

Lion Dancer: Ernie Wan's Chinese New Year

By Kate Waters and Madeline Slovenz-Low, with photography by Martha Cooper
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Reviewed by
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hood: New York's Chinatown.

This year, Ernie's father, the owner of a *kung fu* school, has decided that Ernie is old enough to dance in the place of honor under the lion's head. The clear, simple text of Waters and Slovenz-Low, and the colorful photographs by Cooper, accurately depict Ernie's excitement as the big day draws near. He can hardly wait for his lessons at Chinese school to be over so that he can rush home to prepare for the New Year.

We see Ernie and his siblings dressing in new clothes and praying at the family altar before sitting down to the large feast which Ernie's mother has spent all day preparing. Ernie's uncle arrives with red envelopes filled with money; a most-anticipated event! This is supposed to bring good luck in the coming year. Ernie and his brother practice lion dance music on a drum and cymbal before going to bed. Ernie is much too excited to sleep, however.

The New Year dawns,

This book is a photographic essay that chronicles 7-year-old Ernie Wan's first performance of the lion dance. We meet Ernie's family and tour his neighborhood: New York's Chinatown.

and Ernie is off with his family to the *kung fu* school. Ernie's lion has been blessed the preceding evening and, with trepidation, Ernie dons his costume. Dancing well will bring honor to his family. We follow Ernie through his neighborhood as he visits shops and receives more red envelopes. One of the final pictures shows Ernie's mother in the background, beaming with pride. Ernie is tired but elated at the end of the morning and rides home on the drum cart. Even the lion gets tired!

The authors have done a wonderful job of capturing the child's excitement

and anticipation of a holiday. Ernie's feelings are those shared by children universally as they await celebrations and rituals important to their cultures. Students can relate to visiting with relatives, sharing a meal and being unable to sleep the night before a big event.

This photo essay is an excellent supplement to a Chinese New Year celebration. Children will be drawn into the story and photographs. *Lion Dancer* can also be used as a starting point for discussions about the rituals and celebrations in the lives of each student.

