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The Lost Horse: A Chinese Folktale



Synopsis

The Caldecott Medalist's magnificent illustrations combine paint and paper collage to animate this ancient Chinese story of a wild horse that brings extraordinary reversals of fortune to its trusting owner. Three removable, cut-paper puppets invite young readers to act out the story and to create exciting new tales of their own.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: AD600L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 32 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 6 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #851,286 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #98 in [Books > Children's Books > Fairy Tales, Folk Tales & Myths > Asian](#) #812 in [Books > Children's Books > Fairy Tales, Folk Tales & Myths > Multicultural](#) #1162 in [Books > Children's Books > Animals > Horses](#)

Age Range: 5 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

Customer Reviews

Both text and art are elegantly spare in Young's (Lon Po Po) newest retelling of a Chinese folktale, which may be among the Caldecott Medalist's finest works. Sai, introduced as a wise man, loses his horse; when people arrive to comfort him, he tells them, "You know, it may not be such a bad thing." It proves, in fact, to be fortunate: the horse returns with a mare. Sai rejects his friends' congratulations ("Perhaps it is not such a good thing"), and he is right again (the mare throws Sai's son). This pattern continues, and by the end, Sai's son, like his father, "trust[s] in the ever changing fortunes of life." It's a relatively metaphysical lesson for a picture book, but Young's restrained and even suspenseful telling brings the message home warmly and appealingly. The illustrations are subtle collages with pastels and watercolor. Young eschews his often characteristic abstractions in favor of a delicate, slightly flattened style, reminiscent of traditional Chinese painting. Tranquil scenes of Sai's

exchanges with his neighbors alternate with dramatic spreads (e.g., the dappled horse rearing, a lightning bolt in the sky behind it). As a bonus, three laminated, jointed paper figures of Sai, his son and the horse are tucked into a plastic sleeve on the back jacket. An author's note exhorts readers to use these figures to "extend the story beyond the limits of these pages." No doubt they will. Ages 5-8. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Kindergarten-Grade 3?A wonderful elaboration on an ancient Chinese proverb and story dating from the Han Dynasty. The proverb, which can be translated, "A loss may turn out to be a gain," as well as the original story (though it appears here without the moral), are printed in Chinese characters at the beginning of the book. When a man's horse runs away, he refuses to see the event as a tragedy, just as he refuses to celebrate its return with a mare. Similarly, when his son is thrown from the mare's back and breaks his leg, the father does not consider this mishap as necessarily bad. His trust in the fortunes of life is rewarded when the son's injury prevents him from going to war, and thus saves him from possible death. Pastel and watercolor collages appear on two-page spreads and depict characters wearing attire authentic to their time and place. The tents and the predominantly brown scenery provide realistic glimpses into the stark landscape of the northern frontier. Striking close-up views show the son tumbling from his horse and families mourning their dead after battle. This story is an excellent springboard for a discussion of the changing nature of life. An added bonus is the three articulated puppets that will encourage storytellers to extend the story.?Marianne Saccardi, Norwalk Community-Technical College, CTCopyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Based on a great Chinese legend that contains a lesson for us all, well told.

Whatever happens, happens, for good or for ill. A man teaches his friends about the twists of fate, as he takes what comes with little complaint. What seems good for him turns bad, and vice-versa. And thus all learn a bit of zen. Acceptance.It's an interesting little story, and I wish I got to see the puppet that comes along with this! Sadly, it was a library book, so no puppet for me. But just on the book quality, I actually like this a lot. Kids deal with so many ups and downs, and this book teaches them to just go with it, for all will turn out in its own way.I don't think there's much repeat value here, for most kids, however. I'd say borrow it from your library, and if they keep requesting it, then it's time to buy. But, overall, it seems like a one-read kind of book.

This is the second book I have read from Ed Young, a Caldecott Medalist from the city I live in - Tianjin, China. In *The Lost Horse*, Mr. Young beautifully retells a Chinese folktale. The story is about a wise man named Sai who lives on the northern frontier of China. One day his strong and fast horse is terrified by a thunderstorm and runs away. Everyone tries to comfort Sai for his loss, but he does not believe that losing his horse is necessarily a bad thing. A few days later the horse returns with another strong and fast horse. Everyone congratulates Sai on his new blessings, but he does not believe it is necessarily a good thing. The next month Sai's son rides the new horse and is thrown off. His leg breaks, and everyone once again tries to comfort Sai. Once again Sai says that what has occurred is not necessarily a bad thing. Later in the year China is invaded and all able-bodied men have to fight. Many die in battle, but Sai's son did not have to go to war due to his injury. Sai's son learns from his father that life is full of twists and turns. Things may not always be as good or as bad as they may seem. Although this is a children's book, much can be gleaned from this story. Pastel and watercolor collages that are similar to traditional Chinese paintings compliment what *Publishers Weekly* says is among Young's best works. \$7 is an absolute bargain for such a book. I highly recommend it.

Efficient text, coupled with sweeping illustrations, saturate this Chinese tale of happenstance and fortuity. Sai is a wise man living in Northern China. Having few possessions, he takes things as they happen, for better or for worse. When his valued horse gets lost, he believes it may not be a bad thing; the horse then returns with a mare. Sai finds harmony in taking the bad with the good. Young's artwork is portrayed in subdued oils that radiate with a chalk-like appearance. Soft hues fade into another, giving an impressionistic view of the Gobi Desert. The art is often too relaxed at times; on a few pages, the texture of the canvas is plainly visible. However, tinges of life in China hundreds of years ago take form for an indelible rendering. Display this recommended book with other Chinese folk tale picture books during Chinese New Year. Although targeted for 4-6 year olds, children up to age 8 will also enjoy this book.

I found this Ed Young retelling of the traditional folktale quite simply a delight. The pictures are soft and have a mystical quality. The text is simple and concise on each page and the tale has a humor and lesson that even first graders will appreciate. The addition of the puppets is sure to delight those children who like to pursue a story farther than a shared reading with Teacher and class.

I really liked this story. It is about how sometimes things that seem bad are really good and things

that seem good are really bad. Everyone should read this book.

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