

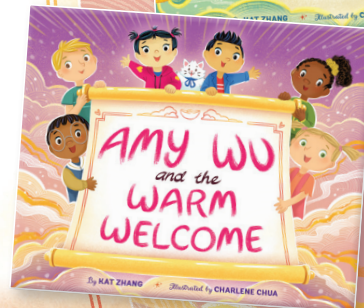
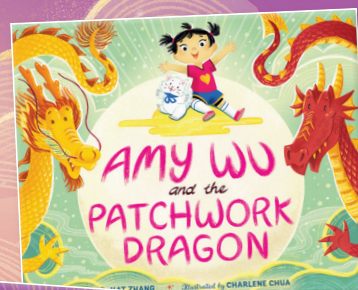
A DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR THE

AMY WU

SERIES:

Amy Wu and the Perfect Bao
Amy Wu and the Patchwork Dragon
Amy Wu and the Warm Welcome

By Kat Zhang
Illustrated by Charlene Chua



SIMON & SCHUSTER
Books for Young Readers

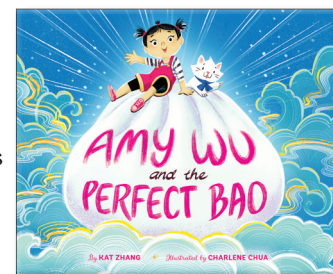
In this series of books written by Kat Zhang and illustrated by Charlene Chua, Amy Wu strives to accomplish some very important tasks. She makes the perfect bao, crafts a dragon unique to her, and connects with a shy new friend—all while dealing with challenges that arise along the way. Amy approaches each problem with enthusiasm, always puts her imagination to work, and knows when to seek support from family and friends.

Author Kat Zhang highlights elements of Chinese culture with stories that are nonetheless universal, while Charlene Chua's illustrations bring Amy's world to life with both playful and true-to-life details. These books are exciting for everyone who sees themselves in Amy Wu—whether it's because they recognize their own cultural heritage, know the trials of feeling different, or are tackling their own dilemma of the day.

AMY WU AND THE PERFECT BAO Hardcover: 9781534411333 | Ages: 4 to 8

ABOUT THE BOOK

Amy Wu loves bao, but why can't she make the **perfect** bao? Author Kat Zhang introduces the complexities of making bao—Chinese steamed buns—as we follow Amy on a journey to make bao like her parents and grandmother do. While some are too full or too empty, and others fall apart or aren't the right size, Amy works through her frustration and ultimately discovers a solution that works for her. This lovely story highlights a scenario that can resonate for readers in various ways, from the exact experience of trying to pinch those wrappers just right to the pressure of doing something as well as their elders.



★ “An extra-tasty book for bao lovers everywhere.” —*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

“This sweet book both encourages cooking together as a family and rewards creative problem-solving.”
—Food Network Blog

“Children will relate to this readaloud if they've ever faced a situation when emulating adults failed, but Amy's triumph is sure to inspire them to try again.” —BCCB

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think it was so important to Amy to create the perfect bao?
2. Amy works on creating a bao with pork, shrimp, ginger, and mushrooms. Have you tried a bao like this or with other fillings? Can you think of foods from other cultures that are similar? (*For more exploration on this topic, see “This is a Dumpling?” reproducible activity at the end of this guide*)

3. Making dumplings is a family activity that means a lot to Amy. What is a food that means a lot to your community or family? Have you been taught to cook or create anything as part of a tradition?
4. In the end, Amy realizes her “not-so-perfect bao...tastes just as good.” Can you think of something you expected to be “perfect” that turned out differently?
 - What did you expect to be perfect and why?
 - Was it still good even if it was different than expected?



EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. **Try Out Amy’s Family Recipe!** Bring ingredients to make baos like Amy’s. Have students try their hand at punching the dough, and after it rises, rolling it out and pinching it together. First try using dough pieces made for larger hands. Then try some that fit a child’s hand better. How did the size make a difference for them?

Note: the bao dough will need time to rise. Start the dough early and then continue cooking. This way everyone can also see how the dough rises after the designated time.

While the baos steam, you can take the opportunity to discuss questions such as #2 and #3 (above).

Check out Amy Wu Shows You How to Make the Perfect Bao from SimonKids for inspiration:

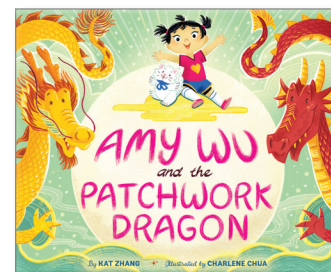
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MpTo9UiQgIM&t=5s>

2. **This Is a Dumpling?** Research and discuss this food category. Consider whether there are other foods across cultures that fit in a category together, even though we might not think of them as similar (e.g., samosas, sandwiches, tamales).
 - What did you think a bao was?
 - What do you think of when you think of dumplings?
 - Looking at variations on dumplings, did you think of this or that food item as a dumpling before?
3. **An Abundance of Dumplings.** Have a potluck or cooking session to try bao as well as variations on dumplings from other cultures.
 - What makes them different?
 - What makes them similar?
 - Do these foods have a certain cultural significance?
4. **Food Brings Us Together.** Create a recipe book using recipes from students to distribute among the class. If possible, ask volunteers to contribute dishes to a potluck, and encourage students to share why they chose to include that dish.

AMY WU AND THE PATCHWORK DRAGON Hardcover: 9781534463639 | Ages: 4 to 8

ABOUT THE BOOK

After their teacher reads a book starring dragons, Amy Wu’s class craft their own dragons. But when Amy’s Eastern dragon looks different from her friends’ Western-inspired dragons, they start to question if it’s even a dragon at all. It’s not until Amy’s grandma tells them a story of her own that they come to appreciate a different kind of dragon—one that comes from Eastern mythology. Bolstered by the support of her family and friends, Amy finally creates a dragon that is a little Eastern and a little Western, just like herself!



“Chua again brings plenty of colorful spirit with her cartoons, perfectly capturing Amy’s fun, creative energy and surrounding her Chinese protagonist with a diverse school community...What is even more appealing is the courage Amy models to readers to stay true to oneself, especially when faced with a lack of role models.” —*Kirkus Reviews*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why does Amy initially struggle with her teacher’s assignment to make a dragon?
2. What emotions do Amy go through in the story? How are they conveyed in the illustrations?
3. Have you ever felt like the odd one out? What was the reason? How did it feel?

4. Did you recognize the type of dragon Amy drew in the beginning of the story? Have you seen this style of dragon out in the world? What was the occasion?
5. In the end, what inspires Amy's patchwork dragon? What makes it uniquely hers?

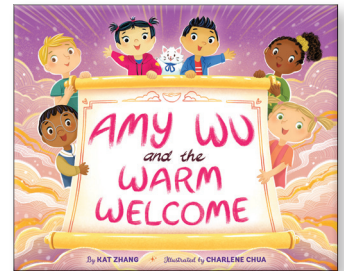
EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. **Drawing Dragons!** When you think of dragons, what do you imagine? How many legs does it have? How many wings? Any other identifying features?
 - Draw your version of a dragon, starting from your imagination.
 - What was your inspiration? For homework, try looking up possible sources of inspiration for the dragon you drew. This can be done with the help of library books or supervised internet research.
2. **Cultural Symbols.** Dragons are a cultural symbol in many regions of East Asia. What animal, real or mythical, resonates with you?
 - Think of how this animal looks and draw your version of it.
 - What influences your ideas of how that animal should look? Describe how these influences show up.
3. **Shadow Puppetry.** Explore Chinese shadow puppetry using the templates and instructions provided at the back of the book. How do you make this dragon feel right for you?
 - Show examples of how such figures are used for shadow puppetry.
 - For added creativity, use the creature(s) designed in the previous activity and adapt them to shadow puppets. If worried about ruining the original, make copies to allow for experimentation.
 - Go a step further and create small groups to create their own short puppet show using their figures.
(See "Dragon Activity" reproducible activity at the end of this guide)

AMY WU AND THE WARM WELCOME Hardcover: 9781534497351 | Ages: 4 to 8

ABOUT THE BOOK

A new student, Lin, joins Amy's class, but when Amy tries to welcome him throughout the day, he remains quiet and shy. Then she sees a totally different Lin after school when he greets his little sister excitedly in Mandarin. Inspired, Amy invites Lin and his family to her house for a dumpling-making party, where she hopes to show him a welcome banner in Chinese. Her plan seems ruined when nerves get the better of her, and she's unable to speak the words. In the end, she and Lin realize they don't need words to make a connection—or to start a new friendship. Once again, the magic of gathering around food offers a warm setting for all.



"When words escape us—or we might not know the right ones—kind gestures can speak loudly. Chua's expressive illustrations capture the emotional beats of Zhang's text." —*Kirkus Reviews*

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. You might not have recognized all the characters or words on those first pages. How do you feel when you do not understand what you are reading or hearing? How do you respond?
2. Both Lin and Amy feel their cheeks glow red when they want to say something. Why do you think that is? What emotion(s) are they feeling?
3. If you were welcoming a new person to your neighborhood or school, what would you want to share? How would you do this?
4. In this book, we see friends and family come together to cook dumplings—an activity similar to the bao-making introduced in the first book of this series. What theme do you think the author is trying to convey?
5. What other details did you notice throughout the book? Did you notice such details in *Amy Wu and the Perfect Bao* and *Amy Wu and the Patchwork Dragon*? If possible, look back on the previous books and see if you notice anything new. (Possible details include background characters, clothing, decorations, and perhaps the role of a playful cat.)



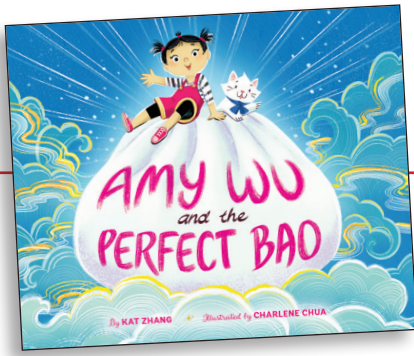
EXTENSION ACTIVITIES

1. **Saying Hello!** The beginning of the book includes various ways people say “hello” or “welcome” in different languages. Can you share other ways to say “hello” to someone?
 - a. Try to look up and learn to pronounce and write the phrases in a few new-to-you languages.
 - b. Practice such phrases with a partner and/or go around the room and say hello to your classmates in different languages. Learn from one another as you do this. (See “Saying Hello” reproducible at the end of this guide.)
2. **Communication Barriers.** What if you wanted to communicate with someone, but you did not understand each other’s languages? How would you try to connect?
 - a. Pair up and try to communicate without speaking, or by only speaking languages that the other does not know (this could include sign language). See what happens, and report back.
 - b. Reflect on how this felt. What did you learn from the experience?
3. **Welcome Banner.** What would you include on a welcome banner? What else might you offer to someone to welcome them? Create a banner with drawings to try to express your message.
4. **Chinese Brushstrokes.** Chinese characters are written with specific brushstrokes—you can see this with thicker points on the lines that make up each character (see Amy’s banner!). Use the writing guide below to try writing basic Chinese characters. If you have already learned these basic strokes, challenge yourself to perfecting Amy’s welcome. (See “Chinese Brushstrokes” reproducible at the end of this guide.)



This guide was written by Elaine Tai, a Chinese-American librarian from the San Francisco Bay Area. She has not yet made her perfect bao, but looks to Amy Wu for inspiration.

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THIS IS A DUMPLING?

What do you think of, when you think of dumplings?

There are foods across cultures that fit in a category together, even though we might not think of them as similar (e.g., samosas, sandwiches, tamales). Research and fill in what you know on these different variations of what we call dumplings.

Baozi



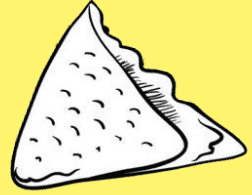
China

Pasteles



Caribbean

Samosa



India

Pierogi



Eastern Europe

Momo



Himalayan Region

Pelmeni



Russia

AMY WU AND THE PATCHWORK DRAGON

DRAGON ACTIVITY

Please make sure a grown-up helps you with this craft activity. Have fun!

MAKE YOUR VERY OWN DRAGON!

YOU WILL NEED:

Tracing paper

Construction paper*

Scissors

Split pins

Art supplies for decorating your dragon

1. Have a grown-up help you trace the dragon body pieces on the following pages, and cut them out.
2. Use the tracing-paper cutouts to trace the body pieces onto construction paper, and cut out your final pieces. You can reuse the tracing-paper cutouts multiple times.
3. Use split pins to attach the pieces together and make a unique dragon that's all your own!
4. Color and decorate your dragon with crayons, colored pencils, markers, paints, or other art supplies! (Amy particularly likes glitter and beads.)

**Extra ideas: Feel free to replace the construction paper with foam sheets, thin cardboard, card stock, etc. This will create sturdier dragons, but you may need to pre-poke a hole for the split pins.*



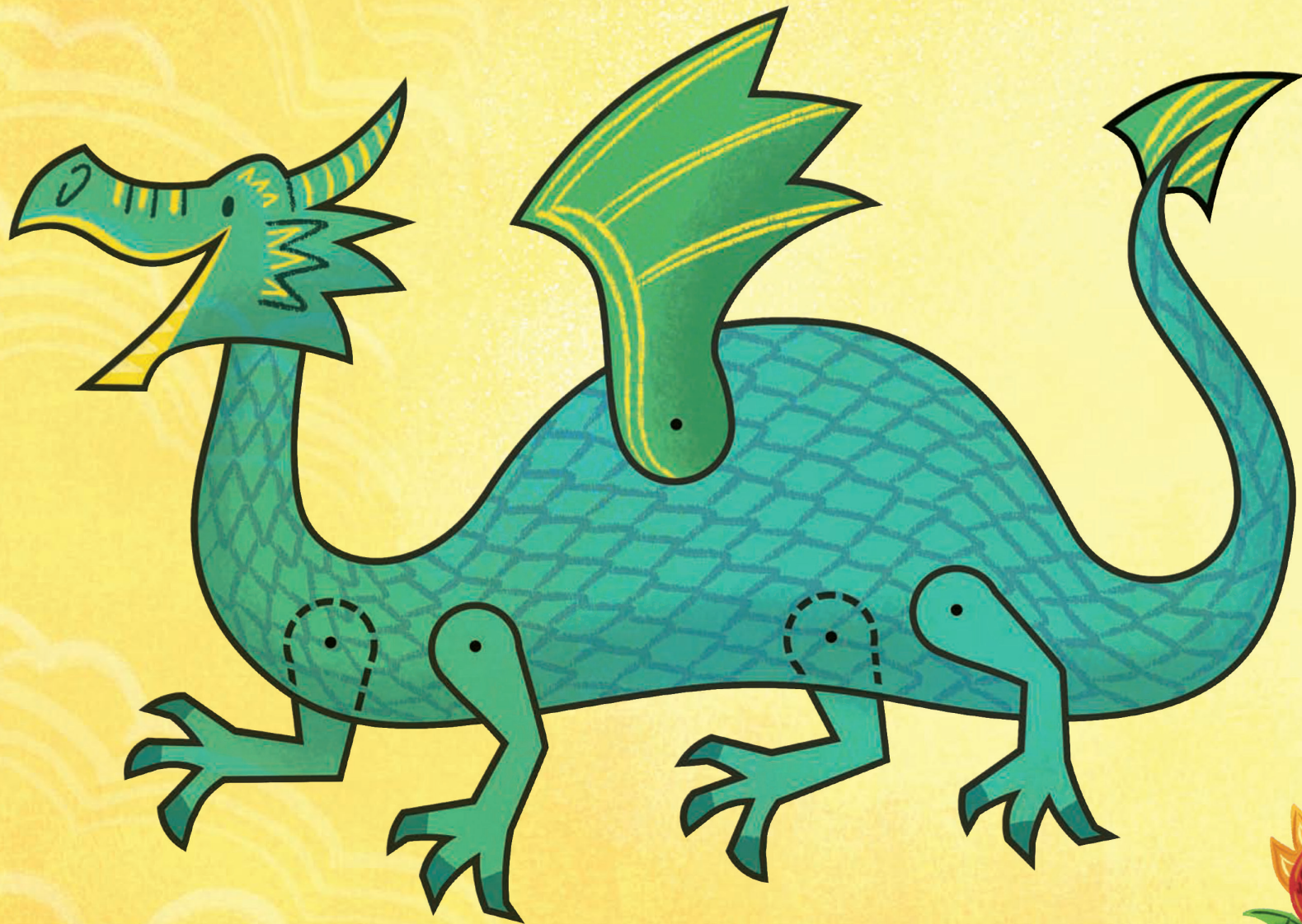
EASTERN DRAGON

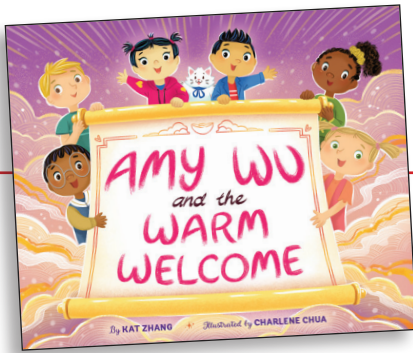
The Eastern dragon is a symbol of good luck and strength in many cultures! It usually has a long, thin body and no wings. Its horns look like stag antlers, and its claws look like eagle claws. Its body is covered in scales. Eastern dragons come in many different colors and can have a wide range of magic powers, depending on the story. Often, they are very intelligent.



WESTERN DRAGON

Western dragons usually have four legs and one pair of big, leathery wings. Like Eastern dragons, their bodies are covered in scales. Unlike Eastern dragons, they often breathe fire! Stories about Western dragons tend to show them as greedy creatures that live in caves and love treasure. Their horns tend to be sharp and pointy, and their claws look like lizard claws.





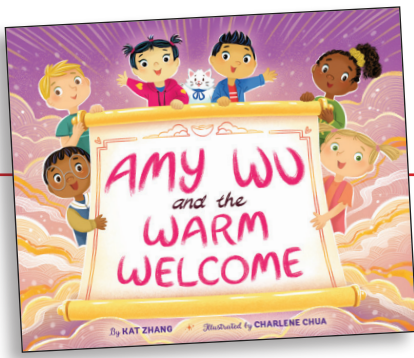
SAYING HELLO!

Sharing other ways to say “Hello” or “Welcome”

The beginning of *Amy Wu and the Warm Welcome* includes various ways people say “hello” or “welcome” in different languages. What are other ways to say “hello” to someone? Look up and learn to pronounce and write the phrases in a few new-to-you languages. Practice the phrases with a partner and/or go around the room and say hello to your classmates in different languages.

LANGUAGE	WORD/PHRASE	WRITE OUT THE PRONUNCIATION



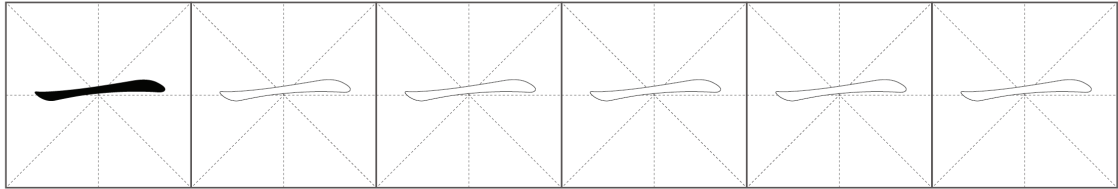


CHINESE BRUSHSTROKES

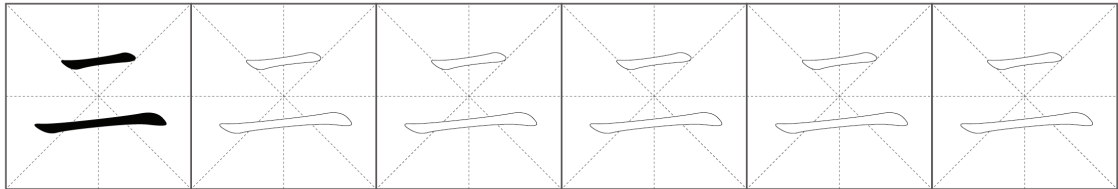
Writing Chinese characters

Chinese characters are written with specific brushstrokes—you can see this with thicker points on the lines that make up each character (see Amy's banner!). Use the writing guide below to try writing basic Chinese numbers.

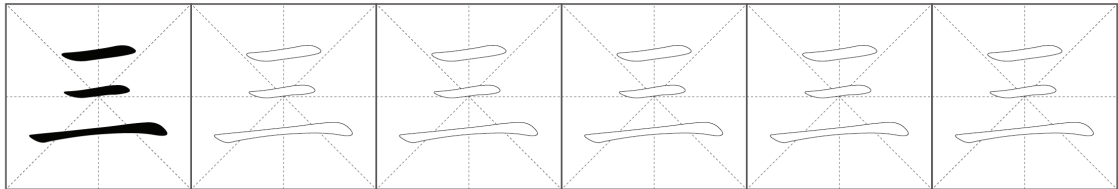
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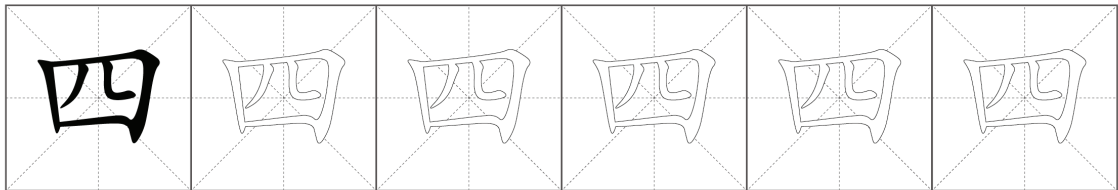
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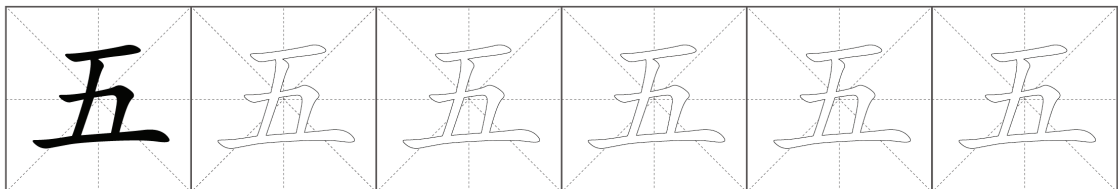
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