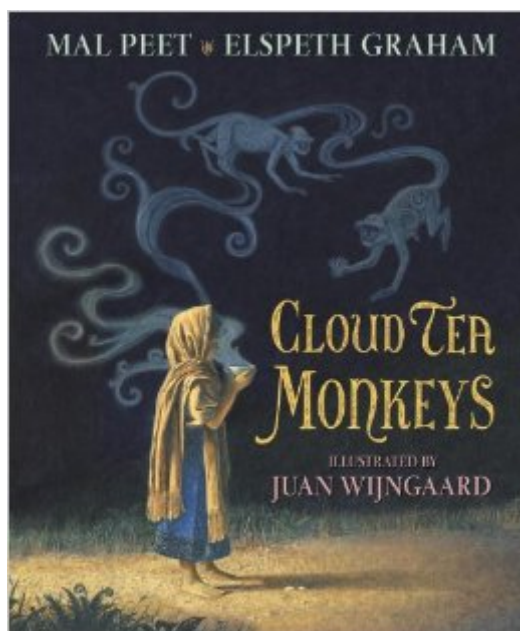


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# Cloud Tea Monkeys



## Synopsis

Carnegie Medalist Mal Peet and his wife, Elspeth Graham, team up for a captivating, lushly illustrated tale evoking a Chinese legend. A Junior Library Guild Selection Tashi lives in a tiny village at the foot of the mountains, below the tea plantations where her mother works. When her mother falls ill, Tashi goes alone to the plantation, hoping to earn money for the doctor. But she is far too small to harvest the tender shoots, and her clumsy efforts anger the cruel Overseer. She is desolate, until "chack-chack-chack!" something extraordinary happens. Inspired by a centuries-old legend of tea-picking monkeys, here is a richly told tale full of vivid characters: the heartless Overseer, the enigmatic Royal Tea Taster, and "far away" an empress with a penchant for tea.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 850L (What's this?)

Series: AWARDS: Louisiana Young Reader's Choice Awards 2013 Grades 3-5

Hardcover: 56 pages

Publisher: Candlewick (February 23, 2010)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0763644536

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Product Dimensions: 7.9 x 0.5 x 9.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 13.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars See all reviews (25 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #230,235 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #25 in Books > Children's Books > Fairy Tales, Folk Tales & Myths > Asian #79 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Homelessness & Poverty #210 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Asia

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: Preschool - 3

## Customer Reviews

Tashi lives with her mother, a tea picker, in a small village that lies in the shadows of the majestic Himalaya mountains. Tashi's mother and the other women work long days on the tea plantation, ever under the watchful eyes of the bad-tempered Overseer. Although Tashi comes along, she is too young to pick tea and instead spends much of the time playing and snoozing in the shade with a

group of friendly monkeys that regularly comes down from the mountain. When her mother becomes gravely sick and cannot work, Tashi despairs that there is no money to pay for a doctor. Determined to earn the money herself, she manages to carry the heavy tea basket to the plantation, only to encounter the angry Overseer who mocks her attempt to pick tea. Even worse, after she retreats to her private spot in the shade, some of the adult monkeys grab the basket and run off with it toward the mountain. Although all seems lost, Tashi learns that small acts of kindness can be reciprocated in unusual and unexpected ways. This book is absolutely superb. The unique story line captures a number of important themes in economics, including the vulnerability of the working poor and the incidence of child labor in developing countries. Stunning illustrations further add to the richness of *Cloud Tea Monkeys*, making this book as much of a treasure as the tea described within.

Sitting down for a morning cup of tea with my husband, I began to open the latest package from to share with him. "Not more books!" he sighed. I had ordered this one because of its Juan Wijngaard illustrations. Our family has nearly read to pieces our copies of his *Sir Gawain and the Green Knight* and *Sir Gawain and the Loathly Lady*, so I knew that *Cloud Tea Monkeys* would be visually exquisite. What I didn't expect was a text that was exquisite as well. Mal Peet and Elspeth Graham know how to "show not tell": "The sun had not yet found a way through the mountains, but it was coming; a light the color of lemons was soaking into the sky and painting out the stars." "The overseer laughed an ugly laugh full of brown teeth." "His mustache was like a spread of snowy wings." "Then from under the cloth there came a good deal of sniffing and snuffling: short shallow snuffles and then some long deep sniffs and then the kind of gasping that comes before a sneeze. Then another, longer silence. A hand came out from under the cloth. The fingers clicked again.... When Tashi saw his face, the Royal Tea Taster no longer looked stern; he looked like a man who had seen an angel." We read on. As I finished the story, my husband dabbed his eyes with his napkin, "It's OK, you can keep ordering books."

A children's book but superbly produced in terms of binding, quality of paper and stunning illustrations (see photo gallery of some of the images I've posted from the book). Buy two copies: one for your child to read, and one to keep as a treasure!

This is a beautifully illustrated book with a long but well told tale. It has a touch of magic, a big helping of multicultural exposure, and captivating artwork on every page. When I finished reading it to my daughters for the first time, the four and a half year old immediately took the book from my

hands and started turning the pages herself, reviewing the full color pictures. "I liked this book" she said solemnly. Me too. It's worth getting your hands on.

Tashi is a young girl living in a small village in the shadow of the Himalayan mountains. Every morning she walks to the tea plantation with her mother and sits in a secret spot playing and sharing her food with a band of monkeys who also spend each day there, as she waits while her mother spends the day picking tea. And now her mother is ill with a cough "hard and sharp like a stick breaking". One morning, when her mother is so sick she cannot rise from her bed to go to work, Tashi tries to take her place, dragging the her large tea basket to the plantation. When the heartless Overseer scorns her efforts, Tashi takes refuge in her secret spot and tearfully spills out her troubles to the monkeys. The male monkeys take Tashi's basket and disappear up the mountain into the mist, and return with the greenest, most fragrant tea leaves Tashi has ever seen or smelled. This poignant tale is filled with lush, descriptive language as fragrant as the mysterious Cloud Tea. And Juan Winjgaard's detailed, gorgeous illustrations capture the emotion and heart of the story, and so perfectly aided my daughters' understanding of key parts of the story. This is one of those perfect marriages of text and illustrations. As I read this book aloud to my daughters, I was struck by the realistic portrayal of Tashi's and her mother's life. The writing is so descriptive I could feel the morning chill that burned away to "cruel" heat, the fear in Tashi as she listened to her mother cough, the fear of no money available for a doctor, the weight of the basket she dragged to the tea plantation, her crushing disappointment at not being allowed to pick tea in place of her mother. (You know it's descriptive when your children try to breathe in the tea clouds as you read.) And I marvelled at Winjgaard's talent for capturing all the emotional nuances of the story. My daughters sat enthralled throughout.

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