



How Many Problems Will the Cat Have?

一隻貓會有多少問題

Author: Xiaxia **Illustrator:** Sai Miho **Publisher:** Rye Field Publishing

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Translator: Helen Wang

Do you have a child at home who asks endless questions? Or perhaps there's a curious child within you? Inspired by Nobel laureate Pablo Neruda's *The Book of Questions*, which delves into life's mysteries through open-ended queries, this collection offers a poetic dialogue with Neruda's work. Xia Xia draws from verses in Neruda's book, translated by Chen Li, using them as titles for thirty-six original poems that weave together everyday experiences such as school, rain, or mosquito bites.

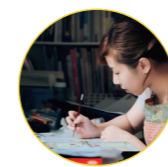
Organized into four sections based on reading comprehension levels, these poems reflect on the wonders of nature, the passage of time, and the soul's journey. Through gentle, playful verses, this collection invites children to celebrate curiosity, nurture imagination, and find joy in asking endless questions.



Author **Xia Xia**

Xia Xia is passionate about writing and life, and she is a mother of two sons. Due to her children's endless curiosity, she began writing children's poetry, not only to document their growth but also to answer their questions.

Her published poetry collections include *Little Daughter*, and *Tantrum*. Her novels include *Beer Before the End of the World*, *Dog Says*, and *Millennium Zoo*. Her essay collections include *Sugar for Tomorrow*, and *At 5:15 PM*. She has compiled children's poetry anthologies *Children Meet Poetry - Want to Sunbathe with You* and *Children Meet Poetry - Five Mothers*, and authored her own children's poetry collection *Polite Ghost*.



Illustrator **Sai Miho**

Sai Miho is a freelance illustrator and writer who takes on commissions, teaches painting, and creates art. With a background in graphic design from university, she previously worked as an art editor at a publishing house. Later, she moved to Japan to study illustration, spending several years washing dishes at a French restaurant in Tokyo while pursuing her dreams.

After returning to Taiwan, Sai Miho turned her own story into a book to inspire young people to dream boldly and work toward making their aspirations a reality. She also illustrates picture books, aiming to fill children's childhoods with joyful dreams. Sai Miho strives to bring a touch of beauty to the world through her work, even in small ways. She is the author of *Tokyo: My Journey as an Illustrator* and *The Little Red Airplane Goes to Work*, among other titles.

The World Is Born from Questions: A Note from the Author

by XiaXia

Sometimes, we forget that the world is born from questions, created by questions. Thankfully, children remind us of this truth.

The inspiration for my poetry came from the endless questions my children asked. In 2021, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the government announced a suspension of work and school, and we were confined at home for about four months. This period left a lasting impression on many parents. I vividly recall being locked indoors with my two young children, 24 hours a day, unable to go outside.

This poetry collection began during that time. Children's questions are endless, reflecting their natural curiosity about

the world. In answering their questions, I was reminded of Pablo Neruda's *Book of Questions*, a work he completed just months before his death. The collection consists of seventy-four poems, each made up of several thought-provoking questions on topics like nature, philosophy, religion, history, and literature.

When I first read it, Neruda's gentle questioning and poetic imagination left a deep impression on me. His questions also provided space for readers to reflect and think for themselves.

So, when my children's endless questions kept coming, I thought of this book. As I revisited Neruda's verses, I realized that perhaps the questions he posed decades ago were similar to the

questions children ask today. This inspired me to create a dialogue between my children's poetry and *Book of Questions*.

The extended period of confinement led me to seek mental exploration to compensate for physical limitations. During the day, I revisited *Book of Questions*, and at night, as I lay beside my children helping them fall asleep, I reflected on Neruda's verses. After they drifted off, I would write down my thoughts. One by one, the poems gradually came to life.

This collection features thirty-six poems, each inspired by a verse from *Book of Questions*. The poems are organized into four sections based on reading comprehension levels, gradually

increasing in complexity. I used Chen Li's translations, and I am deeply grateful for his generosity and years of dedication to translating foreign classics. Among the selected poems are Neruda's reflections on nature, time, and the soul's quest, which brought both comfort and inspiration during the pandemic.

When sharing this poetry with children, there's no need to explain its background. Children are free spirits, and the world is new to them. Each question is a new beginning. If they simply enjoy the words and imagination, perhaps the answers to all the mysteries are already taking root in their hearts.

Q₁₉
What **language** does rainwater speak to
worn-down cities?

The grass droops sadly
The earth is like a burnt biscuit
The cicadas in the trees scream urgently
Suddenly, a crack of thunder
Splits the thick cloud in two

The little black dog is too hot to stick out its tongue
The little brown cat lies on the ground like melted butter
The little white bird sits in the sun, its head almost steaming
Finally, the first big drop of rain
Falls
And the cool fresh northwest rain
Falls

Have a drink, grass
Have a shower, earth
Don't be cross, cicada
Little dog, little cat, little bird
Come and cool off

The rain greets everyone
Pouring down, it shouts loudly
And that summer afternoon
To the sound of the rain
Everyone enjoys a comfortable nap



Q₂₀
Is there anything sadder
than a **train** standing still in the rain?

Sometimes
I am a little ant that has left the army
My friends have all gone
There's only me ... on my own
Playing on the seesaw

Sometimes
I am a pigeon that has lost its way
I can't find my flock
There's only me ... lonely me
Trying to find my way home

Sometimes
I am a train carriage
The other carriages are lined up
To form a very long train
That rumbles as it sets off
There's only me ... feeling sad
At being left behind

Sometimes
I am a drop of rain
Falling from the sky
But even if I'm the last thing left
I will happily wash away people's sorrow



Q₂₁

Do you know what Earth ponders so deeply
and **silently** in autumn?

When autumn comes
A cool wind blows
Earth yawns a massive yawn
Ready for winter's dreamland

When everyone thinks Earth is sleeping
It's actually picking the leaves
And reading them

When everyone thinks Earth is waking
It goes back to sleep
And the leaves in his hand fall to the ground

When autumn comes
A cool wind blows
Grandpa yawns a massive yawn
Ready for a sweet dreamland

When everyone thinks Grandpa is sleeping
He suddenly opens his eyes and says:
"I wasn't asleep, I was thinking"

When everyone thinks Grandpa is waking
He starts snoring again
Before he can take off his glasses

The fact is
Autumn is like Grandpa
Pretending to sleep, but actually thinking
Pretending to think, but actually sleeping