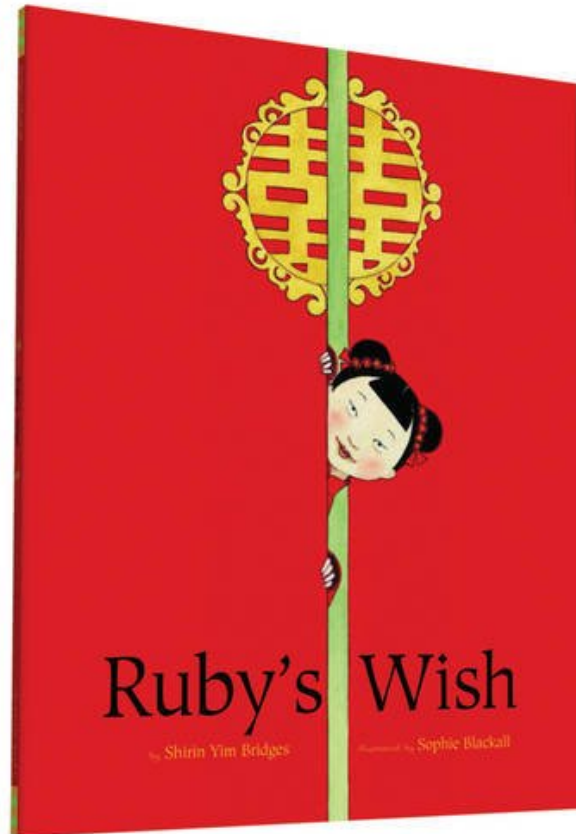
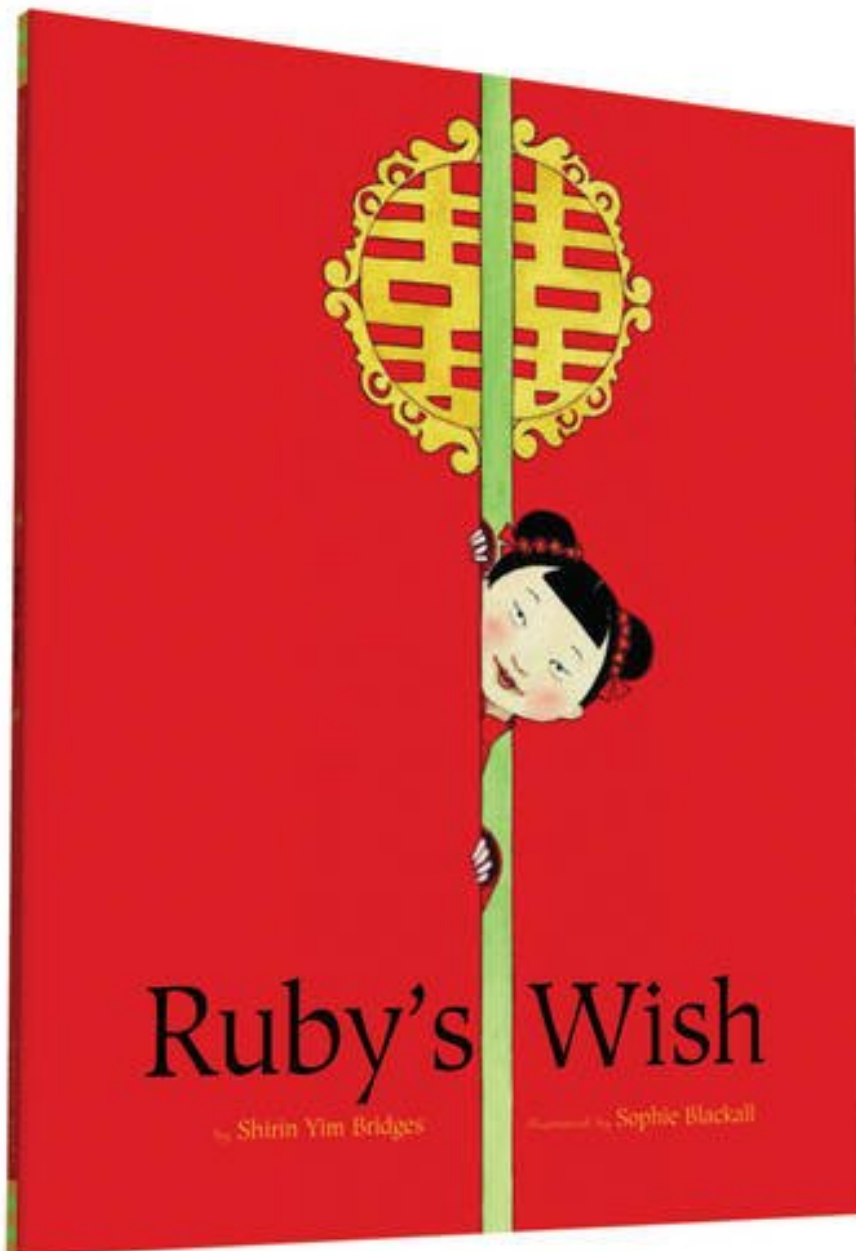


# RUBY'S WISH BY SHIRIN YIM BRIDGES



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First-time kids' book author Shirin Yim Bridges uses a tender family story to travel back to turn-of-the-century China and teach a proto-feminist lesson about perseverance and self-belief.

Idiosyncratic young Ruby lives in a large (and wealthy!) Chinese family, in a gigantic "house filled with the shrieks and laughter of over one hundred children." She stands out because she insists on always wearing red, the color of celebration ("Even when her mother made her wear somber colors like her other cousins, Ruby would tie up her jet-black hair with red ribbons") but even more so because of her quiet dissatisfaction with the family's traditional gender inequity. Determined to study reading and writing--even when it means long hours catching up on more wifely training--Ruby eventually comes to the attention of her grandfather, the wise house patriarch, who springs a surprise as the time for her to wed approaches.

Graceful Aussie illustrator Sophie Blackall captures the culture--contrasted by Ruby's bright red defiance--expertly, with elegant calligraphy, muted period clothing, and countless nice details (from a porcelain bowl full of terrapins to ink smudges on Ruby's cousins' faces). And what's better, Bridges's well-structured story is true--with a fun surprise ending! (Ages 4 to 8) --Paul Hughes

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Ruby is unlike most little girls in old China. Instead of aspiring to get married, Ruby is determined to attend university when she grows up, just like the boys in her family. Based upon the inspirational story of the author's grandmother and accompanied by richly detailed illustrations, Ruby's Wish is an engaging portrait of a young girl who's full of ambition and the family who rewards her hard work and courage.

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#### Most helpful customer reviews

42 of 44 people found the following review helpful.

Gorgeous book with a powerful theme.

By Anonymous

Serendipity brought this book into our home and I'm so grateful. It is a beautiful book in every way, from its vibrant illustrations to its messages of respect -- for oneself, for one's elders, for one's culture and for the never-ending gift of learning. The story of Ruby, a Chinese girl whose intelligence, integrity and confidence inspired her family patriarch to break with tradition, speaks to all. We are African-American parents of a son. We read this book to him often and we know that, through hearing Ruby's story, our son's perspective on life and the world in which he lives has been enormously enriched.

15 of 15 people found the following review helpful.

Lovely, true story of a girl in China

By A Customer

Ruby, a little girl living in turn-of-the-century China, is so named because she loves red, not just on holidays, but every day of the year. She also loves to study with her cousins in the school provided by her wealthy grandfather. Her calligraphy is especially fine, and she comes to her grandfather's attention when she writes the couplet "Alas, bad luck to be born a girl, worse luck to be born into this house where only boys are cared for." Her grandfather questions her kindly and finds out that she would rather attend university than enter marriage--which is, of course, expected of all girls at the time...

On the last page we learn that this is a true story, based on the author's grandmother. We also get to see a photograph of this grandmother, one of the first women university students in China. And we learn that "every day, she still wears a little red."

This is a gem of a book, with simple yet evocative writing and beautiful illustrations which capture emotions wonderfully and provide a wealth of detail on Chinese dress and décor of the time.

3 of 3 people found the following review helpful.

A vivid tale of good fortune, perseverance and familial love

By Deb Nam-Krane

Ruby is a little granddaughter of an old man who "struck it rich" in California (and lived to tell the tale). His wealth is such that he takes on many wives (a sign of wealth and privilege in Old China), has many sons (a sign of good fortune) who in turn take many wives, and ends up with over one hundred grandchildren. He arranges for a tutor to teach any who want to come (even the girls, going against the traditional customs) and is surprised to see that little Ruby (so named because she defiantly wears celebratory red even when there is no holiday) is the grandchild with the most promise. Long after all the other girls drop off and are married away, she persists with her lessons, even though it means that she must work late into the night on her "wifely" arts like embroidery. As hard as she works, she is keenly aware that tradition will soon force her to give up her studies and marry. When her grandfather is made aware of her unhappiness and asks her to explain, he listens but says nothing. What will happen next may not be much of a surprise, but the twist at the end is sure to bring a smile to the face of the reader.

This story "works" on many levels. The bright palette of the book makes Ruby pop off the page. The illustrator does a good job of showing Ruby progress from quietly curious to defiant yet resigned. The restraint of the illustrator is as evident as the skill. The point of the story is of course powerful and poignant: most girls in Old China as well as many places in the modern world are trained to be only wives and mothers at the expense of opening the world to them through reading and writing. While her grandfather's benevolence shields her from that fate, the author still shows the subtle ways in which a young child would understand what her expected role was. However, she manages to do it without beating the point with an age-inappropriate hammer.

This is a great story that ages five and older will be touched by.

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