



Watercress

Andrea Wang

illustrated by Jason Chin

Neal Porter Books / Holiday House, 2021

ISBN: 9780823446247

*Age Range: 4–8

Grade Range: Grades PreK–3

BOOK SYNOPSIS

A story about the power of sharing memories—including the painful ones—and the way our heritage stays with and shapes us, even when we don't see it.

While driving through Ohio in an old Pontiac, a young girl's Chinese immigrant parents spot watercress growing wild in a ditch by the side of the road. They stop the car, grabbing rusty scissors and an old paper bag, and the whole family wades into the mud to gather as much as they can.

At first, she's embarrassed. Why can't her family just get food from the grocery store, like everyone else? But when her mother shares a bittersweet story of her family history in China, the girl learns to appreciate the fresh food they foraged—and the memories left behind in pursuit of a new life.

Together, they make a new memory of watercress.

Author Andrea Wang calls this moving, autobiographical story “both an apology and a love letter to my parents.” It's a bittersweet, delicate look at how sharing the difficult parts of our histories can create powerful new moments of family history, and help connect us to our roots.

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Jason Chin's illustrations move between China and the American Midwest and were created with a mixture of traditional Chinese brushes and western media. The dreamy, nostalgic color palette brings this beautiful story to life.

An endnote from the author describes her personal connection to the story, and an illustrator's note touches on both the process of the painting, and the emotional meaning brought to the work.

REVIEWS AND PRAISE

"Wang's multilayered, poetic text allows anger, guilt and grief to coexist with love and hope. Chin's captivating watercolor art, executed with a mix of Chinese and Western techniques, combines meticulous, gut-wrenching realism with dreamlike panoramas."—*The New York Times*

"Children often don't understand why their parents act as they do; parents often forget to explain. *Watercress* reminds us of the importance of filling in those gaps."—*The Wall Street Journal*

"An understated, visually stunning exploration of memory and family history."—*The Boston Globe*

★ "An adept gem of a picture book"—*Publishers Weekly, Starred Review*

★ "Understated, deep, and heart-rending—bring tissues."—*Kirkus Reviews, Starred Review*

★ "Simple text and beautiful illustrations pack a strong emotional punch . . . A powerful story sure to awaken empathy and curiosity"—*School Library Journal, Starred Review*

★ "this quietly affecting book encourages honesty, communication, and sharing of family history."—*The Horn Book, Starred Review*

★ "*Watercress* is a delicate and deeply felt exploration of memory, trauma and family."—*BookPage, Starred Review*

★ "It's a deft exploration of the information and emotion gap between parents, especially immigrant parents, and children, and it may give space for kids to learn more about their own family history and customs . . ."—*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, Starred Review*

★ "Through powerful poetry and exquisite illustrations, the daughter of immigrants relates an emotional childhood memory that opened the door to her Chinese roots."—*Shelf Awareness, Starred Review*

"The story reveals the chasms that can separate first-generation immigrant parents from their Americanized children and how confronting past traumas from another country and time can bring a family closer together. Chin's illustrations masterfully bring to life the vast cornfields and colors of rural America."—*Booklist*

AWARDS AND ACCOLADES

- **Caldecott Medal Winner**

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- **Newbery Honor Book**
- **APALA Award Winner**
- New England Book Award Winner
- *A New York Times* Best Children's Book of the Year
- *A Wall Street Journal* Best Children's Book of the Year
- *A Boston Globe* Best Children's Book of the Year
- *A Washington Post* Best Children's Book of the Year
- A Boston Globe-Horn Book Honor Book
- One of Kirkus Reviews' Best Books of the 21st Century (So Far)
- Winner of the Cybils Award
- An SCBWI Crystal Kite Award Winner
- A New York Public Library Best Book of the Year
- A Chicago Public Library Best Book of the Year
- An ALSC Notable Children's Book
- Named a best book of the year by *Publishers Weekly*, *BookPage*, *School Library Journal*, *Kirkus Reviews*, *Publishers Lunch*, *Shelf Awareness*, and more!
- A CBC/NCSS Notable Social Studies Trade Book
- An NPR 'Book We Love!'
- A Junior Library Guild Gold Standard Selection!

MEDIA AND RESOURCES

- [Educator's Guide](#)
- *Publisher's Weekly* [In Conversation: Andrea Wang and Jason Chin](#)
- Read Aloud with Mr. Paul: [Watercress—Kids Book Asian American Heritage Short Read Aloud Immigrant Story](#)
- [Collaborative Classroom: An Interview with Watercress Author Andrea Wang and Illustrator Jason Chin](#)

*A NOTE ON AGE RANGES

A publisher-suggested age range covers the gamut of readers that publishers envision using the book, whether for independent reading, family sharing, group study, or in other ways. Educators have the best sense of the appropriate age range for the diverse learners they work with and understand these ranges vary depending on a book's intended use.