

Ten Blocks to the Big Wok: A Mandarin Counting Book

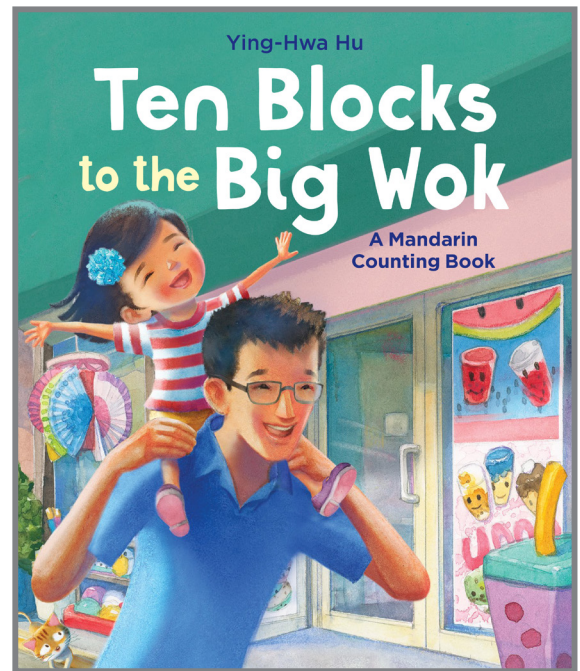
AUTHOR/ILLUSTRATOR

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RECOMMENDED FOR: Lower Primary



SYNOPSIS

When Mia ventures through Chinatown for dim sum with Uncle Eddie, she not only encounters a bustling neighbourhood brimming with life, but also notices a new little friend has joined them. Together, they count their way to the Big Wok, greeting residents and absorbing vibrant Chinese culture along the way.

Ten Blocks to the Big Wok incorporates English and simplified Mandarin number words, together with ordinal and cardinal counting. Readers will love exploring the streetscape on each page, interacting with Mia's adventure as she counts her way to the Big Wok. The author's notes further explain aspects of Chinese culture encountered in the text, while the illustrations invite readers to observe, learn and wonder.

ABOUT THE CREATOR

Ying-Hwa Hu has been illustrating books featuring children of many cultures for more than three decades. With her husband, Cornelius Van Wright, she created the art for numerous classic picture books, including *Jingle Dancer* by Cynthia Leitich Smith, *Princess Grace* by Mary Hoffman, and *Sam and the Lucky Money* by Karen Chinn. This is her first book as a solo author and illustrator. Ying-Hwa's favourite dim sum dish is chive dumplings, which she gets in the Chinatown of New York City, where she lives. You can learn more about her and find fun Chinese-language activities at yinghwahu.com.

THEMES

- Counting
- Chinese Culture
- Mandarin
- Visual Literacy

STUDY NOTES

- Before reading *Ten Blocks to the Big Wok*, carefully examine the cover. What do you think the story might be about? Given the title and characters, make predictions about the story.
- The written text begins: 'Uncle Eddie is taking Mia to the Big Wok for dim sum.' With a partner, brainstorm what might happen when you turn the next few pages. Check your predictions after reading.
- Discuss the importance of 'reading pictures' together with the written text to fully understand the narrative. Discuss

the role of illustrations in conveying meaning.

- The panda is described as 'gentle'. How do the illustrations help show this? Find out more about pandas and their place in Chinese culture.
- What do you think is going through Mia's head when she sees the panda? How do you know? What do you think Uncle Eddie is thinking, even though we can only see his forearm?
- Discuss the use of alliteration on some of the page openings, for example, 'tireless turtles', 'peaceful Penjing garden'. Try adding alliteration to some of the other pages.
- What do you notice about the little cat on the 'number nine' page?
- Imagine you are one of the goldfish in the underwater palace. Write a diary entry about your day.
- Which is your favourite page opening of *Ten Blocks to the Big Wok*? Why is this your favourite? Share with a friend.
- If you could choose any of the ten blocks to spend more time on, which would you choose and why?
- In the role of the little cat, write a recount of your day with Mia and Uncle Eddie.
- Create a Chinatown in your classroom. Include objects that help you to count from 1–10 using ordinal, cardinal and bilingual word numbers. If your school studies a language, include these word numbers as well.
- Use a Y Chart to brainstorm what Mia would have seen, heard, and smelt on her visit to Chinatown. Use this to write a journal entry about your day in the role of Mia.
- How would you describe the relationship between Mia and her uncle? How do the illustrations help show this?
- Using cut-outs of the numbers 1–10 in word (English and Mandarin), ordinal and cardinal form (eg. one, yi, first, 1), play a matching game with these and the dishes of food spread on the dim sum table.
- What do you think will happen to the little cat after the last page? Write about this in your journal.
- As a class, create a map of Mia and Uncle Eddie's return journey home. Choose a part of this story to write and illustrate.
- How would you describe Mia's character? How do the illustrations help convey her nature? What examples from the text share her personality with readers?
- View the YouTube clip of Mia teaching us how to count to ten in Mandarin. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gGfdxuUdbPc>.
- Create a Word Wall with new vocabulary used in *Ten Blocks to the Big Wok*. Use these words to write a simple recount of the story.
- *Ten Blocks to the Big Wok* shares many fascinating aspects of Chinese culture. Using the Author's Notes at the back of the book, find out more about these elements. Add to this list from your own knowledge.
- Compare photographs of your local Chinatown, or Chinatown in a nearby city, with the illustrations in *Ten Blocks to the Big Wok*. How are they different and similar? Use these photographs to help write additional pages suitable for Mia's story.
- Imagine you and one of your relatives go on an adventure of your own. Where would you go and what would you do? Share with a friend.
- Create your own personal counting book based on your culture or including things that are meaningful to you.
- Use *Ten Blocks to the Big Wok* to help celebrate the Lunar New Year.
- Write or voice-record a reflection that shares your wonderings after reading *Ten Blocks to the Big Wok*.