The trainer had a whip in his hand, and if the lion didn't listen the trainer would threaten to use it or crack the whip towards the sky. I found it hard to imagine the animal as a majestic lion in the savannah, king of beasts, when I could clearly see the inner helplessness and fear in its facial expressions while the trainer took the time to bask in the audience's applause.

That show was an upsetting and deeply uncomfortable experience for me, and to this day it remains the last circus performance I've ever watched. Animal rights is probably too heavy and a complex issue for me to give a concrete answer about since there are often a range of structural problems involved. However, I think the most direct way to deal with it is to refuse to watch performances like that. The Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey Circus was disbanded in 2017 after the cancelation of the elephant show. It makes me happy that the retired elephants, like Wang-Wang in the story, can finally get the peace and freedom they deserve at the Center for Elephant Conservation in Florida.



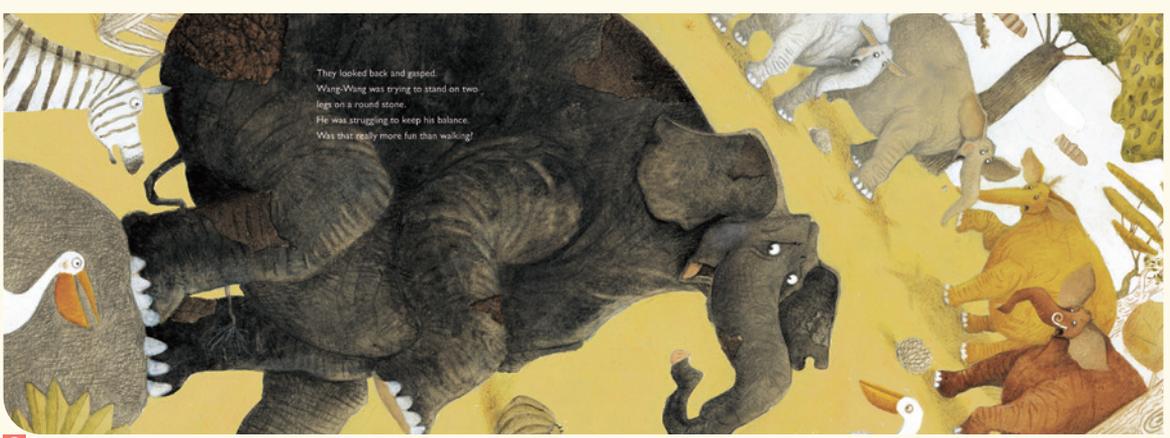
"It looks like there's something wrong with your memory, my friend," said Grey.  
 "Better to say that your forgetfulness is excellent!" said Sweet Fruit.  
 "Can we give you a nickname? How about Wang-Wang?" Baldy welcomed him to the group.  
 "But..." their new friend hesitated.  
 "Don't worry! Come and join us, Wang-Wang!" said Tusks.

1



It was early morning.  
 The four elephants took Wang-Wang for a walk.  
 Elephants love going for walks.  
 They walked and walked...  
 But where was Wang-Wang?  
 Had he fallen behind?

2



They looked back and gassed.  
 Wang-Wang was trying to stand on two  
 legs on a round stone.  
 He was struggling to keep his balance.  
 Was that really more fun than walking?

3

Wang-Wang wobbled and fell over.  
"Sorry, that wasn't very good!" Wang-Wang apologized quickly.  
Grey tried to copy him, but he fell off too.  
"Ouch, my bottom!" cried Grey.  
Tusks tried to comfort Wang-Wang: "Elephants don't need to do that!"  
"Really?" asked Wang-Wang. He couldn't quite believe it.



4



They walked and waited. Everyone was hungry.  
Elephants love to eat grass, leaves, and fruit.  
The four elephants picked bananas from the trees by the road.  
They were preparing a feast...  
But where was Wang-Wang? They glanced back and saw...



5



Oh my goodness! Wang-Wang was standing on his head.  
After all that walking, wasn't he hungry?  
They were just thinking how strange it was, when they heard  
Wang-Wang say quietly: "Excuse me, please could you give me  
something to eat?"

6

# SOMEWHERE

## Somewhere 好地方

\* The BRAW Amazing Bookshelf 2023

\* The White Ravens 2023

*The diver enters a deep blue underwater city where mankind has disappeared and yet somehow everything else looks perfectly normal. Could it have something to do with the puppy who keeps crying out for its father even though its calls seem to go unanswered?*

"Dad, is that you?" The faint figure of the yellow puppy seems to be leading the diver down into the blue depths of an underwater city. From the furniture in the living room to the cars on the roads and the machines in the factories, it's as if everything there is totally normal except that the humans are nowhere to be seen, and all that remains are the sea creatures swimming amongst the objects. Along the way, the puppy accompanies the diver on his familiar walk and keeps calling out "Dad" but gets no response.

By alternating between the vivid yellow conversations with the puppy and the navy-blue scenes of the underwater city, the book creates an intense contrast where the simple dialogue conveys the happy memories the puppy has of the diver in the past while also juxtaposing the silent tranquility of the city in the present. The way the two intertwine evokes an atmosphere that's tinged with melancholy and encourages the reader to contemplate the twin topics of life and the environment.



### Egretllu 于小鹭

Egretllu, is an illustrator who has previously worked as a grocery store clerk, delivery driver, and graphic designer. He has won the Golden Tripod Award for Best Illustration, and his work was featured in the 2015 Illustrators Exhibition at the Bologna Children's Book Fair and selected for the 3x3 Contemporary Illustration Award in the US on two occasions. His illustrations have appeared in books, newspapers, and magazines, and he has independently published the zines *Beautiful Today* and *Cups*. He collaborated with illustrator Hsueh Hui-Yin on her prose poems *Every Day is Beautiful* and *When I Hug a Tree*. His latest titles are *Drawing Baochun's Grocery Store* and *Somewhere*.



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- **Size:** 17 x 23 cm
- **Age:** 6+
- **Material:** Full English translation
- **Rights sold:** Korean (Little Starfield), Turkish (Meav Gayrimenkul Yatirim AŞ.), Russian (Polyandria Print LLC)

# Flipping Between Inner and Outer Worlds: An Interview with Egretllu

By Wu Wen-Chun (originally published at *Okapi*)

Translated by Sarah-Jayne Carver

Author-illustrator Egretllu's debut picture book, *Somewhere*, took him more than three years to complete while he worked at a grocery store. The patience it took to produce the story and illustrations has truly paid off, and his simple, candid drawing style reflects the subtle, warm emotions hidden beneath the surface. The "happy place" Egretllu portrays is a land of memory that's even deeper than the sea, and the "somewhere" from the title is a spiritual space that we're not sure if we can reach, like a dream involving love and happiness.

*Somewhere* is a story about how to keep on living. About keeping going after a loss, about how we keep going even when time stops and the world ends. It's a deep, poetic and solitary read that leaves us with a slight sense of sadness and tenderness at the same time. Please enjoy the interview below where Egretllu shares his thoughts on writing and illustrating picture books.

**Wu Wen-Chun:** You chose to write under the pseudonym Egretllu and started a Facebook page called "Matters of Life", then you became a picture book author and wrote *Somewhere*. When did you have the initial concept for *Somewhere*? And what did you find was the biggest challenge during the long creative process?

**Egretllu:** In 2015, I read *Running Script* by Liu Yun which included a story about Lake Bracciano in central Italy where the tide rose every night and flooded the lakeside villages, and the people in the villages turned on their TVs so that the eels could watch as well. The water flooded everything and the people disappeared but the rest of the world was still very normal. It was such an amazing image and I was desperate to draw it. That was really the background against which I wrote the first words of *Somewhere*.

My publisher and I revised both the text and the illustrations many times, and during our meetings I was particularly impressed by all the questions they asked about the characters' backstories. For example, what did the diver do for work? Was he married? Did he have kids? Who were his family? What happened when the flood came? Was the diver religious? And so on and so forth.

While I was illustrating the book, I listened to Summer Lei's song "The Day After Rain" over and over again. I told my wife and our children that the track was like the theme song for the book. When I had to review the manuscript, I had the song on in the background and could feel when the rhythm of the book was in sync with the music. I really loved doing that.

Locus Publishing saw the first draft back in July 2018, and we didn't have the final version

until over three years later in February 2022. I hope my future books won't take quite so long [Egretllu laughs]. In terms of the challenge, I just hope that people like the book after they finish reading it. It's a bit sad but it's warm too, in the same way our lives are a mixture of happiness and sadness.

**Wu Wen-Chun:** You use a combination of warm-toned colors like yellow and cooler-toned colors like blue, and they interweave so if one spread is in yellow then the next will be in blue. The image composition matches the two tones throughout the book, so for the most part the yellow is only used for the dog, Toto, which portrays a warmth that reflects the character's inner emotions; whereas the blue is used for a lot of buildings and street scenes when the diver is walking alone in the more realistic scenes, which convey a sense of alienation after being cut off from the outside world. The way the yellow and blue pages intertwine gave me such a strong sense of being in the wrong time and that things had shifted, while also giving the book its own unique narrative rhythm. What were the main things you considered when deciding on the image composition for the illustrations and what colors to use?

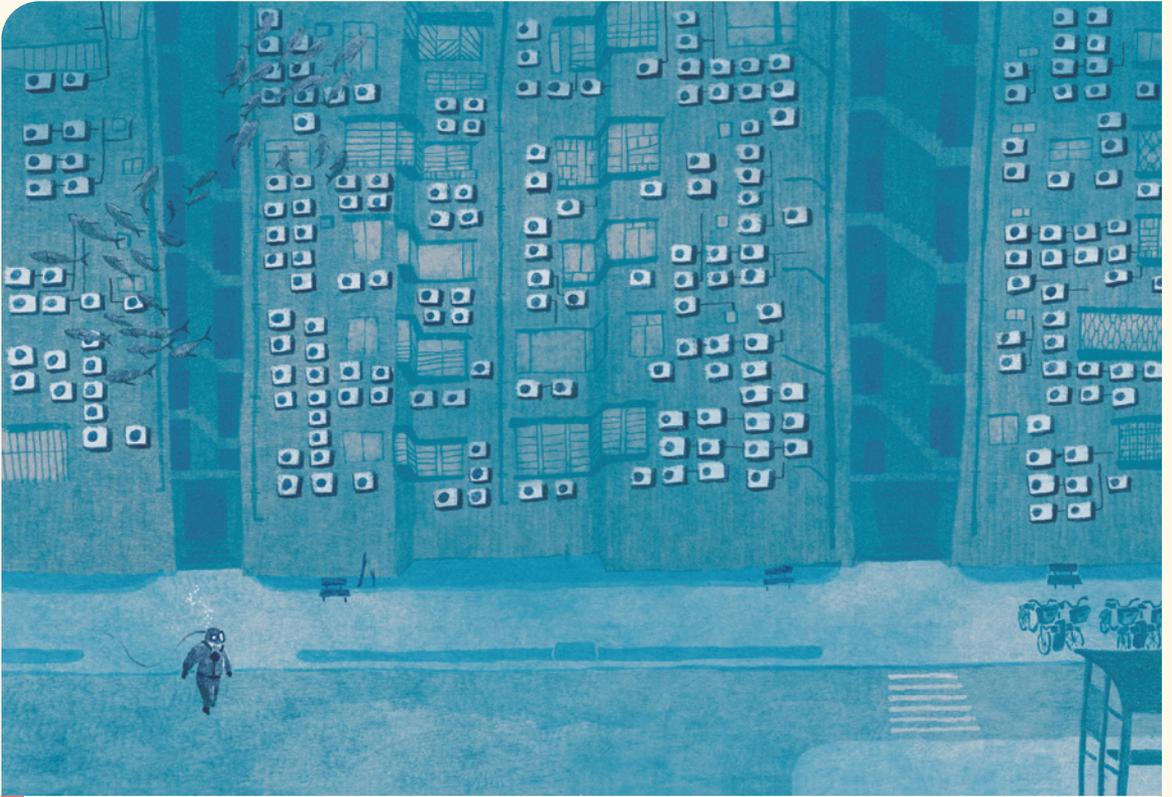
**Egretllu:** I wrote the book first, then did the illustrations. The words that readers see in the published edition are not the same words that I wrote down at the time. For example, there was this line that just appeared in my mind when the diver misses Toto: "I want to go for a walk with you, Toto." I pictured the diver standing in the living room looking out the door where Toto no longer stood. However, this image never made it into the book and we placed the text on the previous page.

In other words, the internal and external

worlds are expressed independently of one another. First, we read a page of text (the mind) which lets the reader see the protagonist's inner thoughts, and then on the next page we see an image without text (the real world) so the reader understands what makes the protagonist think this way. This structure means that even though the storyline keeps moving forward, it's actually a process of continuously rewinding and replaying the story from one paragraph to the next. And in terms of the image composition, I deliberately kept the pages of inner thoughts empty to give a sense of negative space, whereas the pages in the real world felt full which strengthened the impact that the two types of pages had on each other.

**Wu Wen-Chun:** For you, what are the essential elements that make some "somewhere" a "good place" (whether it be physically or psychologically)?

**Egretllu:** In the book, the places that the diver swims past used to be good places for humans but those spaces weren't the same after the flood. Even though they had changed, they'd become happy places for the fish. So, I think for me, a "good place" is somewhere you can go to relax and feel content.



1

2

Dad, don't worry,  
I'll walk by your side and not run off.





3

4



Dad, why aren't we going by car?  
Because it's dangerous.

# LITTLE BLACK DOTS ON THE FENCE

## 圍籬上的小黑點

*In our everyday lives, we're surrounded by creatures large and small, and if we look closely, we'll see that their lives are full of surprises. This book features one of the most common species of ants in Taiwan (gray-black spiny ants) as the protagonist to bring readers into a world of fascinating creatures.*

Have you ever seen an orderly row of black dots in the park, or on a fence or a pile of waste? Gray-black spiny ants are a species of ant commonly found in Taiwan who live all around us, so keep your eyes peeled as you make your way through this book and see how they cooperate with aphids and compete with other insects, as well as how they forage, work, and have families so their population multiplies over generations.

With the lifecycle of the ants serving as the main book's main storyline, the authors use vivid language and scientific illustrations rendered in realistic brushstrokes to guide readers through the natural ecology of the gray-black spiny ants. They hope that by the end of the story, young readers will start to love and understand the natural world and respect all the tiny lives within it.



### Wang Ling-Hsuan 王凌軒

Born in 1992 in Hsinchu, Wang Ling-Hsuan studied life sciences in Taipei and started to unearth her inner feral child as soon as she stepped into an ecology lab. Drawing has not only shaped the way she perceives things and creates narratives but has also been a good way to meet people. However, even before that, drawing was a source of never-ending joy for her. She had first been fascinated by the written depictions of the wilderness, then as she slowly got to understand the reality of nature, she felt a deep kinship towards it and wanted to use stories and beautiful illustrations to pull children into the magical world of living creatures.



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- **Age:** 5+
- **Material:** Full English translation
- **Rights sold:** Simplified Chinese (Dolphin Media)



## Huang Han-Yau 黃瀚曉

Huang Han-Yau loves to observe nature and thought he had to go to the mountains to experience it before he realized that the city is its own kind of wilderness. With the exception of a few places that he visits on a regular basis, he can't remember the locations of almost any of the shops he's been to, but he's gradually drawn a map of the city that feels like it belongs to him. There are buried irrigation canals, disappearing courtyard houses with vegetable gardens, old city walls, treelined streets, formerly prosperous neighborhoods, old trees, ferns, birds' nests, termite nests, and stray cats. Since then, he has been living inside that map and is constantly trying to re-draw those invisible paths and landmarks with words, illustrations, and commentary, so that his friends can travel there too. His narrative non-fiction book *The Lost River* won the Taiwan Literature Award in 2023.

# The Power of Resilience and Teamwork

Written by Huang Han-Yau

Translated by Sarah-Jayne Carver

When Wang Ling-Hsuan and I were students in the forestry department, our teacher asked the class to do a report on wildlife and we decided to study the gray-black spiny ants near our department building. The gray-black spiny ants we drew in the book are similar to the ones we studied back then which lived on a wire mesh fence and worked on some small saplings nearby where they farmed aphids. The saplings had sprouted beside the fence because there were some big trees nearby whose fruits had

been eaten by small birds which had excreted the seeds. There were five or six different kinds of vines and bushes on the fence which made it look messy but actually meant there were lots of structures that animals could use to hide in. We also found another eight species of ant and lots of other small creatures near the fence. When we first came up with the concept for the book, we wanted to include all these creatures but later we worried that it would distract from the gray-black spiny ants so we either didn't show them in the pictures or we let them hide in the corners.



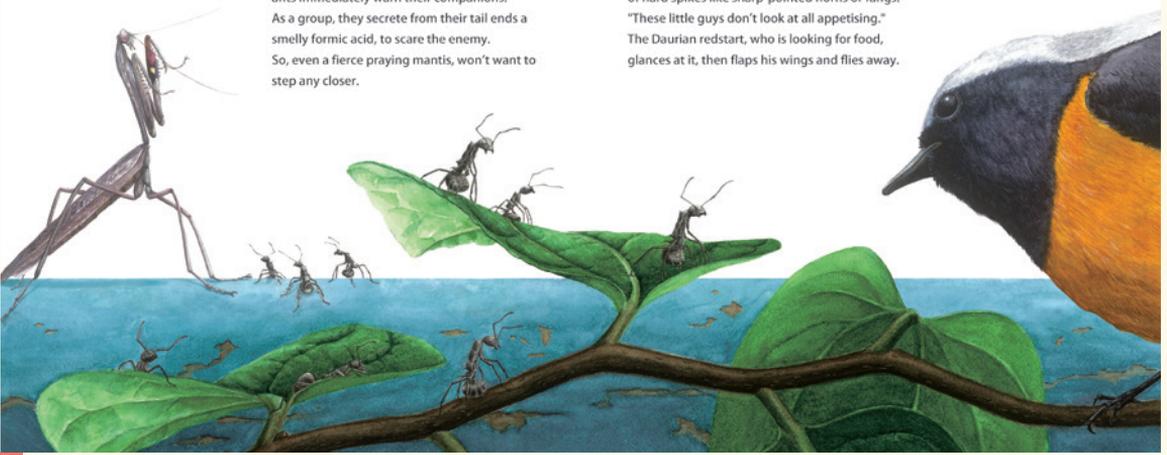
There were five different versions of this book from start to finish, most of which Ling-Hsuan and I both liked because we tried out various different styles. Even though some of the illustrations weren't used in the final version of the book, we tried to change them a bit and incorporate them into the end product. Sometimes, readers might suddenly find themselves wondering "why's that in here?" and it might be because it's a variation of another scene in one of the previous versions.

It took us so long to finish the book because we were writing and illustrating it while we were still studying, but by the time it was done there weren't any ants on the fence, probably because the area had been cleared and without the saplings or aphids the ants were forced to move on. However, gray-black spiny ants are resilient creatures, and I found another city of them in a different part of campus where people had thrown away all sorts of things and the ants were living in old umbrellas, broken flowerpots, door frames, and fractured water pipes, as well as dried out plant pots where they'd formed a thriving colony. Who knows, maybe they were the same ants and they'd found an even better place to build a whole new little city!

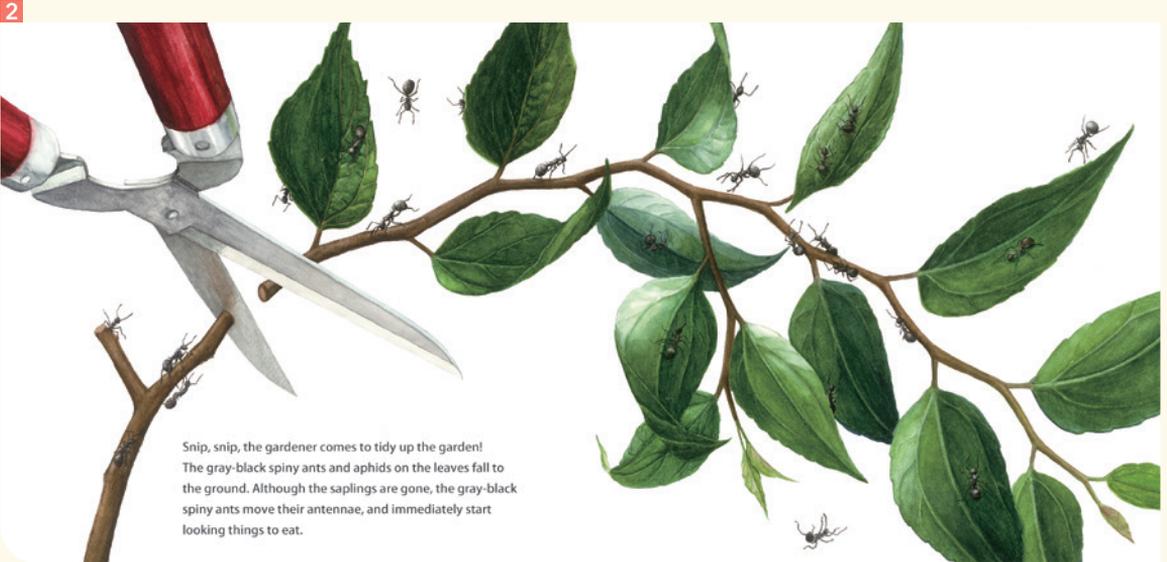


As soon as danger is spotted, gray-black spiny ants immediately warn their companions. As a group, they secrete from their tail ends a smelly formic acid, to scare the enemy. So, even a fierce praying mantis, won't want to step any closer.

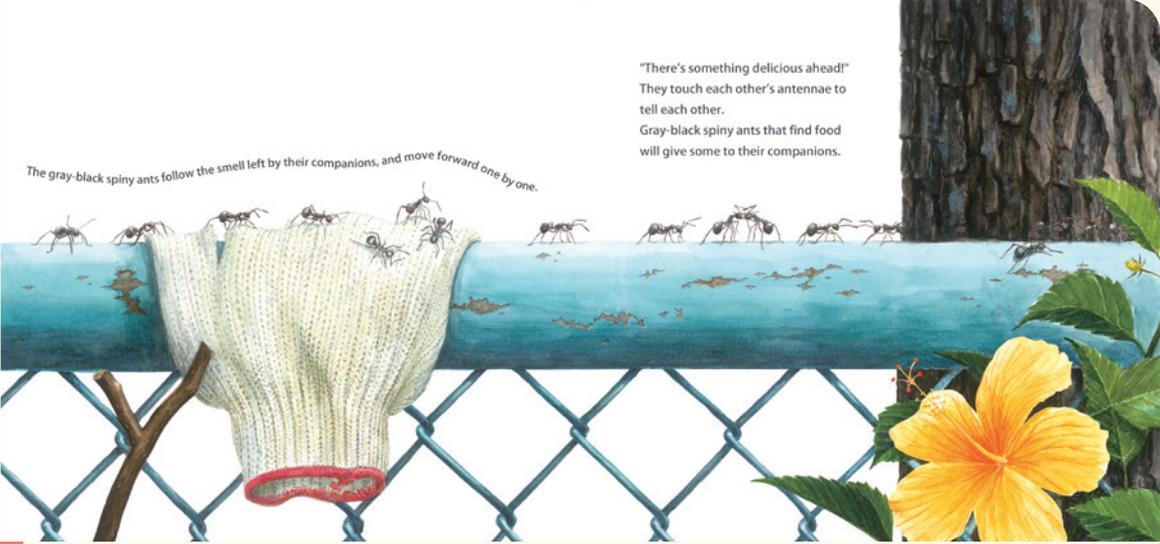
On the back of a gray-black spiny ant grow three pairs of hard spikes like sharp-pointed horns or fangs. "These little guys don't look at all appetising." The Daurian redstart, who is looking for food, glances at it, then flaps his wings and flies away.



1



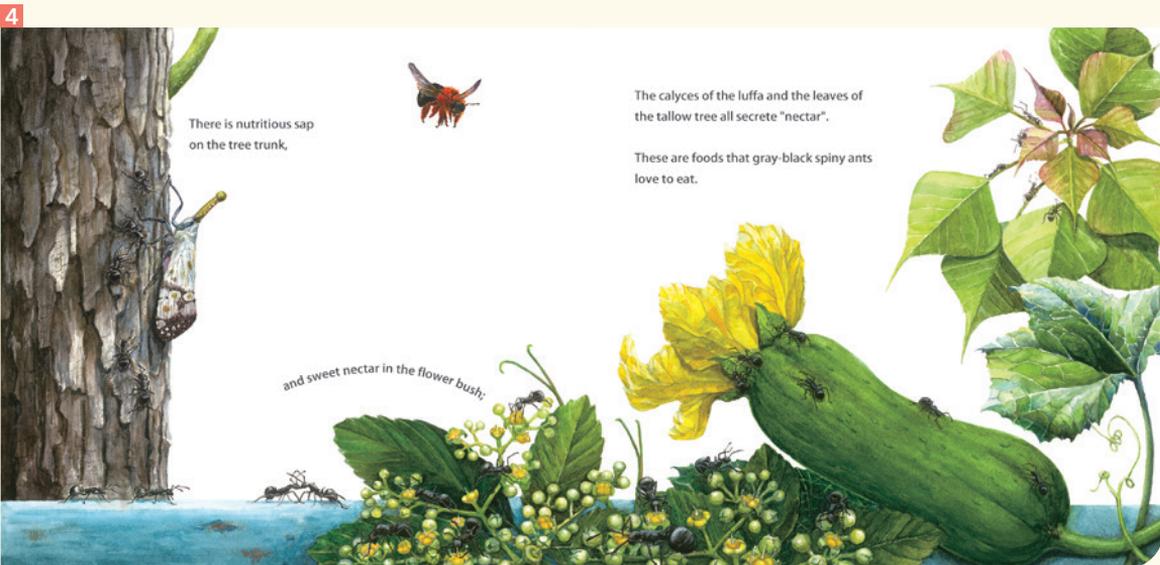
Snip, snip, the gardener comes to tidy up the garden! The gray-black spiny ants and aphids on the leaves fall to the ground. Although the saplings are gone, the gray-black spiny ants move their antennae, and immediately start looking things to eat.



The gray-black spiny ants follow the smell left by their companions, and move forward one by one.

"There's something delicious ahead!"  
They touch each other's antennae to tell each other.  
Gray-black spiny ants that find food will give some to their companions.

3



There is nutritious sap on the tree trunk,

The calyxes of the luffa and the leaves of the tallow tree all secrete "nectar".

These are foods that gray-black spiny ants love to eat.

and sweet nectar in the flower bush;

4

# HISTORY OF TAIWAN RAILWAYS

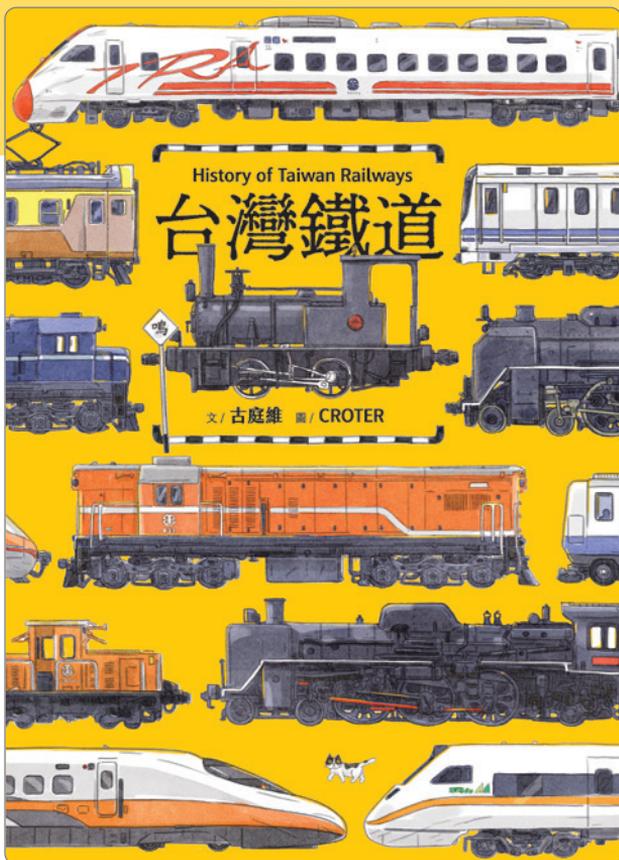
## 台灣鐵道

*Railways are one of the most relied upon modes of transport in Taiwan. Using an engaging and easy-to-understand writing style, this book gives a comprehensive breakdown of how Taiwan's railways have developed over the course of history.*

Taiwan's railways were first introduced during the nineteenth century and underwent significant planning and expansion during the Qing Dynasty, Japanese occupation, and under successive Taiwanese governments. The older structures gradually gave way to newer ones until the extensive network that we know today which covers the whole island was eventually completed. This book explores Taiwan's railways across various eras through nineteen different themes which are put into a broader international context, delving into the history from environmental, cultural, industrial, scientific, and technological perspectives.

The book begins with the origins of the railways and looks at how they were planned and constructed, as well as how the industrial railways were developed, highlighting that the network was a driving force in laying the foundation for Taiwan's modernization. However, just as Taiwan's railway entered its golden age, it also became Japan's southern base during World War II and was significantly damaged by Allied air raids. In the decades that followed, the train systems and equipment were continuously updated, but with the birth and popularity of Taiwan's mass transit system, some of the railway lines gradually fell into obscurity. Today they have become a historical asset for nostalgic culture, preserving the railway's former glory for future generations to explore.

*History of Taiwan Railways* presents the development spanning the last one hundred year from a holistic temporal perspective, using rigorously researched details to reconstruct historical scenes and a variety of different trains so that readers who want to understand Taiwan's railways can easily gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject.



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- **Material:** English Sample
- **Rights sold:**  
Japanese (Hakusuisha Publishing)



## Text by Ku Ting-Wei 古庭維

Born in Taipei in 1983, Ku Ting-Wei spent his childhood traveling between Taipei and Nantou, and has many memories of riding Taiwan's railways. He enjoys photography and hiking, and is currently editor-in-chief of *Rail News*, director of the Takao Railway Museum, and chairman of the Transport Heritage Society of Taiwan.



## Illustrated by Croter Hung

Born in 1978, Croter Hung lives in Kaohsiung and is a designer and illustrator who began his independent creative career in 2004. His picture book *What Would Take You Away* with poet Miao Wang was selected for the BRAW Amazing Bookshelf (the top 100 titles entered for the Ragazzi Award) at the 2022 Bologna Book Fair and won the 2022 Golden Tripod Award for Book Illustration.

# Exploring a Century of Adventures

By Azure Publishing House

Translated by Sarah-Jayne Carver

Like a lot of children their age, Editor Lin Chaiyi's kids absolutely love looking at trains, riding trains, and playing with trains. As a family, they've traveled to various railway attractions all over Taiwan, from the Sugar Railways to the Alishan Forest Railway, from the Taipei Railway Workshop to the Changhua Roundhouse, as well as a lot of old stations. These were all places with stories to tell, places where precious memories were collected. For Lin, her children's interest in trains broadened her whole family's horizons. Unfortunately though, most books for children about railways were focused on the trains and vehicles themselves, which made it hard to satisfy her kids' desire to learn more about the broader historical and cultural context of the railways.

Lin hopes that their curiosity about the world and everything in it will continue to be inspired by reading and that it won't fade as they grow up. Each new interest brings with it a whole new perspective and for a child that loves trains, those stories about railways can act as a bridge between them and history. At the same time, she also hopes that she can use the general public's affection for trains to draw more people in so they can get to know more about Taiwan's local history and culture. With this in mind, she approached Ku Ting-Wei, the editor in chief of *Rail News* and the director of the Takao Railway Museum, and proposed the idea of collaborating on a project. Ku Ting-Wei has loved trains since he was very young and is not only familiar with the field, but also has a

wide range of interests that help make railways accessible for new readers who are just getting into them for the first time.

Lin and Ku invited Croter, who has won awards both at home and abroad, to illustrate the book. His subtle illustration style has a realistic warmth to it so that in his hands even the most mundane things can be transformed into evocative scenes. Croter's artwork also gives the reader a strong sense of his feelings about Taiwan and just how devoted he is to the land. There are so many details involved in painting railways that this project would definitely take a lot of motivation to complete. As expected, the process of creating and editing the book was far from easy, especially given the many issues involved in ensuring the accuracy of the research.

In order to make the manuscript more readable and understandable, the editing process repeatedly refined the text and converted parts of it into illustrations, and then carefully planned the content and layout of the illustrations. To strike a balance between the extensive research and making the book aesthetically appealing, the author and editor-in-chief searched high and low for historical data and consulted experts when providing illustrations for reference. Every aspect of the book was designed to be as close to perfect as possible.

Take the illustrations of the Taipei Railway



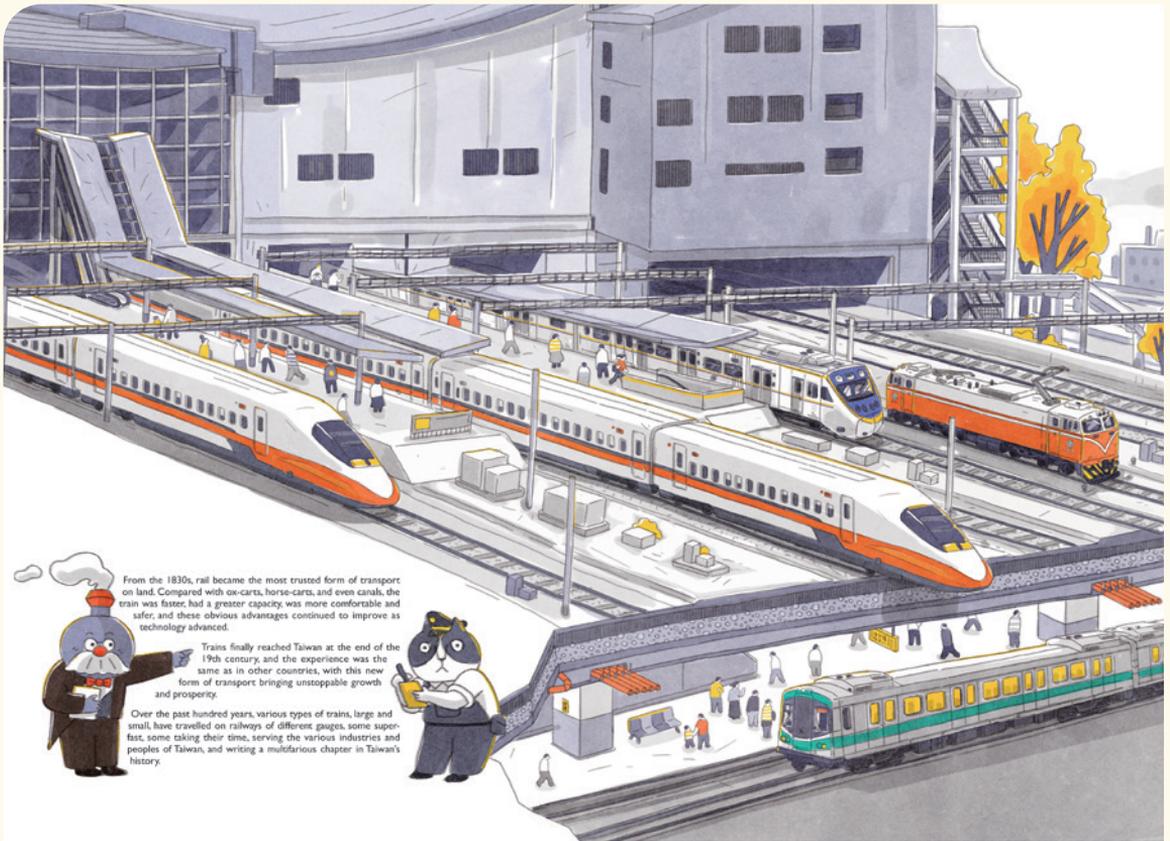
Ku Ting-Wei (left), author of *History of Taiwan Railways*, with illustrator Croter (right)

Workshop for example. The photos of the vehicles undergoing maintenance were slightly blurred, so Croter boldly tried to draw a wider scene which worked out beautifully. However, Ku Ting-Wei looked closely at the sketch of the steam engine going into the workshop for maintenance and noticed certain parts of the vehicle and components that had been dismantled weren't in quite the right place, so the editor-in-chief searched everywhere for some reference materials and interviewed professionals.

Another example is the section on "The Golden Age of Taiwan's Railways" where Lin suggested that Croter could draw people traveling by train during the Japanese colonial era to give readers an image of life to connect to. However, even the limited photographs

they could find were blurry, and none of the previous books about railways had illustrated those scenes before, so they consulted the train specialist Hung Chihwen who had some valuable documents on the subject.

In the end, the book's simple, concise yet detailed text paired with the intricate illustrations of historical scenes and the multilayered graphic design appeals to readers of all ages and incorporates so many other subjects including geography, industry, culture, technology, and so on. As well as being selected as a recommended title by various outlets, the book has also received positive feedback from young children, teachers, parents, the arts sector, the general public and railway enthusiasts.



From the 1830s, rail became the most trusted form of transport on land. Compared with ox-carts, horse-carts, and even canals, the train was faster, had a greater capacity, was more comfortable and safer, and these obvious advantages continued to improve as technology advanced.

Trains finally reached Taiwan at the end of the 19th century, and the experience was the same as in other countries, with this new form of transport bringing unstoppable growth and prosperity.

Over the past hundred years, various types of trains, large and small, have travelled on railways of different gauges, some super-fast, some taking their time, serving the various industries and peoples of Taiwan, and writing a multicoloured chapter in Taiwan's history.

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### The Origins of the Railways

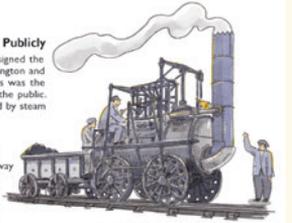
Human beings have used tracks for travel and transportation for a long time, at first driven by mampower or animal power. After the steam train was invented, tracks became more like the ones we recognize today.

Six thousand years ago, before humans invented writing, they invented the wheel. Gradually, they added boxes or wooden planks, which meant they could carry goods. As time went by, people realized that if roads weren't good, it was difficult for carts to move smoothly, even if they were drawn by animals. About 2000 years ago, humans observed the marks made by cartwheels in mud roads, and discovered that it was easier to walk in the ruts. These were the earliest forms of "tracks." Archaeologists have found evidence of the use of tracks in almost every ancient civilization. Transportation along tracks advanced alongside human civilization. After the 15th century A.D., boardwalks and wooden tracks were developed in Europe. Mostly powered by horses, these were initially for engineering purposes, and later also took passengers.



### The First Steam-Powered Railway to Operate Publicly

Years later, another Englishman, George Stephenson designed the "Locomotion" steam train, which was used on the Darlington and Stockton Railway in the English Midlands in 1825. This was the world's first steam-powered railway that was open to the public. It is interesting that at the time not all trains were pulled by steam trains; many were still horse-drawn.



The Steam Locomotive "Locomotion"

### The First Railway to Use Only Steam Trains

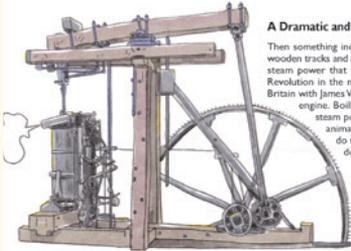
A few years later, the Liverpool and Manchester Railway Company held a competition to select the best steam train for use on its new line that was about to open. Stephenson's Rocket came out on top. The Rocket, in many ways, became the prototype for all subsequent steam trains.

### A Dramatic and Unprecedented Transformation

Then something incredible happened that transformed wooden tracks and animal power into the railways and steam power that we know so well: the Industrial Revolution in the mid-18th century. This started in Britain with James Watt's improvement of the steam engine. Boiling water produces steam, and steam power was stronger than human or animal power, and enabled humans to do things they had never been able to do before.



Watt

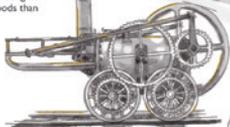


Watt's Steam Engine

After the Industrial Revolution, more coal was mined to provide fuel for the steam engines. Britain's iron mines and iron-making technology were the basis for these industries. The old ways of track transportation could not keep up with the new technology, and soon there were attempts at making iron tracks to carry more and heavier raw materials and goods. At the same time, inventors had the ingenious idea of combining the steam engine and cart, which enabled faster transportation of heavier goods than ever before, without the carrier getting tired.

### The Appearance of the First Steam Train

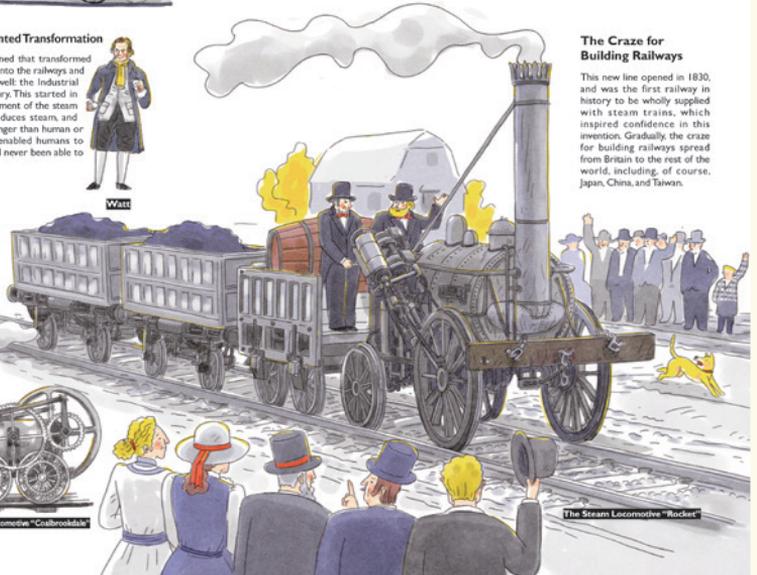
The Englishman Richard Trevithick fitted gears and other parts in order to transfer steam power to the wheels. On 21 February 1804, this peculiar machine made its maiden voyage, becoming the first steam train in the history of mankind. However, the poor quality of the tracks prevented the train from running.



The Steam Locomotive "Coburnbrook"

### The Craze for Building Railways

This new line opened in 1830, and was the first railway in history to be wholly supplied with steam trains, which inspired confidence in this invention. Gradually, the craze for building railways spread from Britain to the rest of the world, including, of course, Japan, China, and Taiwan.



The Steam Locomotive "Rocket"

**3** **Railways in Taiwan in the Qing Dynasty**  
 In the early 19th century, about 50 years after the railway construction boom had started in Britain, it finally began to have an impact on the Qing empire. With the state in decline, imperial ministers looked to western "high tech" construction as the salvation of the nation, which of course included the steam train and the construction of train tracks. In 1885, after the end of the Sino-French War, Taiwan's position grew ever more important, which led to many cutting-edge construction projects being implemented first in Taiwan.

**1888** Taiwan's first steam train, the German-made Teng-Ying, arrived in Taiwan.  
**1891** The line from Taipei Dadaocheng to Keelung port opened.  
**1893** Trains reached as far as Hsinchu. The governor Shao Youlan thought the railway project – the technology and the cost – was too heavy a burden, and decided to stop construction of the railways, so the train stopped at Hsinchu.

**Establishment of the General Administration of Railway Commerce in Taiwan**

The construction of Taiwan's railways was not originally intended for passenger use. In 1876, in order to develop the coal mines at Badouzi, the Qing government built lightweight tracks outside the pits, and used platform carts to take the coal to the port, where it was loaded onto ships. The planning and construction of the first real steam-powered railway did not start until 1887. At that time, the northern part of Taiwan had just been through the Sino-French War and Liu Mingchuan, the governor of Taiwan, believed that the two most pressing needs were the development of military defence and commerce, and for these purposes it was essential to build a railway line between Keelung Harbour to Taiwan. Court approval was granted for this ambitious goal and the General Administration of Railway Commerce in Taiwan was established.

**Facing Enormous Challenge**

For the Qing Empire at the end of the 19th century, railways were still a very new, high-tech product. The planning and supervision of the construction of trains, the laying of sleepers and rails, the building of bridges and of tunnels through mountains had to rely on foreign technicians and specialists. Furthermore, most parts of Taiwan were undeveloped, and in a pre-Industrial Revolution stage. In those circumstances, there were multiple levels of difficulty in building the railway.

**The Tamsui River**  
 Setting out from Taipei to Hsinchu meant crossing several large rivers, including the Tamsui River. Due to a lack of funds, most bridges were made of wood. Expensive iron bridges were only built over very wide stretches of water.

**Dadaocheng**  
 Dadaocheng was selected as the starting point of the railway because it was an important port on the Tamsui River, where imported materials and equipment could be unloaded.

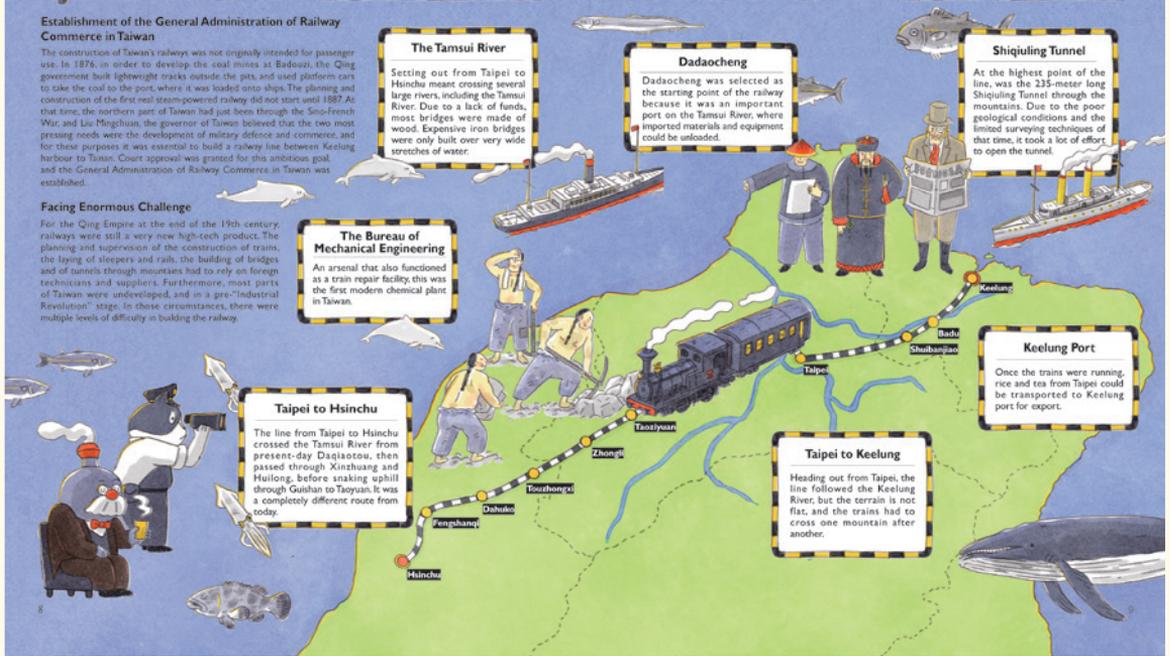
**Shiqiuling Tunnel**  
 At the highest point of the line, was the 235-meter long Shiqiuling Tunnel through the mountains. Due to the poor geological conditions and the limited surveying techniques of that time, it took a lot of effort to open the tunnel.

**The Bureau of Mechanical Engineering**  
 An arsenal that also functioned as a train repair facility, this was the first modern chemical plant in Taiwan.

**Taipei to Hsinchu**  
 The line from Taipei to Hsinchu crossed the Tamsui River from present-day Daxi to the north, then passed through Xinzhuang and Huihong, before snaking uphill through Guishan to Taoyuan. It was a completely different route from today.

**Taipei to Keelung**  
 Heading out from Taipei, the line followed the Keelung River, but the terrain is not flat, and the trains had to cross one mountain after another.

**Keelung Port**  
 Once the trains were running, rice and tea from Taipei could be transported to Keelung port for export.



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**Taiwan's Western Trunk Line**  
 After the Sino-Japanese War, the Qing Dynasty ceded Taiwan and Penghu in perpetuity to Japan. After the Japanese army came to Taiwan, they did some railway prospecting in Keelung, but discovered that the locomotives, tracks, stations, and maintenance equipment were either damaged or lacked essential parts. The Japanese army had hoped to utilize this railway for transporting supplies from Keelung to Taipei, but in the end, it proved too difficult, and they had to mobilize dozens of people to slowly push the train forward. "Pushing the train" became a hot topic of conversation at that time.

**Convenient Taiwan Vehicles Help First**  
 In order to build and manage Taiwan, the transportation problem had to be solved. The army urgently laid a "light railway line" (LRL) through the western part of Taiwan, using human-powered light railcars to transport goods in the area south of Hsinchu where there were no railroads. Although ordinary people could also ride or consign goods, this light railway line required a lot of manpower, so the transportation capacity was extremely limited. Proportionally the LRL was primarily for military use and could not be relied upon by the public or industry as a means of transportation. Reader, you might ask: "If there were no trains, couldn't they drive?" Unfortunately, even the most technologically advanced countries in Europe and the United States had only just introduced the motorized automobile, and Taiwan not only lacked good railroads, but also lacked the modern roads that would allow cars to run steadily.

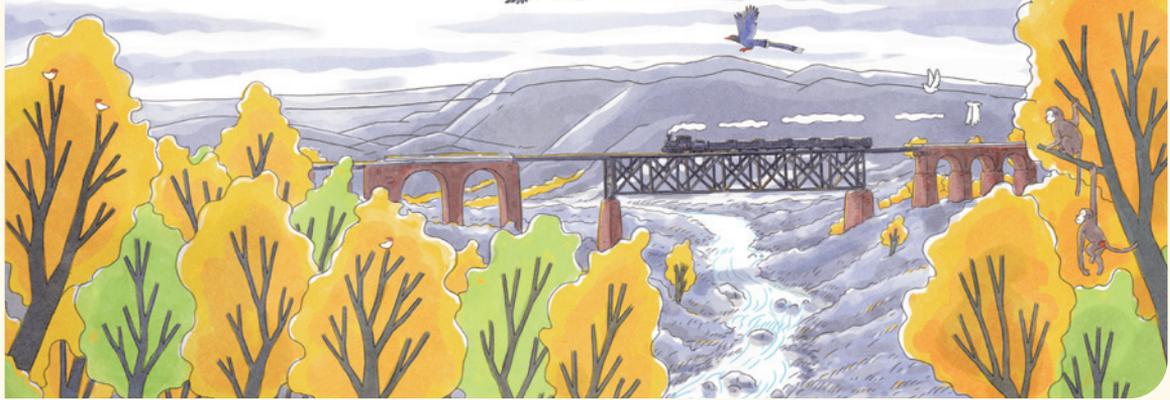
**The Old Railway from Keelung to Hsinchu Receives a Facelift**  
 In addition to the laying of new lines, the Western Trunk Line, including the parts from the Qing Dynasty, underwent renovation and reconstruction. The steep Shiqiuling Tunnel through the mountains was replaced by

the gentler Zhuziling mountain route. The line from Taipei to Taoyuan changed from the mountainous route from between Hsinchu and Guishan to go through Banqiao and Yingge. In fact, at the Qing Dynasty railway covered less than 10 kilometers of the route between Keelung and Hsinchu, it was basically a new construction.

**The Railway Work Heads South**

While construction was underway on the line in northern Taiwan, a new line was being developed in the south. The southern end of the Western Trunk Line started not at Tainan or Anping ports, as Liu Mingchuan had originally planned, but at the more southerly and potentially better harbour of Takao (modern-day Kaohsiung). On 29 November 1900, the line was officially opened between Takao and Tainan. It was the earliest section of the southern line in operation. Later, the line continued to be extended, crossing many wide stretches of water towards the north. The northern line also started in Hsinchu and continued southward, and by 1905, only two kilometers of the entire Western Trunk Line remained to be completed: the short section between Sanyi and Fengshan. However, this was also the most difficult section. The railway had to cross a succession of mountains and rivers, and the soft ground made road-building and tunnelling more difficult. The lack of ports and roads in central Taiwan also made transportation of materials a major challenge.

**The Western Trunk Line from Keelung to Kaohsiung Was Fully Open**  
 Construction units overcame various disasters such as water surges and collapses in the tunnels, and the erosion of bridge pier foundations by high water in the rivers. After critical work on the Dajia River Bridge and the No. 9 Tunnel, the Western Trunk Line was opened to the public on 20 April 1908. The central section of the line, which had taken three years to complete, and consisted of nine tunnels and four bridges, was the most impressive part of the Western Trunk Line, and many monuments of beautiful civil engineering can still be seen today. This section of the railway is known today as "The Old Mountain Line".



# STAMPS TELL YOU STORIES: THE LEGENDS AND CUISINES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

## 有故事的郵票：東南亞傳說與美食

*Introducing ten food-related folk legend with stamps from countries across Southeast Asia, this book invites immigrants from Vietnam, Thailand, Myanmar, Malaysia, and Indonesia to share the stories and culinary cultures of their homelands.*

Even though stamps might be small, they don't just deliver letters to faraway places, they also feature illustrations that can tell incredible, unique stories. This book uses stamps as a starting point to tell ten folk tales from different countries throughout Southeast Asia.

Each story in this book was written by an immigrant from the country where the legend originated, evoking original flavors from across the continent. The book spans a vast range of stories, from the Chung cakes made at the Hung Kings' Festival in Vietnam, to the rice congee consumed during the Songkran Festival in Myanmar; from the Sarawak layer cakes and roti jala in Malaysia, to the fruit and vegetable carvings in Thailand, and the wealth of spices in Indonesia. While all the stories take food as a starting point, they also span a wide range of other topics, from the sources of myths and origins of festivals to amusing fables about animals!

The editor of this book, Chou Hui-Lin, has extensive stamp collecting experience of her own and the *Stamps Tell You Stories* series already consists of five titles, each of which takes on a different geographical theme. In addition to *The Legends and Cuisines of Southeast Asia*, the other titles include *Taiwanese Children's Stories*, *Popular American Legends*, *Slovakian Fairytales*, and *Japanese Folklore and Haiku*, with the series still continuing to expand. In addition to the stories, the series also contains a wealth of stamp-related knowledge for readers to uncover and explore.

【有故事的郵票】

# 東南亞傳說與美食

丁安妮、王麗蘭、匡春芝、  
阮氏梅英、周惠玲、葉碧珠／說故事  
rabbit44／繪圖



- **Category:** Folk Tales
- **Publisher:** Yuan-Liou
- **Date:** 11/2022
- **Rights contact:**  
booksfromtaiwan@taicca.tw
- **Pages:** 172
- **Length:** 27,091 characters  
(approx. 17,600 words in English)
- **Age:** 9+
- **Material:** English sample



## Text by Chou Hui-Lin 周惠玲

Chou Hui-Lin is a multifaceted author of children's literature and a collector of fairytale-related stamps from around the world. Not only was she the curator of the 2013 World Classic Fairytale Stamp Exhibition at Zhongshan Hall in Taipei, but she also planned and co-wrote *Stamps Tell You Stories*. She is the translator of *The Alchemist* by Paulo Coelho, *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormie, and *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll.



### Text by Wong Lee-Lan 王麗蘭

Wong Lee-Lan has a PhD in Anthropology from Tsing Hua University in Hsinchu, Taiwan. She was born and raised in Klang, Selangor (Malaysia) and came to Taiwan to study at the age of 18. She has been a university lecturer since 2010, teaching Indonesian and Malay, and is committed to sharing her knowledge of Southeast Asian languages and cultures. She is a producer and host of *Happy United Nations* on National Education Radio, as well as the planner and host of a podcast called *Aunty's Talk*. She is the author of *We Volunteer in Malaysia* and *Learn Indonesian in One Go*.

### Text by Kuang Chun-Chih 匡春芝

Kuang Chun-Chih is the host of a Thai language teaching program on National Education Radio and was a member of the review committee for the Ministry of Education's textbook for immigrants. She is currently training to become a Thai language instructor.



### Text by Nguyen Thi Mai Anh 阮氏梅英

Born in Hanoi in 1983, Nguyen Thi Mai began learning Chinese because she was interested in the cultural landscape of Mainland China and later immigrated to Taiwan. Currently, she is a host on *Happy United Nations* on National Education Radio and has given talks on Vietnamese language and culture in many schools.

### Text by Ye Bi-Ju 葉碧珠

A native of Mandalay, Myanmar, she came to Taiwan without finishing her studies at Mandalay University and later earned her bachelor's degree from National Taiwan Normal University. She has been involved in Burmese language education in Taiwan for more than 10 years and has been a popular lecturer at National Chengchi University as well as at many companies. She is also a highly acclaimed Burmese translator and interpreter. She is the author of *Don't Laugh! Learn Burmese with Playing Cards: Burmese Flashcards for Life and Travel*, *My First Burmese Lesson*, *My Second Burmese Lesson*, and *Burmese in a Hurry*.





## Text by Sri Handini 丁安妮

Born and raised in Semarang, Central Java (Indonesia), she moved to Taiwan alone in 2001 to work as a caregiver. In 2004, she married her husband who is Taiwanese, and she has been a resident ever since. Today, she hosts the *Happy United Nations* program on National Education Radio (Taipei), and she won the Educational and Cultural Program Host Award in 2015. Alongside her job, she is actively involved in social work where she helps migrant workers and immigrants resolve their job and life-related issues. She has served as editor of the multilingual magazine *4-Way News*, hosted events such as Eid festivities and singing competitions for immigrants, and she has also made guest appearances as an actress.

## Text by Chen Yu-Lien 陳玉蓮

She is a senior philatelist and columnist for *Oriental Post* and *Fortune Magazine*, as well as a guide at the Soka Museum of Art (Taoyuan).



## Text by Chen Chia-Hsiu 花格子

Chen Chia-Hsiu has a PhD in linguistics and has won the Chiu Ko Young Adult Literature Award and the Taitung University Children's Literature Prize, among many other domestic literary awards. She is the author of over a dozen titles including, *Let's Set Sail, It's Gale Force 8!*, *How Much Does Mom Love Me?*, *Buns and Afros*, *My Dad is on TV*, *No. 99 Fangchung Street*, and *The Appetizing Avenue*.

## Illustrated by rabbit44

Rabbit44 graduated from the Department of Fine Arts at National Taiwan Normal University. She has previously worked in the education industry and for magazines, and now specializes in illustration and graphic design. She draws for adults as well as children and particularly enjoys humorous and life-like content. Her work often appears in newspapers and other media.



# It All Started with a Hobby: An Interview with Editorial Director Chou Hui-Lin

Written by Itzel Hsu

Translated by Sarah-Jayne Carver

When you type “Southeast Asia” into the search engine of Taiwan’s biggest online bookshop, Books.com.tw, and set the criteria to children’s books, you get two results: one is a title that’s out of print, and the other is *Stamps Tell You Stories: The Legends and Cuisines of Southeast Asia* which was published less than a year ago. In other words, it’s the only children’s title about Southeast Asia in the current Taiwan book market, as well as the only collection of folk stories written by immigrants to Taiwan from Southeast Asia, and the only book that introduces young readers to Southeast Asian stamps. This uniqueness wasn’t the result of an intentional creative effort but was caused by what Chou Hui-Lin calls “things coincidentally coming together”, with this serendipity facilitated by the shared passion to help young readers see the wider world.

*The Legends and Cuisines of Southeast Asia* is actually the fifth book in the *Stamps Tell You Stories* series, which is the first series of children’s books about stamps currently on the market to be published by a local Taiwan publisher.

## **Making Stamps a Window to the World**

When Chou proposed creating the series, Wang Jung-wen, the publisher of Yuan-Liou Publishing, wondered: do children these days still have any contact with stamps? Fortunately, even though

the company anticipated that the book might be potentially difficult to promote, they chose to believe that Chou’s passion would generate sales opportunities.

During the creative process, Chou learnt from one of the authors that Chunghwa Post (Taiwan’s postal service) had worked with over two hundred primary schools to set up stamp collecting sessions and trained teachers to help promote knowledge about stamps. Since the book was published, Chou and the authors have received a lot of collaboration proposals from schools, libraries, and museums. For example, they collaborated with the National Museum of Taiwan History to organize two parent-child activities which were combined with city tours. Chou also showed off the medal that the book had won at the stamp exhibition. Thinking back to the children and crowds she saw at the exhibition, Chou believes that while stamp collecting seems like a slightly obscure hobby at first glance, there are still definitely a number of people who enjoy it today.

Of course, Chou had the idea for the series mainly because she is a stamp collector herself. More than twenty years ago, she was editing a book series called *Selected Masterpieces by Winners of the Hans Christian Anderson Award* and someone she was working with gave her a set of stamps featuring American fairy tales which

helped revive her childhood hobby and embark on the path to becoming a more professional collector. However, as a children's literature researcher, her interest in stamp collecting is mostly tied to her focus on children's series. Her fellow stamp-collecting friend (and one of the authors of the series) Wang Shu-Fen observed that the story used on each country's stamp was often the story which was most representative of that country. This meant that with the right illustrations, the tiny postal stamps could be windows into foreign cultures for young readers.

### Designing a Journey on Paper

When readers open the contents page of any books in the *Stamps Tell You Stories* series, they're always deeply impressed by the non-linear graphic design based on the concept "What You See Is What You Get". Chou opens the first volume in the series, *Taiwanese Children's Stories*, and points to the small world map with Taiwan labeled in red: "First and foremost, I wanted to let readers know where we are in the world." In the subsequent books in the series, the world map features a blue bird, and readers can follow its arrows as it flies so they can understand the locations of these stories relative to Taiwan. There is a pull-out map on the next page, so in *The Legends and Cuisines of Southeast Asia* for example, readers can see a more detailed map of Southeast Asia with the region indicating the location for each story and its corresponding stamp and page number. "I wanted to incorporate the concept of traveling", so that readers can travel to the stories and regions they want to experience without having to read the pages in order. Even just the design of the contents pages alone let Chou demonstrate what she learned during her master's degree in multimedia design.

As well as the two main content themes of stamp stories and folk legends, Chou has tried to include other elements in the hope of creating more connections with readers. She

happily shares that a lot of little girls have been fascinated by the haiku in *Japanese Folklore and Haiku*, the fourth book in the series. The food in *The Legends and Cuisines of Southeast Asia* was inspired by discussions with the author group. "The first story we decided to include was the 'Watermelon Legend' from Vietnam, and then I asked them if they had any more stories like that." However, adding this new element to the book also brought new possibilities to the creative process, and Chou, who had previously just collected stamps involving children's stories, now had to search for food-related stamps too.

### Additional Puzzles in the Works

The *Stamps Tell You Stories* series is still in progress, but Chou admits the publication timing and what theme they go with is still largely down to chance since the choice of authors, work schedule, stamp content, market trends, and company strategy are all factors which can have an influence on the completion of the book. Pointing to the main illustration on the lower half of the cover, Chou explains that the design is based on the concept of the classic board game Sugoroku. She was inspired by the album artwork on one of the records in her shellac collection, so she invited the artist, Huang Tzu-chin, to be the art designer for the book since he has an in-depth collection of Sugoroku and has conducted research on the subject. The image of the Sugoroku is often blocked by the partial dust jacket, so readers might not see it on first glance. However, Chou perseveres and imagines a future where the series reaches ten or more volumes so she can put the illustrations from each of the covers together and create a giant picture of a Sugoroku game for readers. One can't help but wonder what other surprises might be in store for readers thanks to Chou's ingenuity.

# STAMPS TELL YOU STORIES: THE LEGENDS AND CUISINES OF SOUTHEAST ASIA

Translated by Helen Wang

## Chapter 1

### Children of the Dragon, Grandchildren of the Immortal (Vietnam)

By Nguyen Thi Mai Anh

*The Vietnamese call themselves Children of the Dragon, Grandchildren of the Immortal, and this stamp tells you why...*



A long time ago in the Lac Viet region, in the northern part of Vietnam, there was a dragon god. He was the son of the underwater dragon goddess, and his name was Lac Long Quan (Raccoon Dragon Lord).

Lac Long Quan had great magical powers. Sometimes he lived underwater, sometimes he lived on land. He helped humans eliminate harmful fish spirits, fox spirits, and wood spirits, and taught humans how to grow crops, keep livestock, wear clothes, and how to live.

Whenever he finished a job helping humankind, he would return to the water palace to be with his mother until the next time he was needed.

At that time, in the high mountains in the north, there was a very beautiful woman called Au Co, a descendant of Shennong. She traveled a lot and loved to go to places with beautiful scenery. Once, she overheard that the flowers in Lac Viet were very fragrant and the medicinal herbs there were very effective, so she went to the region, and happened to meet Lac Long Quan. They fell in love, got married, and lived together in a splendid palace on land.

Au Co soon became pregnant. She produced a hundred eggs, each of which hatched a son. Miraculously, these hundred sons did not need to breastfeed. They grew up as fast as you can inflate a balloon, and each son was as handsome and as fit and strong as his father.

One day, Lac Long Quan, who missed life in the underwater palace, felt he couldn't live the rest of his life on land. He said goodbye to his wife and children, and returned to the underwater palace. His wife raised the children on her own, and waited sadly for her husband to come back to land. Finally, she called him

to the shore, and said sadly, "Why did you leave me? Why don't you bring up the children with me?"

Lac Long Quan said: "I'm a dragon from deep in the sea. You're an immortal from high in the mountains. People who live on land have different temperaments and habits from people who live in the sea; it's very difficult for them to live in the same place for a long time. It would be better for me to take fifty children into the sea, and you to take fifty children into the mountains, and each of us manage in our own place. Mountain people and sea people can still help each when necessary – don't forget that."

Au Co took fifty children into the mountains, and settled in Phong Chau, in the northeastern part of today's Vietnam. Lac Long Quan appointed his eldest son to be king. He arranged for his kingdom to be called the Van Lang Kingdom, for the king's sons to be called Guan Lang (officers), and his daughters to be called Mei Niang (beauties), and for his eldest son always to be heir to the throne.

The Van Lang Kingdom lasted for eighteen generations, and each king was called the Hung King.

Following the tradition laid down by the Lac Long Quan, the eldest son inherited the throne. However, the sixth generation Hung King had a different way of thinking. Instead of the eldest son automatically becoming king, he believed that the throne should be passed to whichever prince had done the most for his people. But, he had twenty sons, all of whom were excellent and had contributed in their own fields, so he didn't know who should take his place.

Finally, he thought of a solution. He called all the princes to the palace, and announced that the following spring, after New Year, he would pass the throne to the prince that prepared the most precious gift for their ancestors.

Twenty princes went in search of a rare treasure in the hope of becoming king. One of these princes was Lang Lieu. His mother had

died when he was an infant, he was of simple character, and he had no one to help him. When he heard his father's announcement, he began to worry. He didn't know how to choose the most precious gift.

One night, Lang Lieu dreamt that an immortal came to see him and said, "There is nothing more precious in this world than glutinous rice. Use it to make round cakes and square cakes. With the square cakes, fill them with a stuffing of meat and mung beans, then wrap them in a leaf. These square cakes symbolize the earth. They're called Banh Chung. Or you can crush the glutinous rice and boil it in water, then shape the soft dough into round cakes. These symbolize the domed sky. They're called Banh Giay."

When Lang Lieu woke up, he did as the fairy said, and made square cakes and round cakes.

Finally, the day of the ritual came. The princes brought rare treasures from all over the world. Lang Lieu brought two simple kinds of cakes. At first, everyone looked down on his gift, but when the king tasted the cakes, he thought they were special, and asked Lang Lieu about them. Lang Lieu told his father about his dream.

The king was moved by what he heard. "That's right, ordinary people think of food as heavenly, and want to share good food and drink with their ancestors. This is the most precious gift." He decided to pass the throne to Lang Lieu. Since then, every Spring Festival holiday, Vietnamese families always make Banh Chung and Banh Giay as offerings to their ancestors and to heaven and earth.

### **The story on stamps**

This story is Vietnam's creation story, and tells us about history and belief. Although the first half of the story about the dragon god Lac Long Quan and the beautiful Au Co, and the Van Lang kingdom (2879-259 BC) is mythical,

the Vietnamese people call themselves Children of the dragon and grandchildren of the immortal.

The legend of Lac Long Quan and Au Co is the pride of the Vietnamese people. In 2000, the Vietnamese Post Office issued a set of stamps titled "The Legend of Lac Long Quan and Au Co", with six stamps arranged like a comic strip, telling the main story (Fig. 1-1). This

set of stamps was painted by Hoang Thy Lieu.

The eldest son of Lac Long Quan and Au Co was the first generation Hung King of the Van Lang kingdom. Although this ancient country no longer exists, the Vietnamese still venerate the Hung Kings, and every year on the 10th day of the 3rd month of the lunar calendar they hold a special Hung Kings' Day that includes a variety of traditional



Figure 1-1 "The Legend of Lac Long Quan and Au Co", Vietnam, 2000. From left: the marriage, Au Co produces 100 eggs that hatch 100 sons, Au Co taking 50 children into the mountains, Lac Long Quan taking 50 children into the sea, Lac Long Quan's eldest becomes the first Hung King, the Vietnamese peoples are all children of the dragon, grandchildren of the immortal. (Chou Hui-Lin Collection)



Figure 1-2 "Worship of Hung Kings - Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind", Vietnam, 2015. This set comprises a stamp-sheet, and three stamps, of which the third stamp shows people making Banh Chung and Banh Giay, which they will offer to the Hung Kings. (Chou Hui-Lin Collection)

ceremonies, with various offerings, incense, and folk performances that have been passed on for many generations. They express their respect for their ancestors, thank the Hung Kings for their service and virtue, and call on the people to maintain national unity.

Banh Chungs are an essential part of the offerings on Hung Kings' Day. It is also obligatory to eat Banh Chung at Vietnamese New Year. As mentioned in the story, it is because they symbolize the most precious gift offered to the ancestors. Vietnamese Banh Chungs are similar, but different, to the zongzi commonly eaten by people in Taiwan. Banh Chungs are square, and the filling is made of meat and mung beans.

In 2012, the Hung Kings' Day was recognized by UNESCO as an "Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity". The Vietnamese Post Office issued a set of three stamps and a souvenir sheet titled "Worship of Hung Kings – Intangible Cultural Heritage of Mankind". This set of stamps was designed Vo Luong Nhi and Vo Kim Lien. The last stamp shows Banh Chung, Banh Giay, and the Vietnamese people preparing to make offerings to the Hung Kings.

## Chapter 2: Lake Toba (Indonesia)

By Sri Handini & Wong Lee-Lan

*A fisherman caught a fish. When it turned into gold coins, he was surprised and asked, "What about my dinner?"*



A long time ago, on a mountain on the Indonesian island of Sumatra, lived a farmer called Toba. He was hardworking and willing to endure hardship. After laboring in the fields every day, his biggest pleasure was to go fishing in the river. Surprisingly, he always returned with a full catch, so he always had a variety of fish for his dinner, and his life was very comfortable.

One evening, after finishing his work in the fields, Toba went fishing as usual, but this time he waited a long time and still could not catch a single fish. Toba scratched his head and said, "Strange! No luck at all today!"

"Boom!" Suddenly, the sky filled with dark clouds. Seeing that it was about to rain heavily, Toba quickly packed up his fishing gear and prepared to go home. All of a sudden there was a tug at his fishing rod – he had hooked a big fish! It was a beautiful fish with glistening scales. He took the fish home carefully, looking forward to a good meal.

When he got home, Toba put the fish on the kitchen chopping board, and was just about to stoke the fire when he realized he had run out of firewood. He ran outside to fetch some wood, and when he came back the fish had disappeared. There were some gold coins in its place! Toba was worried. He turned the place upside but still could not find the fish.

"That's strange! Fish don't have feet, so where can it have gone?" That evening he had to make do with a simple dinner of plain rice with a little dried fish and some chili pepper. All of a sudden, he found himself staggering forward, and discovered a girl with long flowing hair standing in the kitchen doorway.

# THE DUCK MIGRATION BRIGADE

## 水鴨南渡大隊

*Each year, the northern-born water ducks make a long, arduous journey to the warm shores of Taiwan for the winter, but it's a perilous trip where they must do everything in their power to survive natural disasters and evade the threat of humans.*

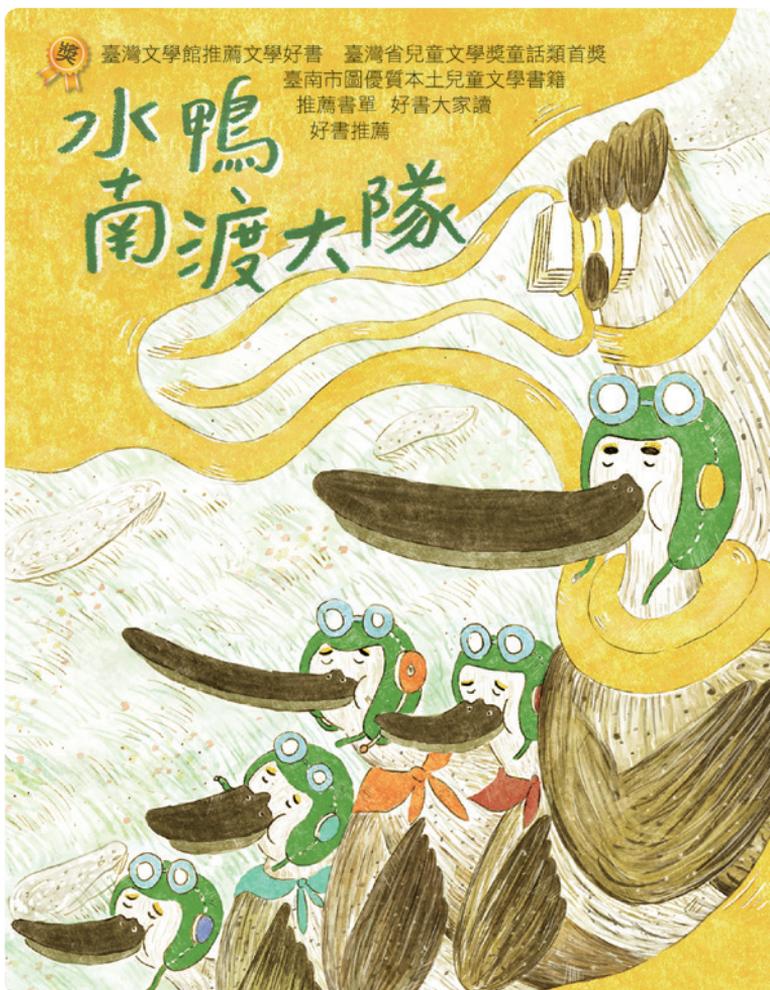
For the water ducks born in the north, they must escape the harsh winter by migrating to the warm southern country of Taiwan even though it requires them to fly for several months each year. Just as a large flock is setting out, they unexpectedly run into a storm and many of their group are sacrificed in the process. After resting and recuperating, they set out again but this time they hear a young girl on the sea crying for help. This suddenly puts them in a dilemma: they are afraid of humans but at the same time they can't bear to leave her. What should they do? Will they set aside their fear of humans and help the young girl?

The book presents the process of the ducks' voyage south in an anthropomorphic way, profoundly portraying the reluctant farewells between the ducks and their family members, as well as the heroic sacrifices they make on their arduous journey, and the friendship that blossoms between the animals and the humans. The author's powerful, emotionally charged writing reflects his deep compassion for nature and his hope that young readers will treat animals and the environment with more empathy after finishing this book.



### Text by Chen Cheng-En 陳正恩

Originally from Pingtung but now living in Tainan, Chen Cheng-En is a retired elementary school principal. He enjoys creating stories that children can read and listen to, and he is also deeply passionate about nature and protecting the environment.



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## Illustrated by Yeh I-Ying 葉懿瑩

Yeh I-Ying is an illustrator from Taiwan. She graduated from Camberwell College of Arts (London) with an MA in Visual Arts. Her illustrations have been featured in newspapers, magazines, and book covers since 2010, and *I Feel Therefore I Am* was featured in *American Illustration* 30 in 2011.

# Stirring the Hearts of Children: An Interview with Chen Cheng-En

Written by Itzel Hsu

Translated by Sarah-Jayne Carver

Several decades ago when Chen Cheng-En was a child, he went with his father who'd gone to work in Cape Eluanbi at the southernmost tip of Taiwan. There were a lot of stalls beside the highway that smelt of barbecue, but they weren't selling the sausages that are common these days, back then they were selling roasted birds - mostly brown shrikes that migrated there in winter. In a time of material scarcity when people had no concept of wildlife conservation, it was a low-cost way to supplement their protein or make a profit. While eating them was by no means heinous, Chen still couldn't bear to see a whole road full of dead birds.

Now, after years of advocacy, the roads and areas that were once known for roasting birds have been cleared of the "shrike killer" stigma. However, many of humanity's actions towards nature still can't be considered kind, and the unbearableness of it is a sentiment that Chen frequently recalls in his writing, saying: "the little water ducks represent those suffering animals."

## Imaging Himself as a Water Duck

Chen chose a water duckling as the protagonist based on his own personal preference since the Taiwanese term "duckling" is synonymous with "duckweed" and both the pronunciation and the metaphorical image always made him

think of something cute and comforting. Since the concept had been in the works for some time, it took him under a week to actually write it and you could say it was quite a smooth process. The only two obstacles were the word limit and the fact that he was human.

When he wrote the first draft, he had to keep the word count under 6,000 Chinese characters to qualify for the short story category in various children's literary awards. This meant that he had to leave out some interesting real-life details and focus on the plot, for example he couldn't mention how the ducklings use moonlight and stars to orientate themselves when flying at night, and he couldn't go into too much detail when describing the landscapes, islands, and incidents that happened along the way. To help readers quickly get to know the important characters, he even named each of the characters directly after their respective characteristics.

On the surface, his inability to really think like a duckling might have seemed like a hindrance to his writing, but looking at it another way, it was also a position of freedom. Chen was able to incorporate his favorite form of flight diary so that readers could gain a greater understanding of the protagonist Flying Southward Hsiang's feelings. He incorporates a lot of human behavior into the ducklings' group dynamic, imagining their conflicts,

bravery, and compassion. He also doesn't shy away from the fact that the ducklings inevitably lose their lives, nor does he sugar-coat mankind's attitude towards animals. These approaches ultimately make the story far more moving.

### **The Difficulty of Survival**

Chen likes to draw inspiration from observing daily life and has a notebook where he collects lots of things that intrigue him. He believes that when he's writing notes it seems like he's recording other people when in fact he's really observing himself. Thus, we should also say that when he's writing about animals, he's also writing about people. In his writing, there is no hierarchy between humans and animals which can be traced back to his experience growing up in the countryside.

His rural childhood is full of interesting memories: working in the fields with his parents during the holidays; finishing his homework then going across the embankment to swim in the stream; receiving fruits from his neighbors as he passed by their orchards...memories filled with green scenery and warm interactions that could easily seem like something out of *My Neighbor Totoro*. Ultimately though, the reality of life in the countryside is nothing like a Studio Ghibli movie. The dead bodies of drowned animals who inevitably appear in streams; the wholesalers who use low prices to mercilessly squeeze hardworking farmers; the unscrupulous factories who discharge wastewater into the aquifer when no one is looking....

Regardless of whether these various aspects of the countryside are beautiful or brutal, Chen believes that "the natural world forgives, accepts, and educates us." He observes that

both humans and animals suffer a lot of pain and setbacks during their lives, and that animals "have to exert a huge amount of effort and courage" just to survive, as seen in *The Call of the Wild* by Jack London. He attempts to show the difficulty of survival, but at the same time, he doesn't want the dark side of the world to scare young readers, so he writes children's stories that feature animals as the main characters in a way that he hopes is lighter and more positive.

### **Illuminating Readers with a Little Girl's Kindness**

After retiring as an elementary school principal, Chen focused on developing his interests and writing was something he kept doing on a whim. He rarely publishes books partly because he doesn't want to repeat topics that he's already covered, and also because he doesn't want to write content where printing it would be a shameful sacrifice of trees which would defeat the purpose of creating the stories in the first place. When he picks up his pen, he thinks of the young students who used to surround him and see him as a grandfather figure, especially now he sees his own newborn grandson among their small faces. If they read the story and think "the ducklings are so cute" rather than "the ducklings are delicious", then they'll be more likely to treat the world with kindness. When he wrote about the unnamed girl in the story who responded to the duckling's actions with kindness, Chen did so with the belief that every child has the potential to become her.

# THE DUCK MIGRATION BRIGADE

By Chen Cheng-En

Translated by Helen Wang

## Chapter 1

### Tearful Instructions

The bone-chilling north wind blew across the land. Dry leaves heavy with cold dew streamed like tears to the ground.

The ducks were busy by the side of the lake, preening their wings, or still looking for food in the cold marsh, hoping to fill their bellies before the annual migration to the south.

This year's flight leader was Flying Southward Hsiang. After careful consideration, he had finalized the name-lists for the Vanguard Early Warning Team. In order to protect everyone else, these outstanding young team members would have to put themselves in unpredictable danger, fly at the front of the team, look out for all kinds of unexpected situations, and alert everyone else at any time. Just thinking about it made Flying Southward Hsiang felt tense.

As he looked at the thick flight log with the yellow threads tied around it, Flying Southward Hsiang could hear his father's instructions as he handed the log book to him:

"... at least 30 out of each 100-strong Vanguard Early Warning Team must return to the south safely, or else... you must also tie a yellow thread around the log book." Flying Southward Hsiang could almost see his father's

deep moist eyes and his trembling body.

"Each yellow thread represents 70 young lives, and these overlapping ones, alas..." Flying Southward Hsiang couldn't bear to go on.

For Flying Southward Hsiang, these yellow threads were not only markers of grief, but they were also a deep reminder that he could never forget.

The ducks lined up by the lake and waited for the Vanguard Early Warning Team name list to be called out. It was so quiet you could have heard a pine-needle drop.

"Clear Vision Chao." At last, Flying Southward Hsiang read out the first name.

"Aagh!" Chao's mother gasped, tears welling in her eyes.

Chao's father spread his wing around his son and said hoarsely, "Keep your eyes open, son! And don't fly into a bird net, they're fatal."

"Ears Alert Chien." Flying Southward Hsiang didn't dare look at the Chien family for fear the final parting would leave him unable to continue reading, but he could still hear the wavering voice of Chien's elderly father, "Son, I am proud of you. You must always listen carefully, and if you hear a human voice, don't go anywhere near it."

"Smart Mouth Sun."

"Don't eat anything without checking it carefully. Humans put poison everywhere!"



"Quick Mover Li."

"Watch out for bird-traps, grandson! Don't be like your uncle, I can still remember the look of despair in his eyes when he was hanging upside down in the trap."

"Beat the Wind Chen."

"..."

"Face the Rain Lin."

"..."

Each name he read out was like a hard rock in his heart. He could almost feel the mood of his ancestors as they tied a yellow thread around the flight log book. All because of humans.

Every duck has a line of yellow feathers above its eyes. It's a symbol found on all the duck family, a declaration of unity in life and death.

Flying Southward Hsiang used his foot to smooth the yellow feathers above his eye. When they came back from migration last year, all the surviving ducks had plucked a

few yellow feathers from each other to make a yellow thread, and that scene came to mind again very clearly. Yellow feathers can grow back, but sad memories never disappear.

Flying Southward Hsiang prayed with all his heart: Please let us not need a yellow thread this year!

Flying Southward Hsiang spread his wings, checked which way the wind was blowing, and decided that they would set off the next day. He looked at the flight log book, then casually opened it to the first page, which had yellowed, and read the log for the first migration since records began.

### Duck Migration Log Book

*Duck Flight: Journey no.1, day 67*

*"Attention!" My voice trembled with excitement, like the autumn reeds swaying in the wilderness.*

*Using the V-formation, of which they were*

most proud, the Duck Brigade swept over the strange but attractive green marshes. That's right! The marshes in the legendary waterbirds' paradise: Formosa.

*As the winter haven of our dreams opened before our eyes, we forgot the hunger in our guts, and our wings battered by the sea winds, and for a long time we were too excited to make a sound.*

*Enjoy! Close your eyes and feel the warmth on your face. Enjoy! Slip your beak slowly into the water, and let the food flow in.*

*"Oh, what a wonderful country!" Flying Southward Hsiang muttered, intoxicated by what he had read.*

*He closed the logbook gently, afraid of shattering the beautiful scene he had painstakingly woven in his mind. He wanted to take this image with him to the south. He understood that the ducks needed ideals to give them the courage to cross foreign seas.*

## Chapter 2

### Ducks Devote Their Lives to Flying

The ducks set off and flew over the bright blue sea.

To escape the cold, they raced against the north wind. For a short break, they chased and caught up with cargo ships. To boost morale, they raced against other cheering geese and ducks. Only the wide-open sea encouraged them, painting a cheerleading scene with the waves' white spray. The island was kind too, providing them with a place to rest and a source of calories.

### Duck Migration Log Book

*Duck Flight: Journey no. 119, day 45*

*Brave ducks devoted their lives to flying.*

*Today, we lost 12 companions, including 1 from the vanguard.*

*When pioneer Guide Lu decided to stay*



*behind on the island with his injured mother, the brigade's eyes filled with hot tears.*

*When ten companions' strength was depleted, and they lost speed and fell into the sea, the brigade paid the highest respect.*

*Remember! The ducks devote their lives to flying.*

The ducks never doubted the direction they were flying in, however, a storm about to break on the horizon worried Flying Southward Hsiang.

In order to grasp the weather situation, he sent Beat the Wind Chen and Face the Rain Lin ahead as scouts.

At first, the sea breeze was surprisingly calm, and the migration brigade advanced silently towards the nearest reef.

Suddenly, it seemed as though a spell had been cast on the sky: a dark shadow hung all around.

Then, the dull roar of the wind in the distance brought heart-stopping news.

"The storm's heading this way!" a voice filled with terror shouted in the distance, though they could only hear the voice faintly.

"It's Beat the Wind Chen, the storm's heading this way!" Ears Alert Chien quickly pulled in his wings and turned around to report to brigade chief Flying Southward Hsiang.

Before Flying Southward Hsiang could react, he heard Clear Vision Chao shouting urgently, "Agh! Beat the Wind Chen and Face the Rain Lin are caught in the storm!"

"Quick! Take cover in the leeward side of the reef!" Flying Southward Hsiang issued an emergency order to the Migration Brigade.

At the same time, Quick Mover Li swerved and flew out about 10 meters, shouting: "I'm going to save Beat the Wind Chen and his group!"

"It's too dangerous!" Flying Southward Hsiang yelled instinctively.

A strong gust of wind halted Quick Mover

Li's momentum, and sent him somersaulting through the air, back to where he'd come from.

The rain fell loud and hard, and the storm arrived at lightning speed. The curtain of wind and rain covering sky and earth shook not only the reef, but the grieving souls of the ducks on the leeward side of the reef as well.

## **Duck Migration Log Book**

*Duck Flight: Journey 119, day 55*

*After the Storm*

*Sunlight intensity: scorching*

*Losses reported:*

*(1) Deaths: 20, including 2 members of the vanguard*

*Cause of death: Fell into the sea*

*(2) Wing damage: 36.*

*Estimated distance to next resting place: 6 duck flying days*

*Special note: Ducks are helpless in a storm, but a storm will not affect the luster of life.*

*Journey 119 will be great because of Beat the Wind Chen and Face the Rain Lin.*

## **Chapter 3**

### **A Little Girl is Crying**

In preparation for the next six days of flying, the ducks were busy searching for food in the crevices of the reef. Even the noisy youngsters were unusually quiet that day – perhaps they were tired, or held back by the solemn atmosphere.

At dusk, Flying Southward Hsiang looked up into the distance, spread his wings, and felt the rise and fall of the wind.

"We can set out again tonight," he thought to himself.

"Someone's crying for help!" Ears Alert Chien suddenly shouted.

# JIANGHU, IS THERE ANYBODY THERE?

## 江湖，還有人嗎？

\* Winner of the 2020 TiBE Book Prize

\* Winner of the 2020 Golden Tripod Award

\* Winner of the 2020 White Raven Award

*As an orphan who has grown up in a cobbler's house, all Tsu Hsiao-Pi really wants to do is lead an ordinary life, but his best friend dreams of someday becoming a warrior. However, given that they live in a tiny village where all the warriors have disappeared, how are they going to find their own wuxia world to be a part of?*

The martial arts tournaments at NiuTou Village used to draw vast numbers of warriors who traveled there from far and wide to compete, but it lost them all thirty years ago when the large iron pillar engraved with the names of various heroes disappeared. Now with the warriors gone, is there anyone left who's willing to take up the mantle and fight for what's right?

For two thirteen-year-olds who grew up in NiuTou Village, they've spent their entire lives hearing stories about that world. While the adventurous Kang Liang dreams of finding a way back there and becoming a warrior, orphan Tsu Hsiao-Pi just wants to stay with his master and toil away repairing shoes.

Then, one day an infamous fugitive appears and ruthlessly declares that for the wuxia world to return, the chief constable of the village has to die. What follows is a steady stream of strangers coming to NiuTou Village who possess a myriad of physical and mental skills, but what kind of chaos will they create as they try to reclaim the old world? And what does it all hold for Tsu Hsiao-Pi and Kang Liang?

Combining fantasy elements and coming-of-age themes which have long been Chang Yeou-Yu's specialty, *Jianghu, Is There Anybody There?* marks the first time that the veteran children's author has used wuxia as a backdrop and is an exciting new novel deep-rooted in a distinctive style that blends wuxia and fantasy.



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- **Volume:** 2



## Chang Yeou-Yu 張友漁

Originally from Yuli Township in Hualien, Chang Yeou-Yu has been a professional children's author for over twenty years. She has published more than forty books, including *The Senior*, *My Classmate Is a Bear*, *How Are You Today, Princess?*, *Child of Saigon*, *My Dad the Hoodlum*, and *The Little Chef Yuma* series.

# Book Report:

## Jianghu, Is There Anybody There?

By Rachel Wang Yung-Hsin

As this book's title suggests, Jianghu refers to a locale. Literally translated as "rivers and lakes", the term Jianghu has rich connotations, encompassing natural and human geographies as well as alternate universes with distinct codes of conduct, choices, and consequences. At the same time, Jianghu is a generic expression and a quintessential component of the Wuxia genre in Sinophone literature, film, theater, and other popular entertainment including comics and online games.

Depending on the context, modern references to Jianghu are found in fantasy, realistic fiction, poetic or prosaic descriptions of social environments or professional arenas, and even individual interior worlds as experienced in this Wuxia novel for tweens. In fact, Jianghu can define both the setting and the conceptual construct shaping the narrative lens: where the stories occur as well as how they are told. Adopting this milieu indicates the presence of alternative - sometimes intersecting - realities that occupy diverse dimensions of existence and realms of imagination.

*Jianghu, Is There Anybody There?* by Chang Yeou-Yu embodies the distinguishing features of Wuxia novels, beginning with a colorful cast of characters possessing different types and levels of Kong Fu, a euphemism for honing the requisite skills for one's pursuits. In the Wuxia genre, Kong Fu refers to the practices as well

as the outcomes of training one's body and mind based on the disciplines of particular clans, schools, or sects of martial art. Written for tweens, this work centers 13-year-old Tsu Hsiao-Pi, who is kindhearted, reserved, and industrious. Abandoned as an infant and raised by the master cobbler of NiuTou Village, he becomes highly skilled at shoe repair and design, and is poised to take over the workshop as the story begins. Unlike his Kong-Fu-obsessed neighbor and childhood friend Kang Liang, who at age 13 is keen to leave his family's steamed bao (buns) business in order to explore the Jianghu and compete for fame and glory as a martial artist, Tsu Hsiao-Pi is content to cultivate his craft and care for his aging mentor whom he considers his father. His other close friend Mai Tien, a compassionate, clever, and quick-witted 14-year-old, also compels Tsu Hsiao-Pi to stay put, although he does not readily admit it to himself.

Strategically situated along an ancient thoroughfare, NiuTou Village supplies essential services for travelers on their way to more prominent destinations. When suspicious circumstances bring a questionable visitor to the cobblers' workshop, Tsu Hsiao-Pi is suddenly gifted with amazing Kong Fu he had not sought. Soon, he is forced to confront a complicated Jianghu and struggles to make tough decisions, such as whether to tell anyone about his newfound superpowers.

While witnessing Tsu Hsiao-Pi's character development and evolution as a reluctant hero, readers learn of the region's legendary martial arts competitions and the champions whose names were inscribed on an iron pillar that once upon a time stood by the village's LiangCha Pavilion. The whereabouts of that pillar becomes the point of contention as conspicuous characters stream into NiuTou Village and fill up the local inns, much to the dismay of the police chief-cum-village head Chien Chih.

Recalling the senseless violence often accompanying martial arts competitions in the past, Chien Chih has outlawed them by decree. Meanwhile, he has put in place a separate iron pillar inscribed with the names of the officers who had perished while protecting innocent bystanders and inexperienced contestants as the competitions had grown increasingly deadly over the decades. Challenging Chien Chih's one-sided representation that privileges strict law enforcement over respect for the Jianghu's chivalric ethos and values, the proponents of the martial arts competitions rally to re-stage the tournament in order to restore their honor and reputation. Moreover, they insist on reinstalling the missing pillar and are willing to take extreme measures to make that happen.

Against this backdrop of adult-world disputes and imminent threats to the community, readers zoom in on the lives of the main characters and their everyday activities. We observe intricate details of Tsu Hsiao-Pi working on special shoes that help Kang Liang with his Kong Fu practice, Mai Tien weaving lifelike animals and tiny shoes with the straw she freely collects from the workshop, and Kang Liang delivering stacks of bao-filled steamers while improving his balance and

agility. We also witness adolescent angst and increasing tension between best friends as misunderstandings arise and loyalties are questioned.

Like its counterparts for adult readers, *Jianghu, Is There Anybody There?* establishes an atmospheric Wuxia story world featuring landscapes with provocative place names, such as Twenty One Peaks, Laklak River and Ancient Road. Sketches by Lin I-Shian reflect traditional Wuxia illustration styles and flesh out the key characters. Author Chang Yeou-Yu distills the genre's epic themes - individual and collaborative quests that involve navigating treacherous surroundings, lingering memories of old scores to be settled, plus conflicts that arise from the ambiguities inherent in rules and regulations vs. justice and truth - into intriguing narrative strands, spinning them into an action-packed plot with reveals and twists that are age-appropriate and relatable for the target audience. Through the sympathetic characters, Chang not only demonstrates some of the finer points of Kong Fu practice, but also outlines various philosophical approaches to life in the Jianghu.

The result is an engaging and entertaining journey through a Jianghu that welcomes anyone who wishes to visit.

# JIANGHU, IS THERE ANYBODY THERE?

By Chang Yeou-Yu

Translated by Helen Wang

## Chapter 1

### NiuTou Village and the Ancient Road

"Jianghu, is there anybody there?"

The boy's cry echoed round the Twenty One Peaks, scaring a few birds from the trees.

Two teenagers in turbans stood on the highest rock in the rocky part of the forest. The stockier of the pair, in a gray turban, cupped his hands around his mouth, and shouted into the distance again: "Jianghu, is there anyone there?"

The smaller boy jumped down from the rock, and pulled a basket of firewood onto his back. He looked up at the other boy and said, "Come on, Kang Liang, we should go home!"

"Tsu Hsiao-Pi, we could leave NiuTou Village and go and see the Eastern City for ourselves," said the stockier boy, "what do you think? There must be a jianghu there."

"But I like NiuTou Village, I like spending time with Master Tsu." Hsiao-Pi adjusted his red turban as he spoke.

"Jianghu, are you there? Is anyone there?" Kang Liang roared again from the rock. A grasshopper leapt up from the grass and landed next to Hsiao-Pi's foot. Hsiao-Pi watched it with interest. "Well, there's definitely an animal jianghu here, with frogs, flies, crickets and chickens. This grasshopper's jianghu is so lively!"

Kang Liang jumped down from the rock, and bent down to look at the grasshopper. "Hsiao-Pi, you forgot about us! We're here too. Humans are also part of the grasshoppers' jianghu. They eat our corn, and we send them off to the Western Skies. Better to be in the grasshopper's jianghu than no jianghu at all, right?"

Kang Liang reached out to grab the grasshopper, but it was too fast, and its sickle leg slashed his hand.

"Wow! That grasshopper's fast, it's really something, a jianghu master!" Kang Liang shook out his hand and peered closely at the grasshopper. It was the color of dry grass. He reached out again, ready to grab it. This time he could see what happened: as soon as his hand went near the grasshopper, its back leg shot up, and he could see the row of spikes that had scratched his hand a few moments earlier. This time, Kang Liang whipped his hand back.

"So this is your weapon? Wait till you see mine!" Kang Liang took off his shoes and prepared his counter attack. As he raised his shoes high in the air, he heard a man's voice coming from behind the stone: "You're so loud they can hear you in LeiEr Town." A middle-aged man with a slightly bulging belly walked out from behind another rock.

Kang Liang and Hsiao-Pi pulled themselves

up straight, and looked at him. They'd never seen this man before. In his bright blue robe, with his long hair tied up in a small bun on top of his head, he looked the very image of a scholar.

The man looked at Kang Liang and asked, "Just now, why did you say there's no one in the jianghu any more?"

"The village's jianghu has disappeared." Kang Liang pointed to NiuTou Village as he put his shoes back on: "There used to be one, but then it disappeared, and now only the grasshoppers have a jianghu."

"You're mistaken," said the man. The jianghu has always been there. Why else would it be on people's lips all day long?" He continued, "It's like... the water tank is still a water tank, even when there's no water in it. The jianghu is always there."

The man looked up at the sky, and as though thinking aloud, said, "It looks like it's going to rain. Then there'll be water in the water tank again."

Kang Liang and Hsiao-Pi both looked up at almost exactly the same time. The sky was so blue! There wasn't a cloud in sight, so where was that rain going to come from?

"May I ask where you have come from, Sir? And where you are going?" Hsiao-Pi had never seen this man before. Most of the traders who passed through NiuTou Village were in a hurry and didn't have time to wander in the forest and enjoy the scenery.

"Not to worry, we'll meet again soon." As soon as he'd finished speaking, the man turned around and walked off into the forest. He'd only taken a few steps before he suddenly stopped, and glanced back at the two teenagers: "What you just said, about the grasshopper's jianghu, hmm, interesting. I like that, the grasshopper's jianghu. Haha, very interesting!"

The two teenagers watched as the man disappeared into the forest.

An eagle was circling the Thirteen Peaks,

observing everything that moved. It glanced at the two boys, walking towards the village with baskets on their backs. But they weren't what it was looking for. The eagle had its eye on NiuTou Village, which, as its name implied, was the shape of a bull's head, with a large pond on its right horn, and a flock of ducks on the pond. The eagle circled in the air, looking for an opportunity. It had almost caught one - it had swooped down just as a duck was taking flight, but an old man sitting nearby had thrown something at the eagle and hit its wing, and it had had to drop the duck. He was sitting by the pond again. Today wasn't a good day.

Mr. Liu, the duck-farmer, was sitting on a deckchair by the lake, leisurely drinking tea, looking at the mountains and the people who passed by.

He enjoyed watching people coming and going.

NiuTou Village was at the foot of the Thirteen Peaks.

An ancient road connecting TaYi Town, NiuTou Village and LeiEr Town formed a trade route, which many people relied on for their living - small businesses and small traders - buying everyday items for others, running errands and delivering letters, making dozens of trips a year.

The Twenty One Peaks was a mountain range that stretched from TaYi Town to NiuTou Village and LeiEr Town, with the last peak rising from Mirror Lake in the outskirts of LeiEr Town. On the other side of the lake was ZhaoYao Mountain. If you took a boat across the lake, then walked round ZhaoYao Mountain, and through a forest, you'd come to the bustling Eastern City. From there it was three day's walk east to the capital where the Emperor lived.

Who was the Emperor now?

No one knew! NiuTou Village was just a small mountain town beyond the Emperor's control.

It didn't matter who the Emperor was, life

just went on, didn't it?

If you were going from LeiEr to TaYi, you have to pass through NiuTou Village on the way. Once you'd reached TaYi, if you continued walking for another half day, you'd come to the Western City, which was almost as big as the Eastern City.

NiuTou Village nestles quietly in the mountains by the Laklak River, and over the course of several dynasties, has remained much the same, with no major development or decline. Whether you're coming from TaYi or LeiEr you have to pass through NiuTou Village, and you can only do so on foot. You can bring a mule or a donkey to carry your goods, but if you tried to ride a horse on the ancient road, you'd get your head smashed in.

Originally, people had just wanted to make a road, and had carved one out of the cliff. On one side of the road was the mountain wall, on the other was the sheer drop down to the rapids of the Laklak River that rushed past on its way to the Mirror Lake at LeiEr. The surface of the road was bumpy and uneven, with low odd-shaped rocks that had been left because they were too hard to cut through, so you had to watch your feet all the time and walk carefully. Trees growing out of the mountain side fought for space, their branches stretching horizontally over the road. The whole road was like that, bumpy and uneven underfoot, another natural stone wall shooting straight up to the sky, another branch sticking out over the road. The sky was so vast in those parts that as soon as you looked up, you could see a flawless blue sky, though the sun shone so brightly it hurt the eyes. Yet, on the road it was dark and damp, with the sun out of sight.

This ancient road carved out of the rock was the only direct route to TaYi or LeiEr. It was hard work walking on this road, and it was painful on the legs. People were always

complaining: If only the road was a little wider! If only you could ride on horseback it would be so much faster! But, the strength to carve this road out of the rock had been exhausted hundreds of years earlier, and nowadays no one had time to carve into the rock any more, everyone was too busy!

And that's why the ancient road has remained unchanged for a thousand years.

NiuTou Village resembled a bull's head, with its horns curling towards the jagged mountain range, and the village houses densely packed on the ox's face. Beyond the ox's lower jaw was a big steep slope, down to a large sheer cliff, and at the bottom of the valley was the Laklak River.

NiuTou Village had more character than TaYi and LeiEr. It was small, and could not expand into a town even it wanted to because there was no more land on which to build houses. But there were twenty inns in the village, the same number as in TaYi and LeiEr combined. That's a lot of inns for such a small place, but NiuTou Village needed them. Those long distance journeys meant traders heading for TaYi or LeiEr had to stay overnight in NiuTou Village. To walk from TaYi Town to NiuTou Village took a whole day. If you set out at dawn, you'd arrive at NiuTou Village when the sun was slipping down the mountains. You had to walk all the next day as well to reach LeiEr, and then get a boat to the Eastern City.

What kind of business needed two days of hard walking?

Where there are roads, villages and people, there will be business. There were porters, because the people of these two towns and one village needed others to run errands for them, and buy goods for them. The porters went back and forth all year round in order to sustain their families. There were people who sold medicine, and flour, and

all kinds of materials, all of whom depended on the ancient road to make a living. Over time, people stopped thinking of themselves as passers-through, as they had friends everywhere in NiuTou Village. They stayed the night, ate a meal, drank wine, chatted, and made new friends.

Besides its well-developed guesthouse industry, NiuTou Village had another thriving industry. As it took a day to walk on ancient road from TaYi to NiuTou Village, and another day to complete your journey, it's not surprising people wore out their shoes.

There were three shoe repair shops in NiuTou Village. Two of them - CleverHands Shoe Repairs and SuperResistant Shoe Repairs were located on the bull's eyes, which were conspicuous positions at the entrance/exit to the village. But neither of them could match the reputation of Old Tsu's Shoe Repairs. [Lao means old. Tsu is a surname, but it also means tough. So you could think of the shop name as Tough Old Shoe Repairs]. Old Tsu's shop was on the bull's jawline on a road called Hanging Cliff Road, because when you walked to the end of the road there was a hanging cliff.

On Hanging Cliff Road there was a shoe repair shop, two inns, a shop selling baozi (steamed buns) and a barber's shop.

Hanging Cliff Road wasn't a main street, so you might wonder if a shoe repair shop could do well there?

It certainly could! Because Old Tsu was a veteran shoe repairer. The owners of the other two shops had previously been his apprentices. The elder one, Tien Kuei, had opened the CleverHands shop, and the younger one Ai Chi had opened the SuperResistant shop. Out of respect for Old Tsu they had not stolen his customers, and sometimes even passed business to him. Old Tsu had not only taught them his skills, he had also taught them how to

behave.

How often had they heard the words that hung on Old Tsu's lips: "If you want to earn money, stitch a good pair of shoes for someone. If you want peace of mind, don't be greedy. If you want to sleep at night, don't say bad things about people."

Old Tsu's full name was Tsu Ta-Chuang [Tsu means coarse, Ta-Chuang means big and strong] which was the exact opposite of his physical appearance. He was dark-skinned and thin, and had kept a beard the length of a finger joint for years. He'd lost all his hair, not that any of the men in NiuTou Village cared if they were bald or not, because they covered their head all year round with either a turban or a fur hat, and the only thing they cared about was whether their turban looked good and whether they had style. Wearing a turban had been a tradition in NiuTou Village for who knows how many generations. Young and old, the men kept their hair short or shaved it off, and wore a turban, replacing it with a fur hat when it snowed in winter. The turban was such a special accessory that you could be in the remotest corner of the world and people would know at a glance that you were from NiuTou Village.

What about the women of NiuTou? They tied a headscarf around their waists, which was not so different to the men wearing a turban, and some women tied their hair up with a headscarf.

"Your village is so weird. You have perfectly good hair, why do you go and shave it all off?"

"We think hair looks ugly. And it gets in the way," every man in NiuTou answered the same way.

"What do you mean, it gets in the way? Hair just grows quietly. What does it get in the way of?"

# NUMERACY IN GLOBAL CITIES: LONDON, BARCELONA, PARIS, KYOTO, TAIPEI

城市裡的數感素養課：  
環遊世界，發掘大都市的數學方程式！

*Have you ever wondered how major international cities became the glamorous tourist destinations that they are today? This book combines mathematics and history to take readers on a journey through the fascinating stories and context behind city planning.*

Today, the ancient Japanese city of Kyoto is a favorite destination for tourists from all over the world, but did it really used to be a jumbled mass of tall buildings and shop signs? Is it possible that London, which is known for its abundance of green parks and trees, was once a hotbed of pollution and disease? And was transit-oriented Taipei previously a pedestrian nightmare? Perhaps what's most surprising is that the secret behind the transformation of these amazing global cities is something that many people find boring: mathematics!

This book introduces five cities, each with their own chapter: London, Barcelona, Paris, Kyoto, and Taipei. Each chapter starts by presenting the city as it is today and highlighting its famous landmarks, then describing the city's history and culture. This is followed by an explanation of the reasons the government has embarked on its process of urban planning and regeneration, as well as how the designers of these cities have used interesting math to create friendly, convenient, people-oriented living environments. Analogies are also used throughout the book to explain complex numbers with simple concepts. The chapters conclude with mathematical stories and discussion questions to review and supplement the knowledge of both the city and the math covered in that section.

The authors take a thematic approach to the writing and goes into depth on the historical and cultural context behind each city, using fun, simple math to combine interdisciplinary topics and knowledge to demonstrate the creative thought that goes into city planning and design. They hope to encourage readers to explore how mathematics solves life's problems and shapes the world around us.



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- **Age:** 10+
- **Material:** English sample



## Text by Lai I-Wei 賴以威

Lai I-Wei is an assistant professor of Electrical Engineering at National Taiwan Normal University, and is the co-founder of the popular mathematics literacy platform Numeracy Lab. He is also the author of several works of fiction including the romance novel *Ring of the Day* which was adapted for television and aired on HBO in 2020.

## Text by Benson Lee 李瑞祥

Benson Lee graduated from the Department of Japanese Language and Literature at National Taiwan University. With some help from Numeracy Lab's mascot NumNum, he's out there spreading the word on just how much fun math can be. He also runs a YouTube channel called "Purpnight" where he reviews Japanese books, music, and television.



## Illustrated by Chen Wan-Yun 陳宛昀

Originally from Kaohsiung, Chen Wan-Yun graduated from School of Visual Arts Illustration (SVA) in New York. She is a freelance illustrator and graphic designer, and her work has been featured in books and magazines, as well as design projects for businesses. She has a diverse range of styles and enjoys using different materials in her creative work.

# A Fun Universal Language for Kids

Written by Lu Yu-Shiou (Editor)

Translated by Sarah-Jayne Carver

Mathematics is probably the most despised and misunderstood subject among elementary school students. It's the "most despised" because as far as kids are concerned, it's just solving problems over and over again, and it's the "most misunderstood" because it's always equated with numbers and formulas.

## **A Source of Inspiration: Math Problems in Japanese Shrines**

Author Lai I-Wei discovered the answer to this conundrum while on a trip to Japan. Japanese shrines have a culture of mathematics that goes back several centuries. There used to be mathematicians who traveled across the country drawing elaborate calculations on ema (small wooden plaques) and presenting them as offerings to the gods. This made him realize that he could actually reverse how children dislike and misunderstand math by getting them to interact with the cities they live in, both in the present and by looking at the cities' long histories.

By looking at the various metropolises he'd visited and their architectural histories, Lai managed to unearth how math can shape the character of a city. Take Barcelona for example, which you could say was the most mathematical city. The neatly arranged octagonal buildings of manzana and Avinguda Diagonal in the Eixample district weren't the result of a sudden flash of inspiration by passionate Spaniards, but the work of the rational architect Ildefons Cerdà who used math to overturn the discrimination and injustice of the Old Town.

The same thing happened in Paris, Kyoto, and London. These cities used to represent filth, riots, danger, disease, and get-rich-quick schemes, but through mathematics they have become the charming and livable global metropolises that they are today.

## **The Creative Challenge: Balancing History and Math**

Although the history and mathematics of these cities were both very interesting, it was a challenge to strike a balance between them and make it relatable to children who had never traveled abroad. We decided to start with the history of each city and how its appearance is widely recognized today, then look back at the various problems it had in the past and use these contrasts to create a sense of fun and disbelief. How has the city changed so much? It turns out, it's math! We ended each chapter with a short story about history and math. For example in Paris, we looked at how Napoleon wasn't just a politician, he was also a mathematician which is why the math of the city became so integral and balanced.

"Is this really math though?" was the most common question I kept asking Lai as I read about the mathematics behind each city. I think I had a deep-rooted negative impression of math, but editing this book was like taking a math class all over again. It turned out that math could be demonstrated through curves, colors, shapes, time, religion, medicine, and all sorts of

other elements, so I stopped obsessing over this need to include more numbers and formulas in the book just to conform with this so-called idea of mathematics.

This diversity was also great at sparking creative inspiration for illustrator Chen Wan-Yun. In addition to math that needed to be present in the book, there were written words that didn't look like math and there wasn't any stereotypical math in there, instead the illustrations were filled with more room for imagination. Chen created her illustrations directly from the feelings she had while reading the text, which frequently produced the best results.



### **Not Just Numbers: The Benefits for Young Readers**

Many cities around the world have such long histories that even local residents struggle to grasp the whole picture. The hope is that this book can make residents and visitors not only appreciate the city as it currently is, but also learn why and how it has changed throughout history.

City planning isn't just a huge mathematical puzzle, it's also tied to the planners' heartfelt desire to make the place where they reside more thoughtful and livable. By including his own city, Taipei, at the very end of the book, Lai hopes that it'll make young Taiwan readers care more about where they live, or even be inspired by other cities around the world to make their hometown better.

Math isn't actually that difficult after all. Anyone who understands numbers and mathematical symbols can communicate with each other across different countries and ethnicities, just as Lai was able to understand the ema by the ancient mathematicians despite not knowing Japanese. By the end of the book, not only is Lai already looking for math in other fields such as art, science, and technology among others, but also anticipates that this common language will help children realize once again just how fun these subjects can be.

**A Green and Open Mathematical Capital**

**LONDON** UK

When it comes to world-famous metropolises, London, the capital of the United Kingdom, will definitely be near the top of your list. Imagine going for a walk in central London: there's the liveliness of Soho, the shop-bill-you-drop of Oxford Street, and literary attractions like the platform at King's Cross Station where Harry Potter caught the train to Hogwarts, and Baker Street, where Sherlock Holmes lived. Then there's Big Ben, Westminster Abbey, the British Museum, the London Eye, and other famous sights.

When you're tired and want a break, London has a number of royal parks that are several times bigger than Taipei's Daan Forest Park. It would take a few hours to walk around some of the parks, some of which have free-roaming deer or boating lakes. This is what Londoners love about London: they can be in the middle of the city one minute, and stepping into nature to relax and clear their minds the next.

The reason why London is ranked as one of the world's metropolises is not only because of its historical, economic or political status, but also because of its greening. It's expected that London will become a "National Park City", where the urban centre is like a national park supporting a rich variety of plants and animals. In order to provide an environment that can sustain these plants and animals, the amount of green space must be increased.

Sherlock Holmes lived at 221B Baker Street. There are so many images of him in the neighbourhood of him that you feel sure you'll meet him as you pass through.

Harry Potter boarded the train to Hogwarts on Platform 9¾ at King's Cross.

Big Ben rings every 15 minutes, and the Changing of the Guards takes place every day at 11 o'clock.

The London Eye is 135 metres high, and one rotation takes 30 minutes.

But, did you know that London wasn't such a green city in the past? In fact, the opposite was true. It used to be a filthy city, lost in a fog of smoke, and black with dirt.

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**Once Upon a Time London Was the City of Fog**

The beautiful haze that pervades London earned it the name City of Fog. But, the fog was, in fact, smog, and the name dates back to the serious pollution of the Industrial Revolution. People mostly used coal to generate electricity, but as soon as it came into contact with the bitterly cold air, the pollutants merged and produced a poisonous smoke so thick that you couldn't see the fingers on your own hand.

Back then, London's sewage system was not ideal, and most of the waste water accumulated in underground cesspools. When there was too much, it would overflow into the Thames, turning the Thames into a foul-smelling waterway. To make matters worse, the Thames was the source of drinking water at the time. Many people got diarrhoea and died.

Starting with the steam engine in the 18th century, the Industrial Revolution caused many jobs that required a lot of manpower and manual work to be replaced by machines. People no longer had to toil endlessly, but many lost their jobs completely. They were forced to leave the countryside to come and look for new work in the cities. By the end of the 19th century, the time of Sherlock Holmes's books, the population was growing faster and faster thanks to improved healthcare and a more developed economy, but the urban infrastructure could not keep up with the population growth, and the whole environment became worse and worse.

People who migrated from the fresh air of the countryside to the dirty cities naturally couldn't stand such a terrible environment. Londoners wanted to see beautiful country scenes in the city, and to improve their quality of life. So, starting with residents' squares, London began to green. These green spaces were originally designed for public use, but as the economy transformed, the green spaces in the city became less and less accessible. Gradually they became the privilege of the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie, and the green spaces filled with trees and bushes became private gardens, in stark contrast to the squalor on the streets.

But that wasn't fair! And under great social pressure, the royal gardens became the first public park in London. Gradually, many green spaces ceased to be privately owned, and the masses began to enjoy the right to relax in parks and green spaces. It was not until the 20th century that the concept of public ownership of green spaces was finally established.

### The Value of Green, and the Greening of London

Compared with a dense concrete jungle, the "greening" of a city brings many benefits to the economy, the environment, and the quality of life. For example, if there is greening near a store, consumers will be willing to stay longer, and employees will be more productive. It has been calculated that every \$1 invested in trees and woodland can generate \$9 for the local area.

Greening also solves the problem of hotter cities and more polluted air. You only have to think how comfortable it would be to stand at an intersection in the summer waiting for the lights to change if there was tree shade overhead. Research shows that tree shade can reduce the surrounding temperature by 2 to 8 degrees – it's a natural air conditioner.

### How Green is London?

As greening has so many benefits, let's take a look at the results of greening in London. If we start by asking how much of London is green, we can see that the largest green spaces are the mega-parks. There are several of these in London – even the smallest is 19 hectares, and the largest, Richmond Park, is almost 1000 hectares. In all these mega-parks, when the weather is fine, you can often see citizens having picnics, doing exercise, or sitting on deck chairs reading a book, enjoying a leisurely afternoon.



### Taipei's Mega-Park

Taipei's mega-park, the Daan Forest Park, is about 25 hectares. Compared to Richmond Park in London, it's very small, but even in this "mini" park, you can often see citizens coming to exercise, having picnics or attending events.

With comparisons like this, it's easy to imagine that London is very green indeed. However, if you think about it carefully, you'll find there are some things that need clarification. For example, although London has a lot of mega-parks, it is a super metropolis, and Taipei is a much smaller city. Is it fair to compare them like this? Also, if you've been to London, you'll probably know that Richmond Park is on the outskirts of the city, and if we were to include the green spaces in the outskirts of Taipei, there is Yangmingshan National Park at the northern end of the city!

To illustrate clearly how green a city is, we can't just rely on mega-parks; we have to look for real figures and do the maths.

### How Big Is One Hectare?

We don't often talk about hectares in everyday life, so it's hard to imagine how big a hectare is. Let's do some calculations: one hectare is 10,000m<sup>2</sup>, and one classroom including the corridor is about 100m<sup>2</sup>, so one hectare is the size of 100 classrooms with corridors.

$$1 \text{ Richmond Park} = 40 \times \text{Daan Forest Park} = 100,000 \text{ classrooms} + \text{corridors}$$



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### The Three Goals of Greenings

### Bigger, Closer, Greener

In order to become even greener, London continues to work towards three goals: bigger, closer and greener. These are the usual indicators for measuring how green a city is. As the words suggest, bigger refers to the size of the parks and grassy areas, closer to how easily citizens can get to a green space, and greener to the level of green (grassy areas and forests being completely different). In other words, a forest park in the city centre has a higher greening value than a grassy area of the same size in the suburbs because the city centre is more accessible to the public and trees are more greening than grass.

So, let's see which figures or calculations we should use to calculate the indicators of bigger, closer, greener more accurately, and see how London scores this time!



### Whose Park is the Biggest, Closest, and Greener?

Let's imagine that the mayor of London comes to visit Taipei. He sees Daan Forest Park and immediately assumes that Taipei isn't very green. So the two mayors make an on-the-spot comparison to see whose park scores highest on the three criteria. From the following conversation, can you see a way to judge the three criteria? If not, don't you find that strange?

### Whose Park is Bigger?

Mayor of Taipei: My park is so big that there's a lake inside!

Mayor of London: My park's big enough to keep deer in!

### Whose Park is Greener?

Mayor of Taipei: My park is as green as a grassy field!

Mayor of London: My park is as green as the grass in the city!

### Whose Park is Closer?

Mayor of Taipei: My park is just 100m from the park!

Mayor of London: My park is just 100m from the park!





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