



The Pet Dragon

Christoph Niemann

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Meet Lin and her pet dragon!

When the dragon mysteriously disappears, Lin sets off on a journey to find her best friend . . . and readers set off on a journey of learning and discovery.

By ingeniously integrating written Chinese characters into the illustrations as the story progresses, Christoph Niemann has created a book that is engrossing, unique, and memorable. *The Pet Dragon* is a playful introduction to the fascinating world of Chinese language and culture . . . and a terrific story to share with children everywhere.

You are invited to join Lin for an adventure you will not soon forget!

The Pet Dragon Details

Date : Published August 26th 2008 by Greenwillow Books

ISBN : 9780061577765

Author : Christoph Niemann

Format : Hardcover 40 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Fantasy, Dragons, Cultural, China

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From Reader Review The Pet Dragon for online ebook

Jenny says

Creative. I didn't necessarily love the story, but the usage of Chinese characters as part of the story to teach basic Chinese was pretty cool. I don't know anything about Chinese so I have no idea how great it really is. But my 3 year old loved that there was a dragon in it.

Laura says

Cute, imaginative, and I daresay very effective method for learning some Chinese characters.

Dani - Perspective of a Writer says

*Check out more **Picture book reviews** @ *Perspective of a Writer*...*

A playful introduction to written Chinese characters... Lin receives a gift of a baby dragon... when he disappears one day after many days of fun, Lin goes in search of him and we learn more characters as the story progresses!

The idea for this book was quite ingenious. It's not meant to teach you to say the words or even really learn words to use in a conversation. It is simply to make written Chinese characters accessible to children. I was attracted to the ART! It is the best sort of computer art and I knew my nephew would get a kick out of the dragon...

It's quite odd to have these stark black characters stuck into the beautiful illustrations! Because of that my nephew and I ended up picking the final illustration to draw since the characters were in the sky and not over faces.

There really isn't a message to the book though friendship is certainly hinted at. I do think though the book fulfills its purpose. Even now I can remember some of the characters that were taught (though I have NO IDEA how to say them as that wasn't the point of the book!)

I do like that the little story linked the pictures and I do think that if you want to expose your child to another language early on then this book does that and would be great in a home library! The art truly is engaging and I believe the concept comes across even to little children. The story is such that you could repeat it often for younger kids and spin wild tangents with older children!

BOTTOM LINE: A dragon book teach Chinese characters!

You can find this review and many others on my book blog @ *Perspective of a Writer*. See my picture book reviews in a special feature called Boo's Picture Gallery...

Judy says

I LOVE this picture book. I love the concept which aligns perfectly with my own visual approach to the world and, I suspect, many children's also. (That of finding visual cues everywhere to help understand and learn things.) My 9 year old son loves the book as well and took great delight in re-reading it when he saw I had it out from the library again.

The illustrations are delightful, work perfectly and have great style and design sense. The story is simple and follows the fairytale tradition, working perfectly. There's even a page at the end where the reader can practice or puzzle out which Chinese characters mean what, to test his or her memory and reading of the story. There's nothing that lets this book down.

Juliana Lee says

Lin receives a baby dragon. They become fast friends, but when the dragon breaks a valuable vase Lin's father banishes him to a cage. The next morning, the dragon is gone and Lin searches high and low to find him. Along the way, she helps an old woman across a river. In payment for her kindness, the old woman eats a magic bean and lifts Lin up to the sky where she finds her friend the dragon living with other dragons. The two friends play and the dragon returns Lin to her home, where her father agrees to allow them to play together whenever they want. The best part of this story is that Christopher Niemann works Chinese symbols/words into his illustrations, so that the reader begins to learn a few Chinese words while reading the story.

Eastofoz says

Not only is this book excellent but it's original. It shows children how to write Mandarin Chinese characters but they're integrated as part of the story illustrations. Simple colourful pictures with a good story. Written in French. Would make a unique gift for children learning or wanting to learn Mandarin Chinese.

The Library Lady says

This reminds me of the pedestrian "tell and draw" you often find in storytelling books. The language is stilted and the plot disjointed.

People with an interest in Chinese characters will find this useful. But as a picture book, it falls flat.

Boni says

Fantastic book design and illustration, but the story was convoluted and confusing and didn't match up very well to the clever premise of Chinese character interpretation. I so wanted to give this five stars, too- very cool concept.

Nikki says

My daughter loves this book and it's an excellent way to teach Chinese symbols.

Virginia says

What a cool book! And who knew that my son already read it at school and knew the Chinese characters? (I was very pleased. The school is totally worth my money!)

Although I think some of the Chinese characters were inaccurate (or not what I learned), I did appreciate the pictures making the Chinese characters make more sense. I enjoyed all the pictures and the story was interesting.

Very excited!

Roxanne Hsu Feldman says

The colors and forms of the illustrations are definitely extremely eye-pleasing. The subject matter (Chinese characters/words) is definitely in high demand these days. However, I find the "story" very forced (where did that green witch pop into the story? And a Pet Dragon is definitely NOT a very Chinese concept. Dragons are not cute little creatures to have as friends! I blame Disney's Mulan for this belittling of a powerful mythical being.)

It is also odd that there is no reference whatsoever to the sounds of these words -- as if Chinese cannot be pronounced, or as if these characters should be pronounced with their English sounds.

The jarring juxtaposition of an extremely traditionally garbed child with a completely modern and western-style clothed father also makes me somewhat uncomfortable -- I can't figure out the reasons behind such choices.

Alex (not a dude) Baugh says

When my daughter was learning Chinese in high school, she used to have a character book in which she would write each character she had to learn that day over and over. Each character, she would tell me, is like a picture of its meaning. And when you read Christoph Niemann's cleverly written book *The Pet Dragon*, you can really see how true that it.

The story is simple - a young girl, Lin, is given a pet baby dragon as a gift. Lin and the dragon do everything together, but when the dragon shatters a vase, Lin's father insists he be put in a cage. The next morning, the cage is empty and the dragon has left. Lin looks everywhere for her friend - in the city, in the country and finally, with the help of an old lady and some magic beans, in the sky. There, she finally finds her baby dragon, now all grown up and beautiful, living with his family. When Lin returns home, she and the dragon promise to visit with each other often, and her father is so happy she has returned, he plans a celebration for Lin and the dragon.

The beauty of this book isn't exactly in the story, but in how Nieman has worked the Chinese characters into it to demonstrate the pictorial meaning of the characters used. Each character used is superimposed over a corresponding illustration.

Niemann states that his purpose is not to give kids, or adults for that matter, lessons in Chinese, but to perhaps inspire them to want to learn more. And, though the story is a bit forced, it's purpose is not to tell a clever story, but to ingeniously demonstrate how characters reveal their meaning.

The characters used are simple enough for young children to learn and remember. When we first got this book, my niece L'naya was fascinated by it. One day we were in a restaurant, waiting for our meal to come, and next thing we knew. L'naya had written some of the characters from the book on the place mat. My Kiddo was amazed that L'naya had remembered both the character and its meaning so easily.

Niemann introduces the reader to 33 common, useful characters, making The Pet Dragon is definitely a fun book for beginning Chinese or just to read out of curiosity.

This book is recommended for readers age 4+
This book was purchased for my personal library.

This review was originally posted at Randomly Reading

Quin says

Pretty pictures, some chinese characters shown in the picture, but all in all, I'm not too impressed. The story depth was rather thin even for children books.

Kate says

Story wise, the book was just so-so. What I did think was great about the book is how the illustrator integrates Chinese characters into the illustrations in a way that makes the characters understandable. I found that once I had read the book I could identify some of the characters on the last page. I think this book would be a great addition for collections that need preschool-early grade school titles on China.

Tatiana says

This is the coolest book that I've read in awhile! The story itself--a girl losing her pet dragon and going on an adventure to find him--only facilitates the ingenious idea to introduce written Chinese characters through the illustrations. This is one big, visual mnemonic device for remembering what the words that the characters represent.

I fully support this method, because it relates to the learning theory of environmental contextualization, and can be applicable for students with various learning styles: kinesthetic, visual, auditory. In the classroom, I would use this for so many different lessons. One that pops out at me is having the students research other Chinese characters and label items in the classroom using the design principles of the book's illustrations.

