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Su Dongpo: Chinese Genius

Donna Cardon

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Demi. *Su Dongpo: Chinese Genius*. Illustrated by Demi. Lee & Low, 2006. ISBN 1584302569. \$24.00. 56 p.

Reviewer: Donna Cardon

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: picture book; informational book;

Subject: Su, Shi, 1037-1101--Juvenile literature; Authors, Chinese--Biography--Juvenile literature; Books-Reviews;

Su Dongpo was a famous scholar/statesman from 11th century China. This beautifully illustrated picture book is more of a tribute to Su Dongpo than a detailed biography. Su Dongpo was the son of a scholar. He and his brother Su Ziyou did so well in the national examinations that both received high positions in the imperial government. As different rulers rose and fell, Su Dongpo went in and out of favor, and finally died after a long exile on an inhospitable island. Demi recounts the main events of Su Dongpo's life, but nestles them in poetic praise. "Just as Su (Dongpo's) writing followed the laws of nature, so did his rulings which were as brilliant as the sun." Her language echoes the formal narrative style of ancient Chinese chroniclers. The writing is fluid with an elegant simplicity. Demi's ink and water color illustrations perfectly compliment the style of the writing. As one would expect from Demi, many of the illustrations feature diminutive figures in monumental environments accented with gold. The landscapes are reminiscent of Chinese scroll paintings. This is an appealing introduction to a character little known to Western culture.