



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Lower primary (K-2) and Primary (3-6)

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English, Creative Arts, HSIE
- **General capabilities:** Literacy, Critical and creative thinking, Personal and social capability, Visual literacy.

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- To discuss new vocabulary, respond to texts and share feelings and thoughts about the events and characters in texts.
- To learn and understand more about the importance of friendship and community.
- To understand more about memories.
- To understand about personal loss and loneliness.
- An opportunity to discuss elderly people, our relationships with them and their value as part of our community.
- To use and experiment with different materials, and create artworks to communicate ideas to an audience.

THEMES

- The relationship between love and loss
- The importance of community
- The children and elderly relationship
- Grief and processing emotion
- Memory and its retention
- Helping people in need
- Encouragement, hope and inspiration
- Empathy amongst individuals

PREPARED BY

Penguin Random House Aust and Christopher Cheng

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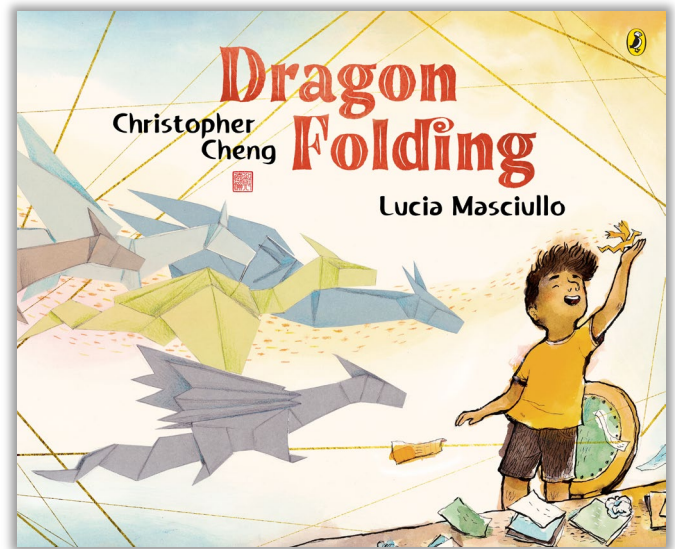
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Author photos by Daniel Woo (dandesigns.com.au)

Dragon Folding

Christopher Cheng &
Lucia Masciullo



PLOT SUMMARY

*In a fractured old house
with a wiggly sign
lived a bent old man, alone.
But it wasn't always this way...*

When Mr Singer's wife went away, the colour and life disappeared from Dragon Hall. Can his young friend Evan help to bring back the dragons and the magic?

From the author of the stunning *Bear and Rat* comes a powerful, heartfelt gem about the strength of community and the magic that can come from the innocence of a child....

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Christopher Cheng is an award-winning children's author who writes fiction and non-fiction full time, conducts workshops and visits schools worldwide. He has a Master of Arts in Children's Literature and was a Literacy Ambassador for the Australian Federal Government. He is a member of the International Advisory Council for SCBWI (Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators).



Dragon Folding by Christopher Cheng and Lucia Masciullo

His picture book, *One Tree*, illustrated by Bruce Whatley, was shortlisted for the 2020 NSW Premier's Literary Awards and the 2020 Environment Award for Children's Literature. His internationally published picture book, *Bear and Rat*, is a loving tribute to Christopher's late wife, Bini, and his most recent picture book, *Dragon Folding*, is a tribute to his neighbours and godson who give so freely of their love and support.

A personal note from Christopher



Nearly all the picture books I write have a personal element to them, where something has had a direct impact on me. I believe expressing emotions in an imaginative way is important to comprehend new journeys.

In the months after the passing of my beautiful wife, one of our godsons

who lived opposite our house said to me as we were strolling to the cafe 'You can do it, Chris'.

I was not in a very enthusiastic mood and was feeling extremely low, so I replied, 'Not today'. But he kept prodding and prodding that day as only a child can (without pestering). I soon succumbed and after our lunch I helped him with his Lego model building. I didn't know then how much I needed that escape.

When I was going through that extremely rough and spiky patch, my lovely neighbours were also continually checking up on me, sometimes daily, so it just seemed natural to add them into Dragon Folding - partly to thank them.

And as my wife and I have always been fascinated by dragons, with many decorating our house, it seemed natural to have dragons as the focus for this story.

When reading Dragon Folding I do hope that young people and those not so young will see that there are older people in their orbit who might not move as fast as they do, who might not think as quickly as they do, who might not like the same things as they do, who might be experiencing life in a less comfortable way, but those old people have great wisdom, and those old people have great affection, and those old people have great knowledge and experience to share.

So talk with them, be with them, care for them. They might be a bit fixed in their ways but don't abandon them – you may find you get back much more than you give!

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Lucia Masciullo grew up in Livorno, Tuscany. She moved to Australia in 2007 and since then she has been happily working as an illustrator. She has illustrated more than 30 books, among which are the CBCA Honour Book and Prime Minister Award short-listed *Come Down, Cat!* by Sonya Hartnett, as well as the Our Australian Girl series, *Meet Katie at the Beach* by Rebecca Johnson in the Aussie Kids series, and *An A to Z of Dreaming Differently* by Tracey Dembo. She now lives on the Gold Coast.

A special note from Lucia

When I first read this touching story, I was moved by the turmoil Mr Singer experiences and by how an innocent and persistent child can help an adult regain the full colours in his life. I also love the portrayal of the community of neighbours, who are ready to help each other when someone is struggling in their everyday life. I'm fortunate to live in a similar environment, where my neighbours are truly lovely.



One challenge for me was depicting an old man like Mr Singer: you don't often see old men in picture books, except for grandparents. So I immediately tried to imagine how he could look like, with hair sprouting from his ears and nose! I portrayed him scruffy and grumpy, giving him two huge eyebrows so he could frown more easily.

The story also features many dragons, including a dragon tree. Since there was no description of the dragon tree, I imagined it as a tree with a gnarled trunk shaped like a dragon. When the garden is well-maintained, the dragon is visible, but not obvious, requiring readers to take a close look.

Sometimes when I walk in the bush, I notice human features or animal shapes in rocks, moss, or the tangled patterns of roots. Does it happen to you as well?

I'm not very skilled in origami art (except for the jumping frog—I'm a master of jumping origami frogs!). So in order to draw the origami dragons in the book, I first had to learn how to make them and then I used them as a reference for my drawings. Learning how to do origami dragon has not been an easy task!

Together with Chris (the author) and Heather (the book's editor), we decided to use ink and watercolour for the final illustrations – except for the origami dragons, which are created with coloured paper like real origami, but they glued on the page, so they are flat instead of three-dimensional.



Dragon Folding by Christopher Cheng and Lucia Masciullo



Then as you read the story through a second time, here are some questions you might ask for each spread:

Page 1

The title appears in a red font.

- Discuss what impression this might give.
- Discuss the placement of the various components (title, names, logos, illustration) on this page.



PRE-READING

1. Discuss the book's title with students and what it might reveal about the book.
2. Examine the cover and the title page. Identify what accompanies the author's English name. Discuss why that would be important? It is also located on the spine.
3. Discuss the emotions the creators might be trying to portray on the cover.
4. Discuss the bird symbol on the cover and the spine. What is the significance of this (and what type of bird is it?).
5. What are the black stripes on the back cover? Investigate how this works.

READING *DRAGON FOLDING*

Read the book straight though once for the enjoyment.

1. Discuss with students how it made them feel.
2. Discuss their thoughts about the book.
3. Identify the ways that the words and the illustrations are complementary.
4. Ask students to identify as either Evan or Mr Singer and then discuss how they would have reacted as that character.



Page 2 and 3

Describe all the things that are happening on these pages.

- What might Mr Singer be carrying in his hand and where might he have been?
- What could be the setting for this book?
- Why is Mr Singer referred to as the 'old man' on this page and not by his name?

Compare the houses on this page.

- Which one might belong to Mr Singer and what gives you that thought?

Page 4 and 5

- The page is predominately grey. Why? What emotions does this convey?
- Create a description of Mr Singer and this room. Describe all the objects that are seen in this room. Discuss with students whether they have seen them in their or their grandparents' homes.
- What does the text tell us about Mr Singer?

Page 6 and 7

- Why has the illustrator used colour on these pages?
- What effect does colour have here?
- What emotions are shown on this page? What is the importance of the photo album?
- Describe the photographs.
- What do you notice about all the people in the photographs?
- Discuss what *fun and laughter* might have been in Dragon Hall.

Page 8 and 9

- Create a story that Evan might have told Mr Singer.
- Discuss ways that friends and neighbours might have used to encourage Mr Singer.
- Discuss the phrase *Dr Marc worked the garden*.
- Why wasn't Mr Singer listening? Discuss what he might have been doing. What feelings would he have had then.
- The author used the phrase *Mrs Singer went away*. What does this mean? What might have happened? Why would things change for Mr Singer?



Page 10 and 11

- What do you notice about the tree?
- Why has the designer put the words 'Keep quiet!' in a different font and within a bubble? What does this impart? How would this have been spoken?
- What words can describe the feelings of the children, and the feelings of Mr Singer?



Page 12 and 13

- Create a list of words to describe the appearance and condition of Mr Singer's house, Dragon Hall, on these pages.



- The author used the phrases *Wings drooped, colour faded, flames quenched, while other dragons collapsed.* Discuss why this would have happened and what happened to the dragons.
- The author used the phrase *Mr Singer's world turn grey.* What does this mean?

Page 14 and 15

- These pages are mainly grey – except for Evan. Why do you think the illustrator has done this?
- What are some of the ways Mr Singer remembers Mrs Singer?
- Why is memory so important?
- Discuss with students how they remember things that have happened to them in their families.
- Discuss what activities occur in class to remember what they have learnt.
- Ask students to write a description of a memory from their weekend and then ask students to write a distant memory. Compare the two and discuss which was easier and why.
- Discuss with students what is their most distant memory. Have students ask their parents about their most distant memory and then compare these.

Page 16 and 17

- This spread has a dramatic swirl of gold across the page. What do you think this represents?

Discuss why the illustrator would have used this method. Could this be portrayed in another way?

- Discuss and then role play the text on these pages. Compare the different versions given by the students.
- What might be contained in Mr Singer's chest besides his chair.
- Have students draw or write about the contents of the chest.

Pages 18 and 19

- Describe what is happening here.
- Discuss why there is no text on this page.
- How is the meaning of this page conveyed?
- What are the coloured objects on this page? Discuss how they have been positioned and Evan's attitude. What are some words to describe how Evan is feeling, how Mr Singer is feeling? Discuss with students how they display this emotion.

Pages 20 and 21

- Discuss the phrase *all fingers and thumbs.*
- Ask students to describe when they have been *all fingers and thumbs.*
- Who is saying the spoken text on this page?
- Compare and discuss the hands of Evan and of Mr Singer. Ask students to draw their own hands (very young students could trace their own handprint onto paper) and then write a description about these hands. Create a word bank of hand descriptions.



Page 22 and 23

- Discuss with students why they think the illustrator has used two different backgrounds in this spread. What effect does this have?
- Have students role play the words that are on this spread in different ways. What do the different ways show?
- Describe the emotions of Mr Singer and of Evan. How has the illustrator shown these emotions?
- The author has written *just . . . like . . . this*. Why have the three full stops been used to break up the words? What is this punctuation called?
- Discuss why the illustrator might have created page 23 with a black background.

Page 24 and 25

- Why did Evan say to Mr Singer 'Now it's your turn.'? Discuss Mr Singer's reaction.
- How do old people show that they are in uncomfortable situations?
- Discuss what old people do when they are not feeling comfortable. Discuss how students might alleviate this feeling.

Page 26 and 27

- What is happening on this page?
- The author has used the collective noun *flight* to describe the dragons on this page. Research other collective nouns for a group of dragons.
- Make a list of collective nouns for other animals. Some animals might be like dragons and have more than one collective noun where a different noun is used in different situations.
- Discuss the significance of so many dragons on these pages.
- What is Mr Singer doing? Discuss the significance of this. What ingredients might he be using?



Page 28 and 29

- Discuss what is happening on this spread.
- Create a list of words describing the appearance of Dragon Hall.
- Compare the appearance of Dragon Hall on this spread and on earlier pages.
- Discuss the Dragon Tree.
- Describe how all the characters are feeling in this spread. How has the illustrator shown this?

- Try dragon folding (see origami links on page 6) and then find a place in the room to hang them.

Page 30 and 31

- Identify all the things that can be seen in this spread.
- Describe the table and its contents.
- Discuss how all the characters might be feeling.
- Ask students to draw their own interpretation of a community scene or colour the one on page 8 of these notes.
- Discuss why the author might have written *But Mr Singer still talks to himself* and what he might be saying.
- Discuss why people talk to themselves.

Page 32

- Read the dedications. What might Evan have done?
- Research origami butterflies and fold them.
- Discuss with students why dedications are important, and who they might dedicate something to.

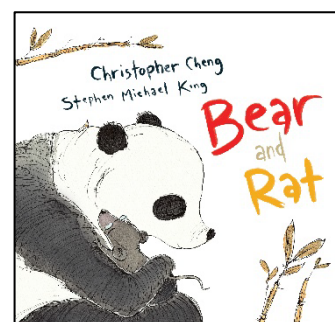
THEMES

There are many different themes in this title including,

- The relationship between love and loss
- The importance of community
- The children and elderly relationship
- Grief and processing emotion
- Memory and its retention
- Helping people in need
- Encouragement, hope and inspiration
- Empathy amongst individuals

Identify and discuss these themes.

The author also wrote the book *Bear and Rat*, which is also about friendship that endures even through the ups and downs of life. *Dragon Folding* is a follow-on from that emotional journey in the author's life and shows the test of friendship.



If you have a copy of both books, read them to the class, one after the other.

- How is *Dragon Folding* similar / different to *Bear & Rat*?
- How are the two titles interconnected?
- List the words that you could use to describe Evan.
- List the words that you could use to describe Mr Singer.
- Why do you think the author chose origami as one of the motifs to use?



KEY STUDY TOPICS

About the Characters

- Describe the ways that Mr Singer changes through the book?
- In what ways does Evan change? Describe these changes.
- How does Dragon Hall change?
- The author often remarks that he uses real life experiences to spark his writing. The character Evan is a real person and was the stimulus for this book.
- What do you think he might have done that gave the author the spark to create this story?
- What else do you think might have happened?
- Identify / name other characters in the book. What could be the significance of the author choosing those names?
- Discuss the ways that the creators have used to create the characters of the old man and of Evan.

About Dragon and Dragon Hall

- Identify as many of the dragons in the book as possible. Create a table listing and describing all the appearances of the dragons.
- Why do you think the author chose dragons as one of the motifs to use? What does the changing dragon signify?
- How has the illustrator conveyed the appearance of dragons throughout the book?
- Create a list of words and phrases to describe the old man's house before and after his interactions with Evan. Discuss why the author calls him Mr Singer? What does this achieve?

About Relationships

- Create a list of words and phrases to describe:
 - What Mr & Mrs Singer's relationship might have been like.
 - Mr Singer & Evan's relationship.
 - Mr Singer's relationship with his neighbours.
- Then discuss reasons that you can find in this book for that. Write a descriptive profile of these characters and their relationships.
- What clues do the creators provide for the changing relationship between Evan and Mr Singer?

About Loneliness

The theme of loneliness is prominent in *Dragon Folding*.

- Identify all the different techniques that the creators use to express loneliness. Create a chart showing these techniques.
- Discuss with students when they might feel lonely and what they could do to alleviate this feeling for themselves, for other students.

About Colour

Colour is very important in this book.

- Identify the ways that the illustrator has used colour.
- Discuss the use and the importance of the colours including the use of grey throughout the book.
- How is it used to portray emotions?
- How does colour contribute to the creation of the mood within the story? Discuss what effect the illustrator achieves using them in this way.
- Create a list of emotions and then a colour chart to show those different emotions. Have students justify their lists and colour matchings.

About Origami

Research and find out about origami.

Some questions to consider:

- Where did it originate, what does it mean, how is it done, what is the purpose of origami?
- What is the common short phrase to describe origami?
- Why do you think the author chose origami to help tell this story?

Many origami models are copyright. Here are two instructions for creating origami dragons. The author and illustrator used these two guides when creating *Dragon Folding*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=25qjLagZzBM>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6p409-aTpL4>

Activities

- Choose one of the two listed video clips and write a step-by-step guide to folding the dragon.
- There are many other origami dragon models. Investigate some and try creating more models. Try folding other animals.
- Describe your feelings about origami and folding the animals.



About Memory

Memory is a critical part of our daily lives.

- Discuss the different ways we remember. What do people remember?



- Discuss the different aids that assist in retaining memory, including notes, calendars, reminder notices, photos. Investigate some of the different ways memory is enhanced.
- How has the way we are reminded of things changed between today and previous generations. Students could ask their parents and/or grandparents and bring these ideas to the class.
- What stimulates a memory? How do students remember things? Discuss with students how families remember things that have happened / places they have visited / people they have seen.
- Some people collect souvenirs of places they have been to help them remember. Ask students to discuss the memories they have of last year at school and why they remember those particular times / events. Draw conclusions why memories are retained / forgotten.

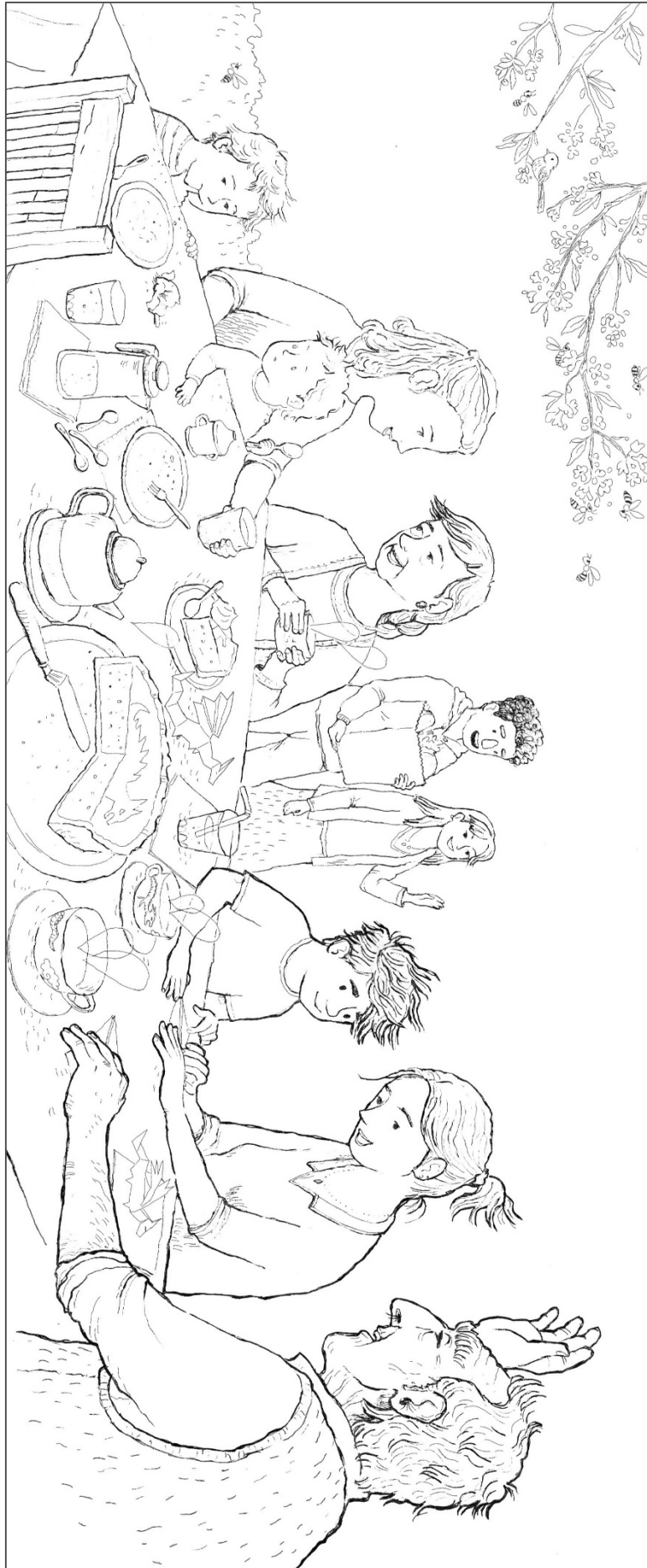


About Community

- Discuss communities and the people that make up a community.
- Discuss the importance of community in this book.
- Identify the ways the community cares for Mr Singer.
- Discuss why communities are important.
- How does the community interact with Mr Singer?
- How do students interact within their community at school, outside of school?
- What other ways can communities interact?
- Create a display of the local community (home or school). Include the people and the way the members interact within the community.

About Old People

- Discuss old people. When is a person old? Are there any particular traits that show that a person is old? Are all old people the same? How can we support older people? Identify all the ways we care for older people.
- Find out about the nearest older persons community or village and discuss some ways that students might be able to assist them.
- How has being an 'old person' changed? Have students discuss with their parents about old age. Do they have the same impressions?
- How do our communities care for 'old people'? Do we do enough to care for older people?
- Governments at all levels have a responsibility for the old people of our community. Discuss how do they do this. Can they do more? Discuss how students can care for old people.
- Investigate the rights of older people:
 - From the federal government Attorney-General's Department:
 - <https://www.ag.gov.au/rights-and-protections/protecting-rights-older-australians>
 - From the Human Rights Commission:
 - https://humanrights.gov.au/sites/default/files/content/letstalkaboutrights/downloads/HRA_older.pdf
 - Aged Care Quality and Safety Commission
 - <https://www.agedcarequality.gov.au/older-australians/your-rights/charter-aged-care-rights>



What makes a friend?

Think about what makes a great friend and then fill in this chart:)

Friends DO ... _____

Friends DON'T ... _____



Plan a Street Party

Ask your parents or care giver if you might organise a neighbourhood party together. It could be in someone's backyard, if one is available, or at a nearby park.

A few weeks before Christmas is a great time for a street party – but send your invitations at least a month before as it's a busy time!

To make it simple, ask everyone to bring a folding chair, their own drinks and some food to share with everyone.

Here's an example of a simple invitation:

You are invited to our



STREET PARTY!!

When?

Where?

What to bring?

RSVP to _____ by _____



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QTY	TOTAL
Dragon Folding	Christopher Cheng & Lucia Masciullo	9781761340949	K-2	\$24.99		
Bear and Rat	Christopher Cheng & Stephen Michael King	9781760896287	Pre-2	\$24.99		
One Tree	Christopher Cheng & Bruce Whatley	9780143786733	K-2	\$24.99		
An A to Z of Dreaming Differently	Tracey Dembo & Lucia Masciullo	9780143778905	K-2	\$24.99		
Come Down, Cat!	Sonya Hartnett & Lucia Masciullo	9780143506997	K-2	\$16.99 (pb)		
Go Home, Cat!	Sonya Hartnett & Lucia Masciullo	9781760899493	K-2	\$24.99		
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