



The Willow Pattern Story

By Alan Drummond

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The author retells a story heard as a child, one of many invented to explain the landscape on willow pattern china, popular for the last 200 years. In this, two young Chinese lovers are punished by one's cruel mandarin father.

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The Willow Pattern Story By Alan Drummond Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

The author's childhood fascination with the classic blue and white willow pattern on a jug owned by his parents inspired this absorbing and distinctive story told within the willow pattern itself. Drummond begins by visually orienting his audience above a willow pattern cup and saucer, drawing readers around and into the intricate design as he tells of a star-crossed Chinese couple, Koong Shee and Chang. Gradually, the pattern's various elements are brought to life: the pagoda is Koong Shee's home; the bridge and boat are the means by which the pair escape the wrath of Koong Shee's father, who opposes their match and ultimately captures them; and the hovering birds become the lovers, eternally reunited after their deaths. The curved borders at the bottom of several pages serve as subtle reminders of the story's backdrop, but Drummond overcomes this potential restriction by elaborating on it for dramatic effect. One particularly striking spread portrays the lovers imprisoned by Koong Shee's father by being pushed off the center of the page/plate into the bordering maze. An afterword details the pattern's history. This ingenious use of uncommon source material may inspire readers to watch for hidden stories in everyday objects. All ages.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 1-3-- Drummond relates his version of the story depicted on the willow pattern china. It is a tale of star-crossed lovers eventually put to death by the maiden's vengeful father and reborn as doves eternally kissing above the painted landscape. The author/illustrator re-creates the feel of the pottery art with his predominantly pale blue-and-white gouache and pencil illustrations. However, for children who have not seen a willow pattern plate, the idea will remain obscure. The story, invented in the 1800s to fit the picture on the china, has traditional, folkloric elements but lacks a sense of authenticity. It sounds like an advertising ploy, and this retelling doesn't salvage it. While adequately written, it won't generate much interest. --Karen James, Louisville Free Public Library, KY

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About the Author

Illustrator Allan Drummond received his degree in Graphic Design from London College of Printing and Illustration from the Royal College of Art. Allan lives with his wife and three sons in Savannah, Georgia. His web site is www.allandrummond.com.

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