



2018

The Crystal Ribbon

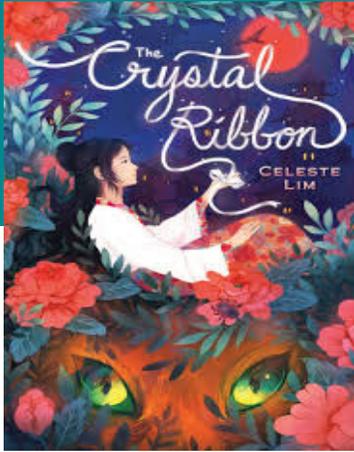
Jamie Greenwood

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Greenwood, Jamie (2018) "The Crystal Ribbon," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 39 : Iss. 6 , Article 92.
Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol39/iss6/92>

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Book Review

The Crystal Ribbon

Author

Celeste Lim

Illustrator

N/A

Reviewer

Jamie Greenwood

Rating

Excellent

Level

Intermediate

Pages

341

Year

2017

Publisher

Scholastic Press

ISBN

9780545767033

Li Jing is a eleven-year-old girl growing up on a poor farm in rural China during the Song Dynasty. Her peers in the small town mock her for her name, because it is so similar to the five-tailed golden fox deity that protects their city: Huli Jing. Despite her father's assurances that her name is powerful, Jing is embarrassed, but that doesn't seem to matter as much when suddenly she is sold as a bride for five silver pieces. She marries into the Guo family, where she is the wife and nursemaid of a three-year-old boy named Ju'nan. When her sisters-in-law frame her for stealing, the Guo family sells Jing to a chinglou, where she is to be a consort, or entertainer of men. Jing knows that this is not the life she was meant to live and she escapes the chinglou and returns home to her family. Jing's journey shows her what her true life's calling is meant to be: a shamaness at the shrine of the Great Huli Jing.

The *Crystal Ribbon* successfully draws attention to some of the lesser-known traditions and customs of "medieval" China, such as the practice of tongyang xi (young wives her were also nursemaids to their infant husbands), belief in jing, and other traditional holidays and celebrations. Jing's character is most remarkable for her resilience and tenacity in the face of difficult hardships. The book's message is of the importance of showing kindness to others despite the abuse one may have suffered by another's hand. The reader will grimace in pain as Jing is tortured by the Guo family and cheer her on as she escapes the chinglou. Jing truly does become a protector of others just as her hometown's Great Huli Jing. She continues her service at the Great Huli Jing's shrine and inspires readers to be companionate toward their fellowman and seek to find their own calling within themselves.