



Dumpling Days

Grace Lin

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There was no day that dumplings couldn't make better.

Pacy is back! The beloved heroine of *The Year of the Dog* and *The Year of the Rat* has returned in a brand new story. This summer, Pacy's family is going to Taiwan for an entire month to visit family and prepare for their grandmother's 60th birthday celebration. Pacy's parents have signed her up for a Chinese painting class, and at first she's excited. This is a new way to explore her art talent! But everything about the trip is harder than she thought it would be--she looks like everyone else but can't speak the language, she has trouble following the art teacher's instructions, and it's difficult to make friends in her class. At least the dumplings are delicious...

As the month passes by, Pacy eats chicken feet (by accident!), gets blessed by a fortune teller, searches for her true identity, and grows closer to those who matter most.

Dumpling Days Details

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Author : Grace Lin

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From Reader Review Dumpling Days for online ebook

Kailing says

I love it because I love Taiwan

Justin says

This one falls outside of my normal reading habits; while I've developed a bit of a weakness for teen lit/YA/whatever you want to call it, I don't typically delve into middle-grade fiction now that I'm so far beyond my middle grades. I picked up an ARC of this because it looked cute, though, and it didn't disappoint.

This is apparently the latest in a series of Lin's books about Taiwanese-American girl Pacy. In this volume, she goes on a summer trip with her family to Taiwan. In the past, Pacy has felt like the odd girl out for being the only Asian kid in the room, but she feels a new anxiety exploring her parents' homeland as she realizes she now sticks out for being profoundly American. Even her talent for art, the thing that she truly believes makes her special, is put to the test. Thanks to the company of her family and plenty of interesting things to see and do, though, what starts as a scary journey to an unfamiliar land ends up being fulfilling and even profound.

There isn't much to say about this book that the description doesn't tell you, but as the title suggests, Pacy's tour of Taiwan revolves around the food she eats. Maybe my gluttony is showing, but I can't think of a better way to do it. The descriptions of all the various foods were a nice, immersive touch, and the occasional illustration of said foods and other Taiwanese cultural items were a whimsical addition to the story. This is definitely targeted towards younger readers, but it's a cute story that offers a friendly introduction to Taiwanese culture, and the travails a kid must go through when trying to navigate their own ethnic identity.

Julie says

My daughters and I are quite possessive of Grace Lin. We've been reading her books and following her blog for so long, we feel that we know her.

Our favorites are probably *The Red Thread* and *The Ugly Vegetables*, but we loved this chapter book for older kids as well.

I think the best audience for *Dumpling Days* is the 3rd-6th grade crowd, and it's especially good for any kid who has ever felt (culturally) like a stranger in a strange land.

Personally, I wish this book had been available to read before my first trip to China in '09. Ms. Lin accurately conveys what a "typical" trip to China might involve, and it would have been helpful to understand in advance why that woman was angrily ramming her dim sum cart into our table.

The spitting can't really be explained. That will appear one day in MY book.

Izze Brand says

I liked this book because it was cool to learn what Taiwan was like. The author did a really good job making you feel as if you were in the story.

ella says

this book helped me so much as a child, even thinking back on it now it brings tears as to how much the representation actually meant to me and helped me as a taiwanese-australian

Elaine says

I loved this book! I've loved the earlier books about Pacy too, but this one really hit home. I could completely relate to Pacy's experience being thrust into a new culture, which was supposedly her own culture, wary and not-so-thrilled with it at the beginning, and loving it by the end, and at the same time, making peace with her own identity, having the best of both worlds, rather than being alienated in each world. This has been a struggle of mine throughout my life, and to have this book so clearly address it, and come to a satisfying closure, I felt like it gave ME closure in my own search for cultural identity. I loved that this book paralleled so many of my own thoughts and reactions of when I went to Taiwan as a kid. It brought back so many memories, and its making me crave some good quality dumplings now! I also loved the stories interwoven throughout the book of old legends and memories of the older generation. Part of Chinese culture is the connection with the past, wisdom and tradition passed down through many generations, and this book (as her other ones do as well) really integrates past and present so well.

Wandering Librarians says

I have to admit that I might have a deeper resonance to the themes in this book than most, considering the fact that I'm Korean American and was raised in the Midwest. I look Asian on the outside but my cultural connection is to my white parents, I've been to Korea and I felt super American. Where do you fit in? How do you deal with the subtle racism that you meet with every day? There were parts that made me want to cry because they were true representations of my experience.

I really enjoyed this book, Grace Lin does a really eloquent job of putting together the traditional themes of a middle grade book - acceptance, growing up, finding your special abilities, and family - with issues of race and cultural confusion. She never gets preachy, she laces everything with humor and levity, it's never over anyone's head and still makes an impact.

Bonus: as I finished the book I craved dumplings like never before. Does anyone know where I can get soup dumplings? Cha siu bao? Because seriously, they sound like a miracle.

Susann says

As Pacy and her Taiwanese American family spend a month visiting relatives in Taiwan, Pacy discovers her roots and grapples with questions about her identity. I enjoyed learning more about the Taiwanese culture—especially the food—but never felt as if I were stuck in a Social Studies lesson. From temples to toilets, Lin shows all aspects of the society, but she also writes a great family story, à la the Fossil family or Penderwicks. Watching Pacy interact with Lissy reminded me of traveling with my sister.

The art class scenes seemed very real, and I liked the nuanced portrayal of Audrey Chiang: "She wasn't exactly mean, though, either. She wasn't making fun of me or whispering bad things. It was more like she looked at me as if I were a red light in a traffic jam."

I plan to go back and read the prior two books in this series, but think this works well as a stand-alone.

Contemporary kidlit illustrations often leave me cold, but Lin's charming drawings add that final touch. I think of them as her 'name chop' to the story.

Amber says

This was a read-aloud to Willow (age 6) and she LOVED it. Great descriptions of Taiwan from a kid's perspective. Made me hungry for dumplings!

Izzy says

I loved this! It's one of my favorite books. I love the whole series, too. I hope this author writes another book in the series.

Neda says

In my opinion, this was a very good book, because of all its humor, and great writing! It had many funny moments and was a very heartwarming story. It never fails at getting a reader to laugh. The main characters are Pacy Lin, and her family consisting of her two sisters, Kiki, and Lissy, and her parents. The minor characters in the book are Pacy's family in Taiwan, such as, Uncle Flower, Aunt Bea, Uncle Shin, etc. The story starts when Pacy is told that she and her family are going to Taiwan, for the whole summer! Pacy would rather stay in her homeland, and be in her normal daily life, not in a strange, new land. Pacy has many adventures meeting new people, getting closer to her family, and discovering her true culture. Find out more by reading the book! This was a great book and I would recommend it to anyone that likes chinese stories, and fiction/fantasy books. In conclusion, this was a very interesting book that I really enjoyed reading.

Alex (not a dude) Baugh says

It's summertime and Pacy Lin and her younger sisters Ki-Ki, 7 and older sister Lissy, 14, are on their way to Taiwan with their parents for their grandmother's 60th birthday and staying for a whole month. Even though

Taiwan is where their parents are originally from, only Lissy has ever been there to visit but she was too young to remember it.

The Lins arrive in Taiwan right at the beginning of Ghost Month, a time when the ghosts and spirits of people's ancestors visit the realm of the living. Pacy isn't really in touch with her Taiwanese roots, and finds herself worrying about these ghosts, and, feeling invisible much of the time anyway, becoming one. This introduction to Chinese beliefs is a stark reminder to Pacy that even though she has always felt different from everyone else at home in upstate New York because she is Asian, now in Taiwan, where she may look just like everyone else, she doesn't know much about Chinese culture, and can't speak the language or understand social cues. One thing she has no trouble understanding, though, is the disapproving look on the faces of the Taiwanese people who try to speak Chinese with her.

But her relatives are a fun and friendly bunch, and the food, especially the dumplings, is spectacular. And there is sightseeing to do, and things to learn. When Pacy finds out that her mother has signed her up for a painting class, she isn't very happy until she sees the tubes of color paint she needs. But, the class is in Chinese painting, which means it is done differently than what she is accustomed to, from the way she must hold the paintbrush to never erasing her mistakes to painting the same bamboo over and over again. It frustrates Pacy, who keeps waiting for her art talent to show up and, to make matters worse, the girl next to her, competitive Audrey Chiang, keeps shooting her disapproving, condescending looks that at first shake Pacy's confidence somewhat.

As the Lin family experiences Taiwan, plus a few days in Taichung, Pacy (and the reader) learns all about her family as well as Taiwanese history, customs, culture, and traditions. Dumpling Day is an episodic novel, describing the different experiences Pacy has on her own journey to self-discover and acceptance. Lin has masterfully worked in so much information without making it sound too teachy about it. Occasionally, there are some short interesting culturally historical folktales or family stories set off from Pacy's narrative that add more depth to the story, such as the Thanking the Emperor, the Story of Dumpling Soup, and Grandma Breaks Tradition .

For the most part, however, Pacy's adventures are the day-to-day kind, things such as the fortune tellers at the market, using the squat toilet, eating chicken feet by mistake, and so much more. These were the things that made this a particularly enjoyable book to read. Many of Pacy's adventures are similar to my Kiddo's when she went to China for a few years, particularly the food. I have email after email telling me how wonderful Chinese food is, with dumplings being the favorite.

I should say that I have not read the previous two Pacy novels, *The Year of the Dog* and *The Year of the Rat*, but I feel like *Dumpling Days* is really a stand alone novel. And I did choose it intentionally because I felt it expresses the idea behind Asian Pacific American Heritage Month perfectly.

Besides that, *Dumpling Days* is one of the best novels I've read about what it is like to grow up in a family that is multicultural, plus it is also an engaging story that will easily appeal to most young readers. Lin has included simple line drawings throughout the novel that also reflect Pacy's experience (after all, how many of middle graders know what a squat toilet looks like).

This book is recommended for readers age 8+

This book was purchased for my personal library

This review was originally posted on Randomly Reading

Erica says

Have you ever been forced to go on a family trip? Sometimes they can be fun, like a trip to Disneyland, but sometimes you'd rather just stay home. That's how Pacy feels about her family's trip to Taiwan. To her mom and dad it's a trip to their homeland, but Pacy's home is back in America. And the worst part is that they have to stay the whole summer. A whole summer away from her friends in a country where she can't even understand what people are saying or read the signs if she gets lost. As if that wasn't bad enough she finds out that her parents have signed her up for classes at the cultural center--classes during summer vacation! But when she gets there Taiwan isn't anything like what she expected. Her relatives are pretty nice, the food is delicious, and she is determined to win the top prize in her painting class. Maybe the summer will be great, or maybe it will be a disaster after all. One thing is for sure though--she'll never forget it!

I am a big fan of Grace Lin and this title did not disappoint. Pacy was charming and I loved her narrative voice ("Dad always spouted in dramatic ways about things, sometimes to be funny but other times because he really meant it. When he meant it, we usually ignored him.") The information about Taiwan was fascinating and left me wanting to learn more (and of course go and eat some dumplings!) Like with her other books, Lin weaves brief stories throughout the main narration about Chinese legends or Pacy's family history. I always looked forward to these. With everything else going on Lin manages to work in some great life lessons about embracing new experiences, focusing on enjoying each moment, and the importance of family. As if her skills as an author aren't enough Lin is an excellent illustrator as well and she skillfully fits her drawings into the story as if Pacy is doodling in the margins of her diary. These add extra character and humor to the novel as well as helping the reader visualize the new concepts introduced.

I'd give this to fans of the Amelia's Notebook series and other novels that are written in the style of a kid's diary with doodles. Fans of her other novels will naturally enjoy this one. It would make an excellent class read for an elementary classroom because despite its light and humorous style there's plenty of themes that would make for good class discussions. I'd say it's good for third to fifth grade.

Read more of my reviews at <http://auldschoollibrarian.blogspot.com/>

Emily says

can't wait til Ellie can read this series! i thought this was the best one yet!

Amanda says

I borrowed this from a coworker who's using it in a middle grade English class. It's a cute story of a Taiwanese-American girl traveling to Taiwan for the first time. It's pretty simplistic, even for middle grade fiction, but what I absolutely loved about it was the depiction of Taiwan. I'd love for people I know in the US to read this just get such an accurate glimpse of what Taiwan is like. At times I felt like I was reading about my own first impressions of Taiwan and seeing my exact experiences reflected back - my first time trying to eat with chopsticks and feeling everyone in the restaurant watching me, not having any clue how to use a squat toilet and trying to figure out for sure if it was a toilet at all, being overwhelmed by traffic and scooters, accidentally eating a huge mouthful of wasabi and thinking my head might explode, being amazed by all the types of fruit I'd never seen before, eating so many specific foods for the first time, gagging at the smell of stinky tofu, feeling that the HSR is pretty futuristic, and the list goes on and on. The author does a brilliant

job of bringing Taiwan to life here.
