

Be Careful, Xiao Xin!

AUTHOR

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ILLUSTRATOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary



SYNOPSIS

They don't understand what I can do!

They don't understand what I can be!

Xiao Xin believes he is a red fire warrior but his family are always telling him to be careful. They believe the world is a dangerous place. Too dangerous for a little boy on his own.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Alice Pung is a Melbourne author whose award-winning books include *Unpolished Gem*, *Her Father's Daughter* and *Laurinda*. She also wrote the Marly books for the Our Australian Girl series, and edited *Growing Up Asian in Australia* and *My First Lesson*. Visit alicepung.com to find out more.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Sher Rill Ng is a Melbourne-based author and illustrator. She graduated from RMIT with a Bachelor of Design and works as a web and mobile UX/UI designer. She took part in the Imaginism House Workshop, an intensive art training program in Montreal, Canada, working with leading artists in the concept art/animation industry. Her works have been shown in numerous exhibitions, including the Light Grey Art Lab (Minnesota) and Gallery 1988 (Los Angeles). Sher Rill's debut picture book, *Our Little Inventor*, was followed by contributing Thumbelina's illustrations to the anthology *Fairytales for Feisty Girls* by Susannah McFarlane and illustrating Emma Allen's *The Night of the Hiding Moon*.

STUDY NOTES

- Xiao Xin means 'Be Careful' in Chinese, which means that every time that Xiao Xin hears his name, he also hears a warning. What effect do you think this might have on a little boy? Do you think this could influence his decision to run away?
 - Xiao Xin can also mean 'little heart'. Do you think this is a more appropriate interpretation of Xiao Xin's name? Explain your answer with reference to the text.
- On spread 5, Xiao Xin thinks that his parents might not love him as much as other parents love their children. Do you think this is true? Why might Xiao Xin's parents express their love so differently to other parents?
- Throughout *Be Careful, Xiao Xin!* we see blue shadows looming over Xiao Xin and his family, and lurking throughout

his home. What do you think these shadows might represent?

- After Xiao Xin runs away, we see what his grandmother, mother and father fear most will happen; explain these images. Why do you think the illustrator has chosen to portray fear in this way?
- Throughout the book, Xiao Xin's gaze shifts dramatically. Track Xiao Xin's gaze throughout the text, and explain what's happening—and how the use of gaze impacts this—for each of the dramatic shifts.
 - Write a paragraph explaining how Xiao Xin's changing gaze reflects his growing confidence, and how he is attempting to step out of the shadows of his family's fears.
- As well as changes to Xiao Xin's gaze, he also undertakes a physical transformation across the events of the story. When does Xiao Xin move from looking like a small child to a little boy? How do you think his outward appearance reflects what is happening inside Xiao Xin?
- By the end of *Be Careful, Xiao Xin!*, Xiao Xin has stopped pretending to be the Red Fire Warrior, and has become himself. Write a paragraph explaining how this transformation is depicted in the text.