

Paper Boat, Paper Bird

AUTHOR

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ILLUSTRATOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Mid to Upper Primary



SYNOPSIS

This wonderful tale transports Mina to Kyoto, Japan, an entirely new and different cultural landscape, where she encounters the magic of origami and an older magic, too. She accepts an origami paper boat from a woman on the bus. 'Ko-ni-chi-wa,' says the woman, 'Take it.' And then, 'Float it.'

Mina watches as the woman's fingers fold another elaborate paper form: creased, tugged and teased into the shape of a paper bird. She imagines what it would be like to be a sheet of paper in the woman's hands, to become a paper Mina. The crowds around her disappear and Kyoto is gone.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

David Almond is the author of *Skellig*, *My Name is Mina*, *Counting Stars*, *The Savage*, *Island*, *A Song for Ella Grey*, *The Colour of the Sun* and many other novels, stories, picture books, opera librettos, songs and plays. His work is translated into 40 languages, and is widely adapted for stage and screen. His major awards include the Carnegie Medal, two Whitbread Awards, the Eleanor Farjeon Award, the Michael L Printz Award (USA), Le Prix Sorcier (France) and the Guardian Children's Fiction Prize. In 2010 he won the Hans Christian Andersen Award, the world's most prestigious prize for children's authors. In 2021, David was awarded an OBE for services to literature.

David speaks at festivals and conferences around the world. He is Emeritus Professor of Creative Writing at Bath Spa University. He is widely regarded as one of the most exciting, inspirational and innovative children's authors writing today. He has one amazing daughter. He lives in Newcastle, the city in which he was born.

Find out more about David at www.davidalmond.com.

ABOUT THE ILLUSTRATOR

Kirsti Beautyman is an illustrator and children's book author based in Newcastle Upon Tyne. You'll often find her in her small cosy studio, with her feet on a portable radiator, clutching a mug of hot Ribena while she works on her latest projects.

She graduated from Edinburgh College of Art in 2016 and was awarded 'Picture Hooks Illustrator of the Year' in 2017. In her most recent years Kirsti has turned to working digitally, however, her illustrations still always begin as a loose pencil sketch in one of many battered sketchbooks.

THEMES

- Travel
- Japan
- Friendship
- The art of Origami
- Memories
- Culture
- Food

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading the story, answer the following questions:
 - Why do you think the woman makes a paper boat and a paper bird for Mina?
 - Do you know the name for the Japanese art of folding paper?
 - What do you think will happen with Mina in the book? How are the paper boat and paper bird significant in the story?
- Mina's mum says, 'That's travel, turns the world into somewhere else and turns you into someone else.' Discuss with a partner; what definition can you give to the word travel? What does travel mean to you? Can you think of your own experiences of travel?
 - Do you agree with Mina's mum? Can you think of an example of what she means here?
- If someone could fold you into an origami shape or model that represents you, what would it be? Discuss and share ideas with a partner.
- Do you know what sushi and sashimi are? Have you ever tried them before?
- Can you think of a time that you have eaten something different? How would you describe it?
- 'When she sleeps, she dreams of the bird and the boat that have been carried away.' Work in pairs or small groups. Imagine you are Mina, dreaming about the paper boat and the paper bird. What do you think would be in your dream? Use the picture on p 43 to help you.
- What is a bullet train? Why are they so famous in Japan?
- 'Mina and her mum love the crowds, the shops, the buses, the food, the temples. They love the silence and stillness at the heart of it all. It's the last day. Tomorrow it's a bullet train to Hiroshima. But they feel that even when they've left this place, they'll still be here.' Look at the last line in this extract. Why do you think people still feel part of a place even after they have left it? Do you have a place that holds special memories, and do you feel like it will always be a small part of you?
- 'The bus continues through the busy streets, through all the noise, past skyscrapers, hotels, flower sellers, flashing lights, cyclists, geishas, sushi shops, punks, cinemas, statues, tourist groups, burger bars, lanterns, pachinko parlours, shrines, road signs, lorries, buses, cars, crowds.' Read through this description from Mina's bus journey. Can you write a postcard as though you are Mina writing home from Japan?
- Think about a holiday you have been on or a place you have visited. Make a list of all the places, sights, food, people, anything you can remember. Now use the list to write a description. Imagine you are on a bus journey; can you write about all the things you saw along the way?
- Look up instructions on how to make your own origami boat and think about what secret message you can write in your origami boat. What message would you write in your boat for someone to find?