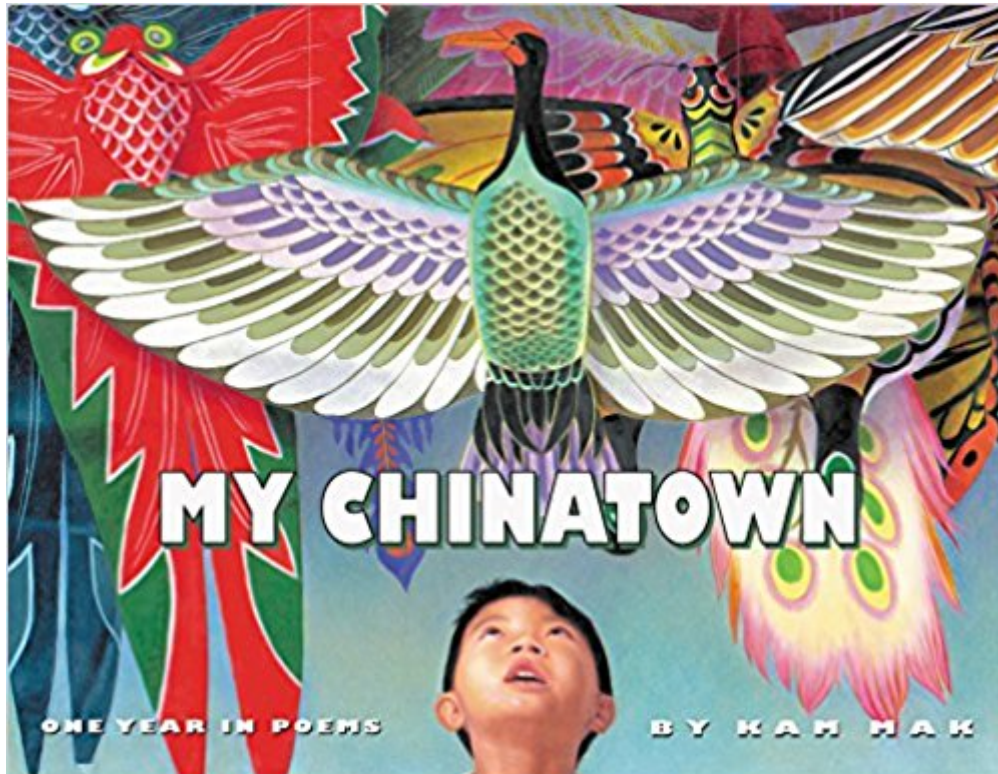




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# My Chinatown: One Year In Poems



## Synopsis

My Chinatown is a critically acclaimed, spectacularly illustrated picture book homage to family, culture, and a childhood spent in one of the most striking places in any city—Chinatown. Kam Mak grew up in a place of two cultures, one existing within the other. Using extraordinarily beautiful paintings and moving poems, he shares a year of growing up in this small city within a city. My Chinatown explores a boy's first year in the United States—after emigrating from China—as he grows to love his new home in Chinatown through food, games, and the people surrounding him. Through Kam Mak's spare verse and richly detailed artwork, the streets of Chinatown come vividly alive. Included in [Brightly.com's 2017 list of recommended diverse poetry picture books for kids](#). Chinatown—a place of dragons and dreams; fireflies and memories Chinatown—full of wonder and magic; fireworks on New Year's Day and a delicious smell on every corner Chinatown—where every day brings something familiar and something wondrously new to a small boy Chinatown—home?

## Book Information

Paperback: 32 pages

Publisher: HarperCollins; Reprint edition (January 5, 2016)

Language: English

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ISBN-13: 978-0064437325

Product Dimensions: 11 x 8.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 12.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 6 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #494,122 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #205 in [Books > Children's](#)

[Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories > Asian & Asian American](#) #453

in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Where We Live > City Life](#) #1018

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Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

Grade 2-4-Children whose ideas about life in New York's Chinatown come solely from books about holiday celebrations will get a deeper glimpse from this former resident's solo debut. In four ruminative, simply phrased free-verse poems, one for each season, Mak looks back to childhood: to

feeling homesick for Hong Kong, or excited by the annual Dragon Boat races; happily spoiling his appetite for dinner with fish balls purchased from a cart; and drifting off to sleep next to his mother as she does piecework on her sewing machine. There are no colorful urban street scenes or (with the exception of the Dragon Boat race) panoramic views in Mak's sober, extraordinary paintings. Instead, he focuses on individual figures—a curbside fortune-teller, a cobbler, a wide-eyed child drinking in a shop—rendered with photographic realism and placed against plain, undecorated backgrounds. The mood is generally wistful, though brightened at the end by a New Year's lion float prancing into view. The distinctly personal voice and sensibility makes this a natural companion for the more community-conscious tour in William Low's *Chinatown* (Holt, 1997). John Peters, New York Public Library Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

**\*Starred Review\*** Gr. 2-6, younger for reading aloud. Extraordinary photo-realistic paintings and spare, free-verse poems bring New York's Chinatown to life in this picture book with appeal to a wide age group. Organized chronologically through the seasons, the poems follow a young boy from Hong Kong through his first year in the U.S. Written in the boy's voice, the words capture the fear and discomfort of adjusting to newness: "The English words taste like metal in my mouth." But as the year progresses, the boy feels the irresistible vitality of his new community, helped along by signs of the familiar; and at year's end, he exuberantly celebrates the dragon parade and his new home: "Drums beat / feet stamp / hands clap / voices shout / Chinatown, / this is Chinatown!" The words and pictures work beautifully together; both glow with a quiet intensity that complements rather than overpowers the other. Whether or not they've known displacement, readers will come away with a deeper interest in Chinatown's culture and in immigration stories in general. Suggest this to teachers doing units on home and place. Gillian Engberg Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

*My Chinatown: A Year in Poems* by Kam Mak will delight the eye and the ear. The imagery of the poems convey an appreciation for the energy and culture of Chinatown. Readers of any ethnicity will enjoy the boy's stroll through the fascinating and exotic city. He struggles to understand how he can be in America and appreciate and feel connected to his native home in Hong Kong. Chinese culture exists in Chinatown but it's different from the way things are observed there. Any child who has ever moved, will identify with his longing for "home" in Hong Kong and the security and familiarity it represents. **Adoption-attuned Lens:** This book will resonate with internationally adopted kids via the

boy's sense of yearning for "home"--for the way it smells, looks, sounds, and the way things are done there. His struggle to feel at home in America will connect with that rootlessness that many adoptees feel, (even those who were adopted domestically.) Another "note" which will connect with many adoptees is that struggle to blend a dual heritage into a unified whole that results from valuing and merging both.

•Gayle H. Swift, "ABC, Adoption & Me, A Multicultural Picture Book"

send it to my grandson, great. I don't get excited about knives BUT this product is WONDERFUL! as soon as you pick it up....you KNOW this is a sturdy professional product! there is NO OTHER product in any department store like this one.....ITS WELL WORTH THE PRICE!!! 5 stars!

Received as described. very good .

If you have only a few, treasured children's books on your shelf, *My Chinatown* should be one of them. Rarely does a picture book ever exceed the level of entertainment or visual treat and amusement to ascend to a realm where, well, you get tingles while experiencing it. And this book must be held in your hands and consumed. Each page is a frameable work of imaginative, breathtakingly beautiful art. Each poem is a vignette of life in Chinatown, complete with all the sensory details in a few lines. Like Matisse's few strokes that reveal a cat, Kam Mak's writing reveals entire scenes that come to life simply, remarkably. Even if I did not have a child, I would love to have this book on my coffee table. Reminiscent of Chris Van Allsburg (*Polar Express*, *Jumanji*) where elegant, spare writing and outstanding art work combine to make magic. *My Chinatown* is miraculous.

'*My Chinatown*' is a beautiful book about a young boy who misses his old home in China and how he is slowly discovering his new neighborhood- Chinatown. The beautiful pictures in the book are bright and bold with simple prose to guide the reader on this young boy's adventure. The book is broken down by seasons as the young boy describes the transformation his neighborhood takes during various times of the year. I brought a copy of this book home very well expecting it to go on the bookshelf and to languish there until my son got older. I was pleasantly surprised that even at 18-months my toddler gravitated to the book and enjoys looking at the artwork. It is wonderful to share this book with him; he likes the picture of the kumquats. This is a beautiful book with brilliantly bright artwork and a wonderful gift for a child or adult.

"My Chinatown: One Year in Poems," by Kam Mak, is a truly beautiful blend of poetry and visual artwork. The simple, straightforward poems tell about life in Chinatown for a young boy whose family has emigrated from Hong Kong to the United States. The poems are accompanied by richly colored illustrations. A sample of the writing style: "If you have money in your pocket, / you're never hungry / in Chinatown." The illustrations capture many memorable images: a bunch of colorful kumquats, a cobbler at work, colorful dragon boats, and more. This book is a wonderful celebration of the people, food, and cultural events of Chinatown.

The author does an amazing job of capturing the emotions and attachments of his childhood between Hong Kong and New York. The poems are sad, happy, and full of keen observations. The illustrations are beautiful. A favorite...

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