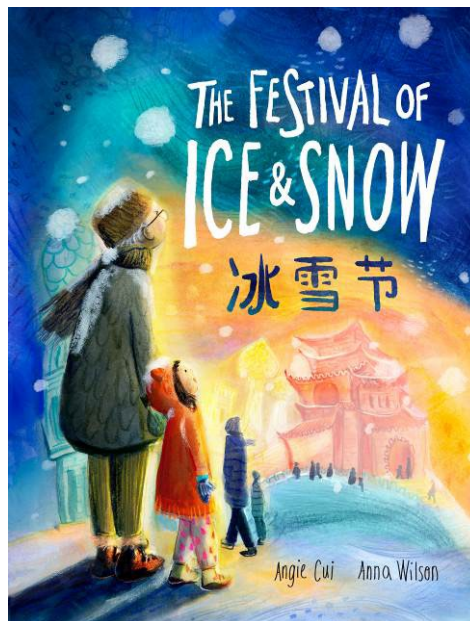


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THE FESTIVAL OF ICE AND SNOW

Angie Cui & Anna Wilson



Teachers' Notes

Prepared by Christina Wheeler, who is a practising teacher librarian with a background in the Australian curriculum (English)

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SYNOPSIS

It's that magical time of year again when Grandpa takes his grandchildren to the Festival of Ice and Snow. Filled with anticipation, the cousins are eager to see the magnificent ice sculptures, fly down the super slides and indulge in delicious treats once more. But will they succeed in taking Grandpa for his first ride on the ferris wheel?

In a nostalgic celebration of winter wonderlands, timeless traditions and creating memories with loved ones, *The Festival of Ice and Snow* shares the joy of precious time spent with family. Set in Harbin, China, this bilingual text is told in both English and Chinese.

THEMES

- Grandfathers; Cousins
- Family
- Festivals
- Winter
- Culture (Chinese); Traditions
- Languages (English and simplified Chinese)
- Memories

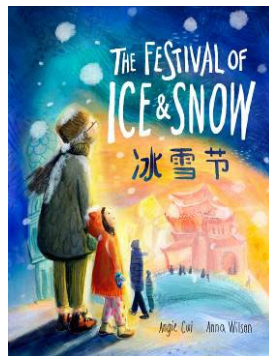
WRITING STYLE

The Festival of Ice and Snow is written in first person, present tense. Told from the point of view of a little girl, it shares the joy of her annual visit to Harbin's Festival of Ice and Snow with her grandpa and cousin Yan Yan. It is impossible not to be transfixed by this illuminous setting that complements a beautiful recount filled with wonder and nostalgia. It is indeed a celebration of family, traditions, culture and memory making. Sublime illustrations invite readers to make connections between the story and their own childhood memories of precious time spent with loved ones. A bilingual text told in both English and Chinese, it provides an important conduit encouraging readers to embrace culture and traditions. It is suited to audiences aged 5–8.

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STUDY NOTES

- Before reading *The Festival of Ice and Snow*, look carefully at the front and back covers. Discuss the use of colour and how this may contribute to the storytelling. Describe what the little girl and her grandfather are doing. What else do you notice on the front cover that gives clues about the story's setting and context? What are you wondering about this story?



- Describe the mood in the spread below. How do the little girl's facial expressions and body language help create this mood?

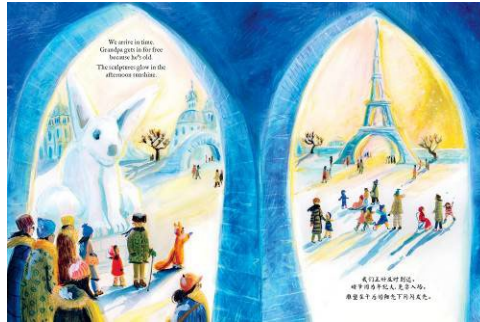


- In the role of Yan Yan, write a journal entry based on the below spread. Share how you are feeling about visiting the festival. Why are you feeling a little impatient as your cousin and grandfather take their time outside the festival? Which cousin are you most like? Why?

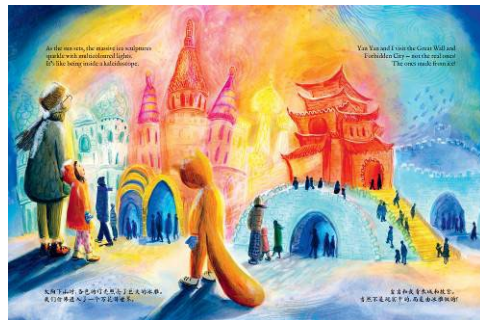


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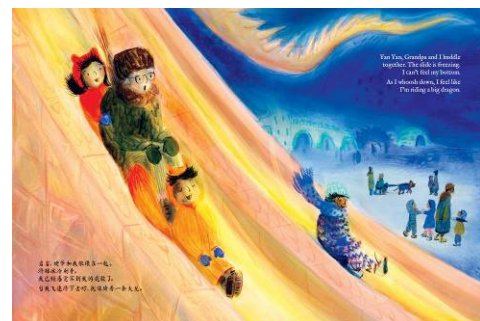
- Discuss the framing used in the illustration below. How does this help build the excitement of what's to come for both the family and readers? In a reflection, describe a time when you felt excited about the day ahead while queuing at the entry.



- We are told in the spread below that being at the festival at night is 'like being inside a kaleidoscope'. Why has it been described in this way? View kaleidoscopic images online to further explore this description.

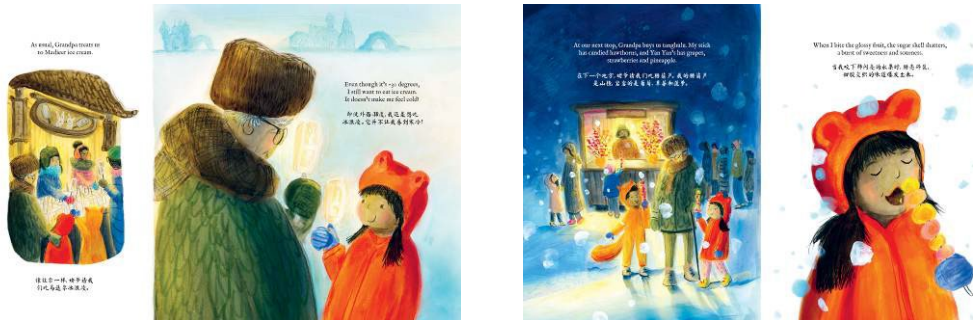


- With reference to the spread below, write a recount of this scene in the role of Yan Yan or Grandpa. How does this illustration include other aspects of Chinese culture?



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- Grandpa treats his grandchildren to Madieer ice cream and tanghulu. What foods are special treats in your culture? Alternatively, discuss the types of foods you look forward to when at special events such as fetes, shows or carnivals. Why is eating special-occasion foods such a big part of treasured memories?



- Alliteration is used to describe the taste of the tanghulu: 'the sugar shell shatters, a burst of sour sweetness'. How does this help readers to fully appreciate this sensation? Describe one of your favourite treats using alliteration.
- In the spread below on the left, Grandpa seems unsure about riding the ferris wheel. Before turning the page to the next spread (below on the right), make predictions about what might happen next. Give reasons to support your thinking. What does it tell us about the relationship between Grandpa and his grandchildren that 'Still, we take Grandpa for his first ride'? In the role of Grandpa, write about the experience of your first ride on the ferris wheel.



- Discuss the different colours used in the endpapers (below). How do they show the passage of time in this story? Think about a time when you visited a place while day turned into night. What is so special about this transition?

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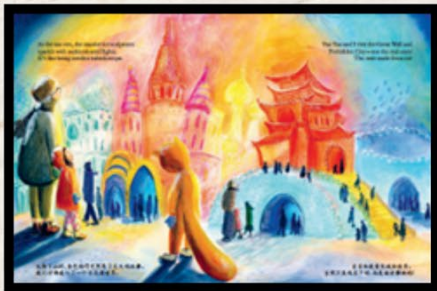
- Use Talking Strips to tell your friend about this story.

First ...	Next ...	After that ...	Finally ...

- Which is your favourite spread in *The Festival of Ice and Snow*? Why? Share in a reflection.
- With older readers, compare the different frames, gazes and camera angles of the illustrations in *The Festival of Ice and Snow*. Identify close-ups, mid and long shots. Likewise, discuss those offering eye-level and high angles. How do these different gazes help position readers in this story?
- Choose one of the spreads in *The Festival of Ice and Snow* and create a Y Chart. Record what you would see, hear and feel at this stage of the story. Use these ideas to write a description of this magical event.
- Which famous landmarks are included in the amazing ice sculptures at the festival? Although we can't see them in the illustrations, what other landmarks do you think or hope might be there?
- Read the author's notes at the end of the text. How do these help give readers context for the story?
- Write a recount about a special experience or tradition you have shared with your grandparents or close family friends. Illustrate your work.
- Re-create one of the illustrations in *The Festival of Ice and Snow* using crayons or watercolours.

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- The children in this story enjoy the anticipation and familiarity of visiting the festival each year. What traditions do you and your family enjoy? What are your favourite parts about this experience? Share in a reflection.
- Retell *The Festival of Ice and Snow* from either Grandpa's or Yan Yan's point of view.
- If you were to write a story celebrating a special event in your region, what would it be? Plan this story. Time permitting, write this story.
- Map *The Festival of Ice and Snow* on a Story Graph, showing its beginning, middle and end.
- Discuss the importance of 'reading pictures' as well as the written text to fully understand the narrative.
- In the role of one of the children, write a letter or postcard home to Grandma or your parents sharing your experiences at the festival.



To:

From:

Address:

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- Using evidence from the text to support your thinking, create a character profile of Grandpa.
- Create your own similes to describe some of the experiences in *The Festival of Ice and Snow*.
- Discuss the colour palette of the illustrations throughout the book. How do they reflect the joy of this day?
- Locate Harbin on a map. Use Google Earth or online images to observe this setting. View images of Harbin's Festival of Ice and Snow using the links below. In the role of the cousins, use some of these images to create a Photo Journal of your day at the festival with Grandpa.
 - Ice Festival Harbin website. <https://www.icefestivalharbin.com/>
 - 'Giant Ice Castles Feature at World's Largest Winter Festival'. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=n411ijPGmiY>
- Consider reading the following books as companion texts to *The Festival of Ice and Snow*:
 - *The Colours of Home* by Sally Soweol Han (Thames & Hudson)
 - *New Year Surprise!* by Christopher Cheng and Di Wu (NLA Publishing)
 - *Granbad* by Penny Tangey and Peter Baldwin (UQP)
- Use *The Festival of Ice and Snow* to learn some simplified Chinese characters. Create a display of objects that feature in the story, labelling them in both English and simplified Chinese.
- Discuss the use of figurative language in *The Festival of Ice and Snow* to describe various themes, settings and events. How does this help readers better connect with the story?

Examples include:

- The sculptures glow in the afternoon sunshine.
- we can see the swirls of fur and feathers
- These sculptures are like frozen fairytales
- As the sun sets, the massive ice sculptures sparkle with multicoloured lights. It's like being inside a kaleidoscope.
- As I whoosh down, I feel like I'm riding a big dragon.
- When I bite the glossy fruit, the sugar shell shatters, a burst of sweetness and sourness.
- When they step on the keys, the piano lights up and plays sounds like magic.
- the vivid sparklers dance in the dark
- As snowflakes twirl down, we wave goodbye

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AUTHOR MOTIVATION

Writing *The Festival of Ice and Snow* was a deeply personal and nostalgic journey for me. Inspired by my childhood memories growing up in Harbin, China, this story celebrates the wonder of the Harbin Ice and Snow Festival and the joy of sharing family traditions with loved ones. Visiting the festival with my grandpa was one of the highlights of my childhood – we would explore glowing ice sculptures, eat special treats in the freezing cold and experience the magic of winter together.

This book is also my way of honouring my grandpa's legacy. He brought so much warmth, laughter and adventure into my life, and I know he would want to be remembered through joyful memories and moments of togetherness.

The story was originally written in English and later self-translated into Mandarin Chinese, which made the process especially meaningful to me as someone who now lives between cultures and languages. I hope readers can see the beauty of family traditions reflected in these pages and treasure the special memories they create with their own loved ones.

ILLUSTRATOR MOTIVATION

When I was asked to illustrate this book, I was immediately excited. I love ice and snow and the first time I ever experienced living in a place where winter brought with it frozen lakes and canals and a world covered in the beautiful white of snow, was actually in northern China. So I felt like I really drew on my love of the cold as well as experience living in China when I started trying to work out the ways in which I wanted to bring Angie's beautiful story to life.

When the world gets cold, there is a magic about it that I wanted to capture. Things sparkle and everything gets a little more abstract. The light changes. I haven't been to the ice festival in Harbin but have seen lots of ice sculptures in Mongolia. I wanted to use light and colour to show the exciting transition between the sparkling ice and light of the daytime and then the more artificial colours of night. I think although the air was freezing, I wanted to bring warmth to the story using light and colour, as with extremely cold weather can also come a cosiness.

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I also enjoyed thinking about the clash of old and new that was very present during the time I have spent in China and so enjoyed playing with the characters clothing to think about the difference in life for those in the older generations in China and contrast it with the very modern life of lots of the younger people. I also decided to make Yan Yan wear a fox suit as I felt like he was a little distant in the story (because the girl and Grandpa seemed so close) and I thought this made him interesting and also helped him and his role stand out. I also love foxes and I enjoy in my illustration work trying to add in little things that I love about the world that are not always expected in the story.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Angie Cui, originally from China, embarked on her Australian journey at age eighteen. She lives in Melbourne with her husband and two children, whom she calls the 'ABC Family' – a fusion of four individuals and three cultures (Australian, Bangladeshi and Chinese). Imbued with a profound appreciation for the linguistic richness within her family, Angie finds delight in weaving tales through various languages. Her aspiration is to craft narratives that resonate with children, enabling them to envision themselves within the stories they read. *The Festival of Ice and Snow* is her third picture book.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Anna was born in Australia's Snowy Mountains, spent her childhood moving houses and schools, and then spent most of her adult life travelling the world. She is inspired by people and places and studied and worked with these concepts for a long time before embarking on a new career as a freelance designer and illustrator. She loves storms and snow and is happiest running in the mountains, drawing in the streets of new cities, or imagining up new characters and worlds. She has illustrated children's books for Bloomsbury, Hachette UK, Little Tiger and Cameron Kids Books.