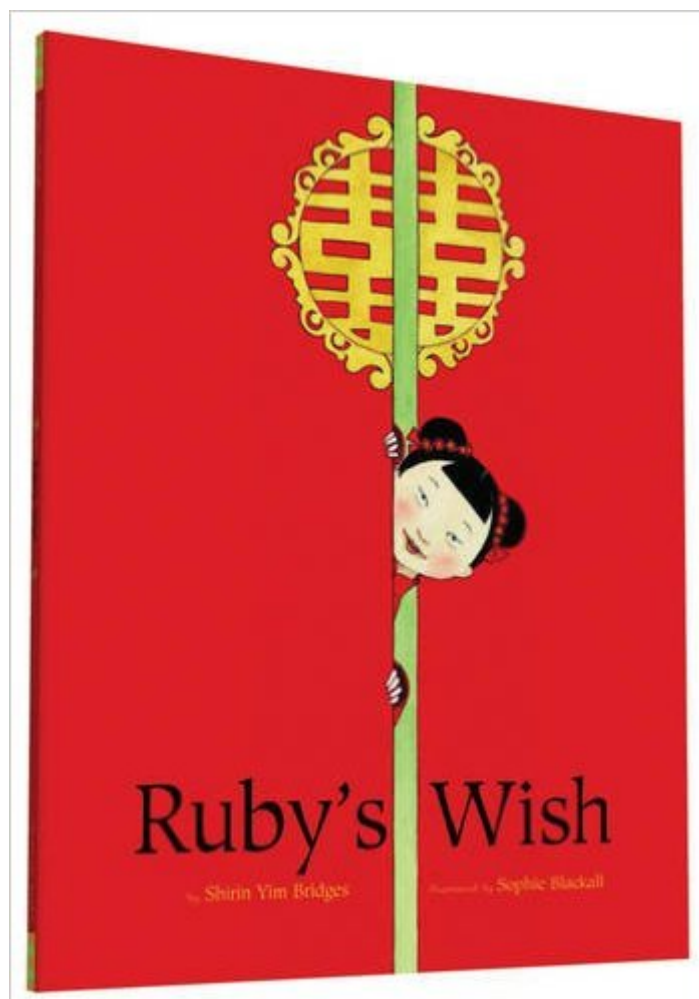


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# Ruby's Wish



## Synopsis

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.

## Book Information

Paperback: 36 pages

Publisher: Chronicle Books (August 4, 2015)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1452145695

ISBN-13: 978-1452145693

Product Dimensions: 8.6 x 0.2 x 10.6 inches

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

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (34 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #115,272 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #115 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Asia](#) #534 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Self-Esteem & Self-Respect](#) #931 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Girls & Women](#)

Age Range: 4 - 8 years

Grade Level: 3 - 7

## Customer Reviews

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.

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.

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.

Though this is a true story, it reads like fiction. In *Ruby's Wish*, Shirin Yim Bridges tells the story of a bright and independent little girl growing up in a house of 100 children. But, this little girl stands out in a crowd and writes a poem about how hard it is to grow up as a girl where boys are privileged. When questioned by her grandfather, the patriarch, she makes her case. And, years later, instead of a little cash in her red envelope on Chinese New Year, she receives a university invitation in her red envelope and becomes one of the first female students to attend. The combination of great watercolor illustrations and the true story of a Chinese woman whose wish came true makes this one a treasure. As you read with a daughter from China, be prepared for some hard conversations about their preference for boys. If you want to read reviews of 35 children's books having to do with China, visit the 7/2/2012 post on [myoverthinking\(dot\)com](http://myoverthinking(dot)com)

In olden China, a family with over a hundred members lives in one large house. The grandfather patriarch sets up a school just for his grandchildren. This story focuses on one girl, nicknamed Ruby because she always wore red. Ruby loved to learn and felt badly that boys were given more opportunities than the girls were. Boys were able to go to university; girls got married. After writing a simple poem expressing her thoughts, the grandfather asked Ruby to tell him why she felt that way. The next New Year's Day, Ruby was given more than her usual "lucky money" in her traditional red envelope. She had a letter of acceptance to a university -- making her one of the first women to attend. This story is written by Ruby's grandchild. This story is simple and sweet. The kids are so cute, and you get a bit of Chinese culture by understanding gender roles and holiday customs.

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