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Beyond the Great Mountains. A Visual Poem about China

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Young, Ed. *Beyond the Great Mountains. A Visual Poem about China*. Illustrated by Young, Ed. Chronicle Books LLC, 2005. ISBN 0-8118-4343-2. \$17.95. Unpaginated.

Reviewer: AnnMarie Hamar

Reading Level: Primary

Rating: Outstanding

Genre: Nonfiction;

Subject: China--Juvenile fiction

This ingenious presentation of what Young calls "visual verse" is an eloquent tribute to his homeland of China. The text consists of a fourteen-line poem describing the vast and beautiful landscapes of China. The book is designed to open from the bottom and has graduated pages so the reader sees the entire poem immediately. As the reader turns the pages, s/he sees only one line of the poem along with a picture that illustrates the meaning of that line. Young's illustrations consist of cut, torn and painted papers all of which combine to give his work texture. Each illustration is in double-page format and includes ancient Chinese characters in red with their English translation in black. A careful reader will notice the similarities between the images in the illustration and the accompanying Chinese character: the character for mountain resembles a mountain; the character for river resembles a river, and so on. Young includes an author's note explaining his concept of visual verse as well as a chart of Chinese characters showing how they have changed from ancient to modern times. Especially enjoyable is Young's ability to capture the way Chinese poetry sounds when translated into English. Although the poetry might be too abstract for some younger readers, the illustrations, Chinese characters, and Young's evident love for his homeland should capture and hold their attention.