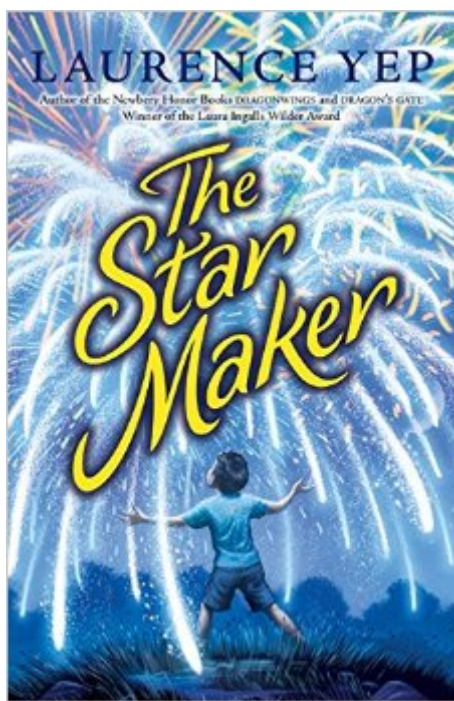


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The Star Maker



Synopsis

If only Artie had kept his mouth shut. But his mean cousin Petey was putting him down, so Artie started bragging. Now he has to come up with enough money to buy firecrackers for all his cousins by the Lunar New Year. Luckily, there's one person he can count on . . . Uncle Chester! Newbery Honor Book author Laurence Yep celebrates family and Chinese New Year traditions in this story of a boy and his uncle who discover that age doesn't matter when it comes to helping out a friend.

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 530 (What's this?)

Hardcover: 112 pages

Publisher: HarperCollins (December 21, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0060253150

ISBN-13: 978-0060253158

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.5 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 7.2 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (2 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #821,605 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #44 in [Books > Children's Books > Holidays & Celebrations > Chinese New Year](#) #308 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories > Asian & Asian American](#) #1552 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Multigenerational](#)

Age Range: 8 - 12 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

Customer Reviews

This middle-grade novella takes us back to San Francisco's Chinatown in the 1950's. Eight-year old Artie is the youngest amongst all of his cousins, and unfortunately, prone to frequent bullying by his elder cousins, especially thorn-in-his-side Petey. Goaded into bragging about his prowess with fireworks, Artie tells his extended family that he'll gift them all with fireworks for the Chinese New Year. Seeing that he's taken on an impossible task, Artie's doting, yet ne'er-do-well Uncle Chester decides to step-in and help out. But, will even his help be enough to close the gap and get Artie the firecrackers he's saving up for? It's a uniquely Chinese-American story, and Yep handles the balancing act between cultures perfectly. There's even a subplot about a possible girlfriend for Uncle Chester. The characters experience several improbably lucky turns, as well as a few

setbacks, but everything wraps up very neatly. While some of the racism of those times is implied, it is not overtly part of the story. The slight 112 pages are padded by a lengthy apologist introduction by Yep, explaining that while fireworks are a central part of the story and they were legal in the 1950's, but they certainly aren't (in most states, anyway) considered safe for children to handle nowadays. The story is appended with an explanation of some Chinese customs, including information about the Chinese zodiac. Readers who enjoy *The Star Maker* will probably also like *Being Teddy Roosevelt* by Claudia Mills, featuring another plucky, can-do protagonist.

It is rare that a book for children is able to explore fully, without being pedantic or rote, the various elements of a particularly rich ethnic culture. Laurence Yep, a Newbery Honor winner with over 60 books under his writing belt, explodes the wonders of Chinese New Year on us in his new work, *THE STAR MAKER*, the story of a young boy in a large family who makes a promise to his multitudinous cousins and, in doing so, charts an adventure into what makes his people tick. Basing the novel around Chinese New Year, Yep is able to hone his anthropological skills in a focused and clear-cut fashion. The specific customs and celebrations that take place at this time each year are highlighted throughout the book, giving it a rich and varied backdrop. Of course, the story of Artie's attempts to score fireworks for all the cousins for a big celebration is the real crux of the plot. How this young boy realizes that he has made a promise too big to keep, yet keeps it by learning some hard truths about grown-ups and his family, is something that middle-schoolers will relate to without difficulty. A small boy for his age, Artie is always being bossed around by the bigger cousins, and *THE STAR MAKER* puts his difficulties into the context of so many interesting subjects --- growing up in general; growing up in a large, close, extended family; and growing up in that large family where ancient customs are still considered important traditions and enacted by all family members, even though the family lives in contemporary San Francisco. Yep is very adept at making the most mundane musings of Artie part of a first-class monologue that continues throughout the book, told in Artie's honest voice.

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