



A Stone Refused to Sleep

A Full English translation is available.

有一個石頭不想睡

Author: Manling Yeh **Illustrator:** Manling Yeh **Publisher:** Yuan-Liou Publishing

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By the sea stands a rock unlike any other. While the rest drift off to sleep, soothed by the ocean goddess's lullaby, this one suddenly wakes.

Wobbling and unsteady, this stone encounters the world like a newborn. Though it is probably a million years old, the stone experiences a series of life's "firsts": an awakening of the five senses, the rise and fall of emotions. Filled with curiosity, it brims with expectation—what will it encounter next? Then one day, a memory stirs within: it recalls the instant of its birth countless epochs ago.

Infused with the spirit of oral storytelling, this playful and poetic book carries the grandeur and mystery of myth.



Author **Manling Yeh**

Manling Yeh is a picture book author and puppet designer. Since 2005, she has worked closely with Puppet & Its Double Theater, creating puppet characters and designing a wide range of forms. Her work has received the Hsin Yi Children's Literature Award, the Kaohsiung Public Library Picture Books Sprouting Awards, and was selected for dPICTUS: The Unpublished Picturebook Showcase. Books that she has both authored and illustrated include *Who's Coming for Afternoon Tea?*, *Little Cotton*, *Slowly and Me*, and *A Stone Refused to Sleep*.

When a Stone Wakes: A Myth-Like Story of Seeing the World For The First Time

by Tzu Ning Huang

Every culture carries its own myth of origins, an imaginative account of how life began and how consciousness first emerged in the world. In Chinese tradition, for instance, the goddess Nuwa fashions human beings from clay. In Japanese mythology, Izanagi and Izanami create the islands through divine labor. And in the Biblical narrative, humanity springs from Adam and Eve, shaped directly by God. These stories often depict the birth of life as a transformation: inert matter, once lifeless and unaware, is stirred by divine touch or the forces of nature. Awareness takes shape, and with it comes memory. Memory, in turn, gives rise to a sense of inheritance—and through the continuity of inheritance, stories begin to accumulate across the vast expanse of time.

A Stone Refused to Sleep is precisely

such a tale. It tells the most essential story of movement: from nothing to something, from silence to consciousness. It portrays the process of awakening and becoming, recounting how a single stone, long dormant on the shore, slowly opens its eyes and discovers the world for the first time. The narrative adopts a semi-observational, gently documentary tone, allowing readers to witness the stone's early experiences: its first movements, its first emotions, its first encounters with the living world. Occasional glimpses through the stone's own perspective pull the reader deeper into its consciousness, creating the uncanny sensation of rising out of primordial darkness together with the protagonist.

Gradually, the stone begins to perceive the world through newly formed senses. It soon learns to interact with

others, taking in everything for the very first time. As we read, we accompany this fledgling soul as it explores a world that may seem ordinary to us. But this young stone glows with irresistible curiosity.

By the time the stone is carried into the great ceremonial fire, its journey circles back to its beginnings. In the flames, it remembers its origins. After experiencing a brief yet profound awakening, it chooses to return to the seashore and fall once more into deep sleep. Yet even such a fleeting moment of consciousness has marked it forever. Through memory—its own private treasury of experiences—it has become different from the countless stones that have never stirred. From that moment onward, the tale of this “stone spirit” begins to pass from one human generation to the next, becoming part of the cultural fabric, a story shaped by the imagination of those who retell it.

Beyond her work in the visual arts, author Manling Yeh also works as a puppet designer for a theater troupe. This experience is vividly reflected in her characters. Whether portraying the stone itself or the villagers participating in ritual, each figure possesses a distinctive form and an intangible sense of presence.

More, the book uses a lyrical, nearly incantatory style of narration rather than direct dialogue. Together with the choice of the stone—rather than a human—as its protagonist, this creates the atmosphere of an ancient folktale or a whispered myth. Yeh, who has written elsewhere about her experiences as a mother, also draws upon moments of rediscovering the world through the eyes of her child. These experiences of shared wonder lend the story a warm, playful core beneath its mythic form.

After reading, one may find oneself wondering: in the vastness of the ocean depicted in the book, why is it that only one stone refuses to sleep? Perhaps, in moments beyond the boundaries of the story, other stones have also dreamed of awakening. Or perhaps this stone is truly unique in the way that you and I are: we each live a singular life, creating stories that cannot be duplicated or repeated.

Tzu Ning Huang is an editorial consultant at Books from Taiwan. She loves to listen and tell stories, enjoys conversations and encounters with others, and appreciates time alone. She also loves to use photography and writing to explore the world.



As the villagers marched uphill, they began to sing together.
The stone opened its mouth with them.
“Eeee—ahh” was the very first sound it made.



They arrived in the village,
where the air was thick with the delicious
aromas of food prepared by each family.

The stone inhaled the fragrant air.
Without understanding why,
it heard its stomach begin to grumble.



辟里
啪啦
Crackle
Snap!

辟里
啪啦
Crackle
Snap!

辟里
啪啦
Crackle
Snap!

The celebration built to a peak.
Circling the fire,
all the villagers began dancing with delight.