



# Why the Cat? Amazing Stories the Stamps Tell You, Vol. 6

This book does not have a full English translation.

貓咪為什麼？——有故事的郵票 6

**Author:** Shu-Fen Wang **Illustrator:** Nanjun **Publisher:** Yuan-Liou Publishing

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172 pages | 14.8 x 21 cm **Volume:** 6 (Ongoing; each stands alone.)

**BFT2.0 Translator:** Michelle Kuo

What can a cat on a postage stamp teach us about the world? In this delightful and informative book, young readers are invited to explore global cultures—one tiny stamp at a time. Playful and inspiring, the book celebrates cats, stamps, and the journeys of stories as they travel, evolve, and connect people across the globe.

From a classic Mongolian tale about reciting sutras to Belgium's cat throwing festival, each story is followed by a feature-style section that introduces other intriguing cat stamps. Created by internationally acclaimed author Shu-Fen Wang and illustrator Nanjun, *Why the Cat?* is the latest title in the award-winning original series *Amazing Stories the Stamps Tell You*. It opens with ten officially issued cat-themed stamps from around the world and tells the fascinating stories behind their images. Nanjun, who works entirely by hand, infuses each painting with classical elegance, meticulously researching every detail to ensure historical accuracy.



Author **Shu-Fen Wang**

Shu-Fen Wang graduated from National Taiwan Normal University. An award-winning and bestselling children's author, she has also served as a primary school director, art teacher, and consultant and host for literary programs on public television. Since publishing her first book, *Fresh Stories for First Graders*, in 1993, Wang has produced over sixty works, including children's books and teaching materials. Her children's novel *I Am an Idiot*, frequently featured on life education reading lists in Taiwan, has been published in Korean and simplified Chinese and adapted into a Korean film.



Illustrator **Nanjun**

Born in Changzhi, Pingtung, Nanjun was inspired by the exquisite illustrations in picture books in his elementary school years. He enjoys starting his creative process with a cup of black coffee to awaken his soul. Then, he retreats to his own small studio, where he picks up his paintbrush and begins to dream on paper. Committed to drawing by hand, he cherishes how watercolor dances on paper in unpredictable ways.

# The Magic of a Single Postage Stamp: How One Small Image Reveals a Nation's Culture, History, and Artistic Heritage

by Shan-Chung Yang

Can a tiny postage stamp really contain stories as rich and wondrous as *The Arabian Nights*?

Many might assume that a stamp is simply proof of postage. Yet compared with people who must carry passports across borders or goods that require documents to clear customs, a letter is a light object. It can cross mountains, seas, and national boundaries with relative ease. As a result, thoughtful care is often poured into the design of each stamp. Within that small square of imagery, a country can weave together its history, culture, and artistic heritage. A stamp becomes a miniature national emblem, a compact portrait of identity and pride.

Shu-Fen Wang, a children's book author passionate about both cats and stamp collecting, has gathered cat-

themed stamps from around the world. From her extensive collection, she selected ten stamps and shaped them into ten delightful origin stories. Each opens the door to a unique cultural tale about cats. As you read, you may be surprised to discover just how many countries treasure legends about cats. Whether white, black, tabby, or ginger, cats take on distinct personalities and symbolic meanings depending on the stories and historical contexts that shaped them.

Some cats in these legends are princesses transformed into feline form. Some are clever, sly, or mischievously lazy. Others possess magical powers. With each chapter, Wang also includes supplemental sections that introduce the folklore behind the stamp, the origins of the tale, and the history or literary traditions behind it.

Through her knowledgeable storytelling, readers encounter not only a variety of cats and myths but also the important children's writers from manifold corners of the world.

For example, in the section titled "Why Turn Into a Cat?"; readers learn that both J. R. R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings*, and J. K. Rowling, creator of the Harry Potter series, were influenced by classic English writer Edith Nesbit. Wang effortlessly connects this literary lineage to philately, the collection and study of postage stamps. On British stamps, one finds not only famous fictional cats but also felines tied to curious moments of history—such as the legendary cat that helped Richard Whittington become the mayor of London three times, or Mrs. Chippy, the loyal cat who joined polar explorer Ernest Shackleton on his Antarctic expedition. Through Wang's gentle and engaging narration, each story hidden within a stamp resurfaces brightly, unfolding a tiny illustrated world.

Yet Wang's talent extends beyond her research. In this cat-themed stamp collection, she also showcases a vibrant range of narrative techniques. At times she writes from a cat's point of view; other chapters employ reverse chronology; still others take on the reflective tone of a personal essay. These shifts in style offer young readers an accessible introduction to different literary approaches,

demonstrating how myriad forms of storytelling can illuminate the same subject in fresh ways.

The result is a book that acts as a bridge, connecting cats, postage stamps, literature, and global cultural traditions. It is a playful but deeply informative guide for young readers, allowing them to travel the world one stamp at a time. Through Wang's meticulous selection and warm storytelling, readers come to understand how even a tiny printed square can reflect a nation's imagination, values, and collective past. In this sense, the book becomes not only a celebration of cats and philately but also a gateway to understanding how stories migrate, evolve, and take root across borders.

A single stamp may seem small, but in Wang's hands, it becomes a window. Through that window, readers glimpse the vast, interconnected tapestry of world cultures—each thread beginning, unexpectedly, with a cat.

*Shan-Chung Yang graduated from the Department of History at National Taiwan University and has worked as a teacher and a literary event planner. Born in the subtropical winter of a humid island, she loves the trees and climate of the temperate zone. She is a devoted bear enthusiast, and her life idol is the Adélie penguin.*

# Why Recite Sutras?

On the postage stamp, the cat licked its tongue with a quiet *meow*. Sadly, the mice bowing their heads to listen to the chanting never noticed.

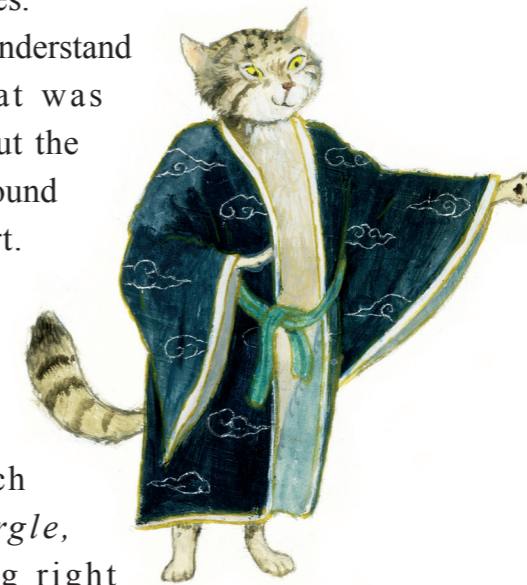


The old cat was slowing down. He could no longer run with the speed he once had. Just yesterday, when he tried to leap onto the table, he slipped and fell.

With age, his greatest weakness was that he could no longer snatch a mouse in one swift motion to satisfy his hunger. He patted his slightly flattened stomach and thought, *If this goes on, what will I do?*

For the past few days, he had been staying in a large temple, where a lama sat with closed eyes, chanting scriptures.

He didn't understand a word of what was being recited. But the deep, rhythmic sound calmed his heart. As he lay quietly on the floor, he suddenly realized he could hear his own stomach growling—*gurgle, gurgle*—falling right



in time with the lama's chanting. *How strange*, he thought. And in that moment, the old cat was struck with inspiration.

The next morning at dawn, he secretly slipped into the lama's outer robe, climbed onto the platform, and began to mimic what he had seen the day before. With great solemnity, he sat there, intoning a deep "purr, purr," as though he were chanting scriptures himself.

The mice living in the temple basement had always been wary of this old cat.

But they reminded one another: *Don't get caught by him.*

Even so, the sight before their eyes was simply too strange. Several mice scurried off to report to their companions.

An old mouse, already advanced in years, listened and nodded.

"I understand now," he said. "This cat must have taken up Buddhism!"

Puffing himself up with importance, he added, "I've even heard of cats who, after embracing the teachings of the Buddha, turned into kind and gentle

creatures."

So they dispatched a big, broad-shouldered mouse to stand at a safe distance and call out to the cat:

"Hey! Have you really become a Buddhist?"

"Yes," replied the cat gravely. "I am a kind and gentle lama-cat now."

Gone was all the fierceness and swagger he once had.

The mouse called out again, "Then what scripture are you chanting?"

"If you want to know," the cat said with half-closed eyes and an expression of deep sincerity, "you are welcome to come and listen. But today, my energy is spent. Tomorrow morning, I will recite it for you again."

An old mouse, seasoned and wise in his own eyes, said, "We should bring offerings of food to the lama-cat. If he eats well, he'll have the strength to preach the scriptures."

And so, the mice brought him a piece of dried meat, and with great reverence, laid it before the cat.

The mice even agreed to come back the next

day to hear what sounded like a very powerful Buddhist scripture.

When the mice returned to the basement, one long-tailed mouse couldn't hold back anymore: "Everyone, do you really believe that cat has turned into a kind and gentle creature?"

"Oh no! That's disrespectful to the Dharma—you'll be punished by the gods and Buddhas!" An elderly mouse's face turned pale with fright, and he quickly put his paws together, bowing again and again toward the sky.

The other mice dared not say a word. They lowered their heads, pressed their paws together, and swore never to offend the deities—of course, they also mustn't doubt the lama-cat.

The long-tailed mouse was still unconvinced, but seeing all his mouse brothers glaring at him, he had no choice but to shut his mouth.

"Come, come, let's sit in five rows. Don't sit too close, or else you'll be tempted to chat with your neighbor."

