



How Old Is An Apple?

A Full English translation is available.

蘋果幾歲呢？

Author: Xia Xia **Illustrator:** Soupy Tang **Publisher:** Rye Field Children Publications

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BFT2.0 Translator: Lya Shaffer

How old is an apple?

The apple in my tummy—how old is it now?

How old is the mama whose tummy I was in?

This fresh, inventive, and profound book invites children to think on every page. Told from the perspective of a curious child, it follows a stream of questions about how old everything is. From the apple in a child's hand to a puppy on the run, from a sun drawn in crayon to a grandma who has begun to forget things, every creature, person, and object seem to have an age. Poet and beloved writer Xia Xia creates a playful, rhythmic stream of questions that carry deeper meaning beneath the surface. The illustrator Soupy Tang brings these words to life with bright and colorful images. Themes of time, emotion, agelessness, and fragility are woven in with a light touch, encouraging readers to think, dream, and—when they reach the final page—ask questions of their own.



Author **Xia Xia**

Xia Xia is passionate about writing and life, and she is a mother of two sons. Inspired by 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*.



Illustrator **Soupy Tang**

Soupy Tang is an illustrator who holds a Master of Arts in Illustration from the University of Edinburgh. She has loved drawing since childhood and now enjoys a happy life where she gets to draw every day. She delights in observing all the seemingly unimportant moments of daily life and remembering the smallest details. Her illustrated works include *Relax Together with Soupy*, *Soupy Mom's Diary*, and *The Shape of Home: Soupy and Struan's Scottish Adventure*.

How Old Is Everything? A Child's Questions Become a Playful and Profound Meditation on Time

by Pei-Yun Yu
(originally published on OPENBOOK.ORG.TW)

The picture book *How Old Is an Apple?* begins with a question that appears whimsical, even illogical: “How old is an apple?” With this seemingly nonsensical inquiry, the reader is ushered into a child’s inner world. Though such a question defies adult logic, it brims with playfulness and reveals the winding, imaginative paths of a young child’s thinking.

Told entirely through first-person questions, the narrative captures a child’s curiosity about the smallest details of everyday life. From an apple to the seed inside it, from a puppy to the shadow that follows it, each question branches out

freely, mirroring the way a child’s thoughts leap from one wonder to the next. In these wandering inquiries, we witness the pure, unfiltered lens through which children observe and make sense of the world.

But the questions do not stop at concrete objects. They stretch into more abstract realms—shadows, light, and even time itself. Xia Xia’s text distills the boundless imagination of children, and this poetic openness is one of the book’s most captivating qualities. Through these innocent questions, she explores how young children use the idea of “age” to grasp the passage of time and the notion of growing up.

As the story turns its pages, the questions gradually circle back to the child who is asking them: “Me, as I blow out the candles, how old am I?” The accompanying illustration shows five candles on a birthday cake, hinting that the child is about to turn five. This moment becomes a symbolic anchor—a milestone that gathers the book’s scattered questions and grounds them in the familiar ritual of blowing out birthday candles.

Yet the book is not only an exploration of time; it is also a gentle study of emotional change. The child asks, “How old is the mama whose tummy I was in?” “How old is my gentle mama?” and “What’s my mama’s age when she gets... angry?” Time begins to intertwine with feelings, for the child is not simply wondering about a mother’s numerical age. Rather, these questions reveal an attempt to understand the shifting faces of the person they love most. Beneath each line lies a tender sensitivity to the emotional world of the family.

A similar poignancy surfaces when the child wonders, “My grandma who forgets things—what age might she be?” The question carries a trace of sadness, hinting at the child’s awareness of memory loss and the fragility of aging. Through this emotional layering, the book moves beyond the theme of time and opens into a broader reflection on relationships, care, and the subtle ways

children perceive change in the people around them.

The graceful language of poet Xia Xia pairs beautifully with Soupy Tang’s vibrant illustrations. Tang’s lively compositions and rich colors create a warm visual landscape that deepens and expands the text rather than merely echoing it. Through inventive imagery, abstract concepts become tangible, allowing even questions like “What’s the age of a dog’s shadow?” to take on shape and meaning.

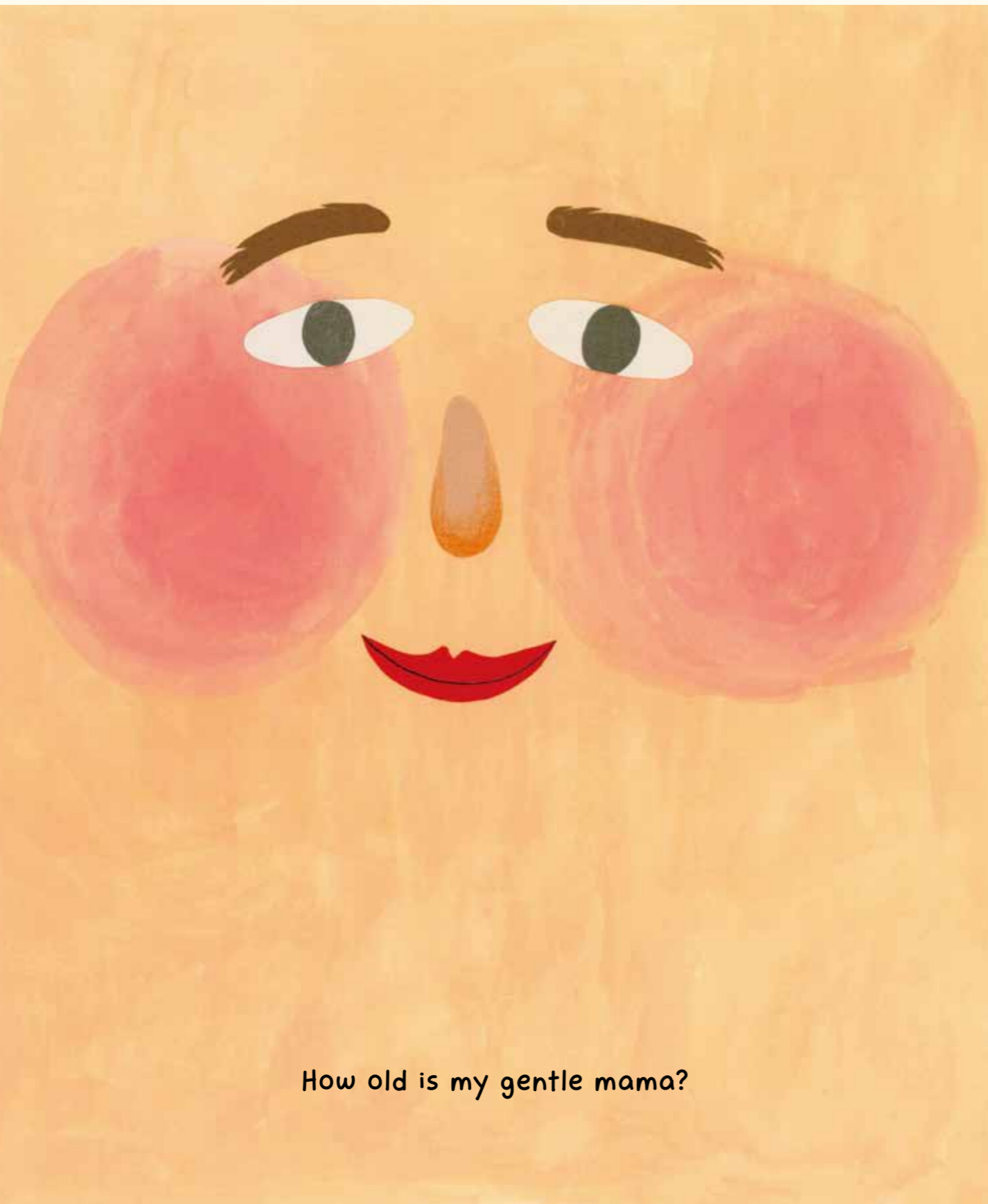
The seemingly playful phrases in *How Old Is an Apple?* in fact weave together a young child’s dawning awareness of time, growth, and emotion. The book gently invites both children and the adults reading with them to linger on questions that sound simple yet carry surprising depth. One can easily imagine a young reader closing the book and, inspired by the child within its pages, beginning to ask their own poetic, wonder-filled questions about the world.

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

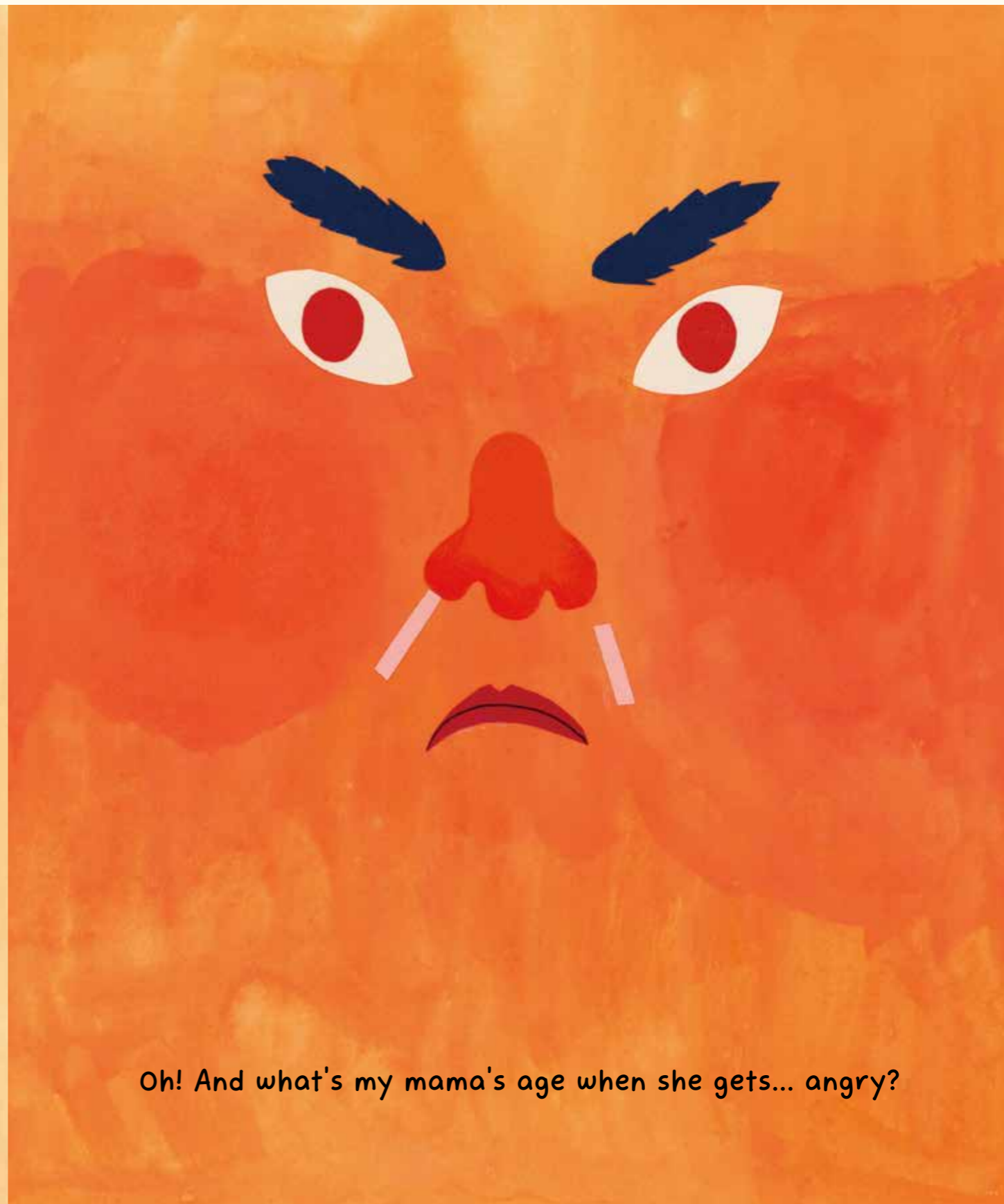
Pei-Yun Yu is currently a professor at the Graduate Institute of Children’s Literature at National Taitung University. Her work focuses on children’s literature and culture, including research, teaching, curation, publishing, creative writing, translation, and literary criticism.



How old is the mama whose tummy I was in?



How old is my gentle mama?



Oh! And what's my mama's age when she gets... angry?



How old is a lamp?