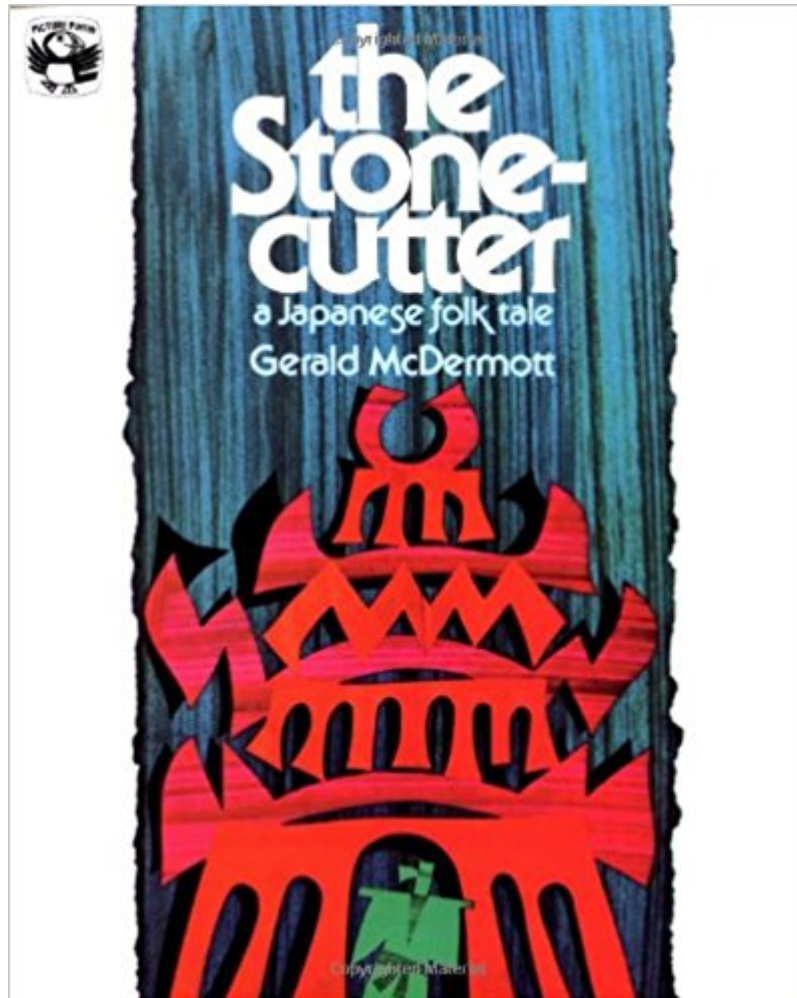




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# The Stonecutter: A Japanese Folk Tale (Picture Puffin Books)



## Synopsis

Relates the consequences of a stonecutter's foolish longing for power.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: AD490L (What's this?)

Series: Picture Puffin Books

Library Binding: 32 pages

Publisher: Puffin (May 25, 1978)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0140502890

ISBN-13: 978-0140502893

Product Dimensions: 7.1 x 0.1 x 8.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.2 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.8 out of 5 stars 6 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #995,446 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #109 in [Books > Children's Books > Fairy Tales, Folk Tales & Myths > Asian](#) #193 in [Books > Children's Books > Fairy Tales, Folk Tales & Myths > Other](#) #924 in [Books > Children's Books > Fairy Tales, Folk Tales & Myths > Multicultural](#)

Age Range: 6 and up

Grade Level: 1 - Preschool

## Customer Reviews

Parable reminding children that the grass isn't always greener and that the quest for ever more is unfulfilling.

A simple elegant tale about desire- its insatiable nature, and what it misses in plain view! A tale for all ages (of human beings) through the ages! Artwork fits perfectly!

I love everything about this picture book. It is just the right length for reading aloud without losing a toddler's attention, the illustrations are strikingly abstract, and the moral is profound -- don't keep trying to be something you're not. I can't believe it's out of print -- please, oh mighty Publishers-Who-Read- Reviews, bring this one back, for the good of the little ones and the parents who read to them!

Because I teach Humanities classes on various levels, I am always on the lookout for engaging resources that can bring the subjects of myth, legends, and folklore to life. Just browsing, I happened upon this little book, and I must say that it is impressive for the universal messages it conveys about humility, gratitude, envy, temptation, status, power, ambition, and the cycles of these things. Ambition can take one far--to great heights even, but sometimes it can take one way too far, which the main character, Tasaku discovers. One major theme of the text is "Be careful what you wish for because it may come true, and if it does, there is a moment of choice---how to handle the gift that has been given." Another parallel theme is "with great power comes greater responsibility, especially for one's own actions." Running throughout the tale is the very Taoistic notion of "the Virtue of the Small." The smallest creatures can affect great / significant change--a little piece at a time--if they are just aware of themselves and if they embrace who and what they are. (For more reading about the Virtue of the Small, seek out B. Hoff's *The Te of Piglet* book.) The images of The Stone-Cutter prove to be more symbolic shapes than specific details--all rendered in bold colors that look somewhat like expressive "brush" paintings--though I believe they are actually a form of collage. The illustrations truly compliment the curious story rather than detract, and they are unusual enough to capture the interests and imaginations of young people--teaching them to "look" into the pictures rather than just "see" them. Looking vs. seeing makes an excellent foundation-building lesson for the study of visual arts, maps, geography, science, sensory details for composition, etc. This book contains many useful "lesson-oriented" concepts for resourceful teachers and parents to develop their own presentations and activities from, for a variety of ages and stages:

1. Folktales & Storytelling
2. Multicultural concepts and appreciation: Japanese
3. Reading & Vocabulary (brief word list: examples of book's vocabulary / level--chisel, hewed, palaces, preceded, aloft, magnificent, procession, envied, transform, fragrant, withered, parched, obscured, obeyed, trembled); sensory signaling words
4. universal themes
5. Visual Design & Critical Thinking
6. Personal Choices, Temptation, Ambition, Self-centered behavior; Corruption of Power
7. Responsibility & Personal Actions
8. Consequences & Remorse
9. Philosophy & The Virtue of the Small
10. For teens and college students: the story can be related to modern views about fame, fortune, notoriety, quests for power, loss of humanity and humility along the climb to success
11. For workforce training and team-building, this story can be used to illustrate attitudes toward work, the negative sides of ambition, the abuse of power, etc.

With the right guide and / or teacher to steer the learning, this book can be a huge slice of enrichment--no matter which of the above concepts is emphasized.

The Stonecutter is a 1975 retelling of a Japanese folk tale by Gerald McDermott. The story, which features themes of being content with one's situation in life and being careful what one wishes for is simple, yet deeply profound. But what makes this book amazing is McDermott's art, which is nothing short of phenomenal. Here, McDermott has formed his illustrations as collages made from paper colored with gouache; this gives them a rich visual texture. The characters and environments are done in the blocky, somewhat abstract style McDermott excels at, and which spark the imagination. In all, the art is similar to his prior work on the outstanding *Arrow to the Sun*. McDermott is a king of illustration, and his art is rarely more spectacular than it is here. It makes *The Stonecutter* a wonder.

This book has been great to use in my third grade classroom. It has tied in to our Japan unit very well and has been greatly enjoyed by my third graders.

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