



It's Not Fair

A Full English translation is available.

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Author: Juei-Chih Tsao **Illustrator:** Juei-Chih Tsao **Publisher:** Rye Field Publishing

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40 pages | 23 x 17 cm **Volume:** 1 (Three-book series; each book is interlinked but can also stand alone.)

BFT2.0 Translator: Michelle Kuo

When Little Lion plays long jump with Rabbit or jumps rope with Duck, it never feels fair—Little Lion just can't win. "It's not fair!" he cries. Nothing seems fair at all.

Things come to a head at snack time, when Little Lion bursts into tears after receiving just one biscuit—the same size as the ones given to much smaller animals. What is fairness, anyway? And how can Little Lion begin to make sense of it?

It's Not Fair! gently introduces children to the concept of fairness, helping them navigate feelings of frustration, comparison, and conflict. Kids often wonder why things don't feel equal. This story offers a thoughtful starting point for those conversations. Through Little Lion's experiences with his classmates, children are invited to reflect on fairness in different situations, making it a perfect read-aloud for parents, caregivers, and educators alike.



Author **Juei-Chih Tsao**

With a master's degree in law, Juei-Chih Tsao has been writing and illustrating picture books since 1996. Known for her vivid, colorful artwork inspired by the brightness of Taiwanese fruits, her stories are warm and tender. Her debut picture book, *Scratch Scratch: Little Bear's Itchy Day*, won First Prize in the Picture Book Category of the 9th Guo Zheng Chen Children's Literature Award. Her book *Dorothy's First Day of School* received Honorable Mention in the 14th Hsin-Yi Children's Literature Award.

When she's not creating picture books, she enjoys cooking, reading, gardening, and listening to rock music. Her published works include *Big Bad Wolf's Dining Table*, *Rise and Shine!*, *It's Bed Time!*, *The Eagle and Me*, *Dorothy's First Day of School*, *I Will Be Brave*, *Scratch Scratch: Little Bear's Itchy Day*, and *Yummy Yummy: Little Bear's Food Adventure*. This is her first time creating a picture book in Taiwanese (Hokkien).

The Bright Hope of “Ho-ka-t sai”: The Childlike Warmth of Juei-Chih Tsao’s Children Books

by Higo Wu
(originally published on OKAPI)

Since the release of her debut picture book *Itchy! Itchy!* in 2006, Juei-Chih Tsao has created stories that resonate deeply with young readers. This year, she launched a new trilogy written in Taiwanese: *It’s Not Fair!*, *I Don’t Like It*, and *Ho-ka-t sai*. These bring her total number of picture books to seventeen and mark a turning point in her use of language—though her core artistic vision remains unchanged.

Though the characters in this new series are animals, the emotions they express are unmistakably human and childlike. A lion cub obsessed with fairness,

a big elephant with a touch of jealousy, a tiny mouse discovering the joy of helping others—Tsao captures these moments with minimal text and vivid expressions. These animals feel just like kindergarten or early primary school kids—each brimming with a unique personality and energy.

Tsao admits she rarely interacts with children and doesn’t have kids herself, but she’s always been a close observer. “When I see a child—or even a puppy—I instinctively wave or wink,” she says. “In that moment, I feel like I’m their age too. Maybe I never really grew up.”

Visually, Tsao’s books are known

for their vibrant colors—bright, joyful, and full of warmth. Her signature “Juei-Chih Tsao blue” feels welcoming, even as a cool tone. In her artist biography, she describes her palette as “as colorful and passionate as Taiwanese fruit.” This may come from her time working at Taiwan’s Council of Agriculture, where fruit-themed calendars left a lasting impression. In the new series, this influence shows in playful ways: the lion’s mane glows like an orange mandarin, the monkey’s red fur resembles a dragon fruit, and the sheep’s fleece feels like a crisp pear.

Tsao had long incorporated Taiwanese into public readings, even for her Mandarin books. After receiving enthusiastic feedback and watching her husband read a personal story in Taiwanese with deep emotion, she felt ready to create in the language herself. Each of the three new books includes Mandarin text and bilingual audio, making

them accessible to readers still learning.

At a recent school visit, Tsao saw a child pat their chest gently when hearing the phrase “ho-ka-t sai.” There’s no exact translation, but it roughly means, “What a good thing!” or “How lucky I am!” This subtle, emotional response deeply moved her. “I think ‘ho-ka-t sai’ is one of the most beautiful phrases in Taiwanese,” she said. “If we can still say it—there’s still hope.”

This essay has been edited for the purposes of this booklet.

Higo Wu has previously led curriculum development and parent-child education programs in the children’s industry. He is now a storyteller, picture book translator, speaker, and the producer and host of the podcast Story Break Station. He believes that the smallest unit of the universe is not the atom, but the story.

When he joins the long jump contest, he says,

“NO FAIR!
You’re just better at jumping!”



1

3

4

5

When he joins an arm-wrestling match, he says,

“NO FAIR!
Your arms are stronger than mine!”



Snack time! Everyone goes to wash their hands.

