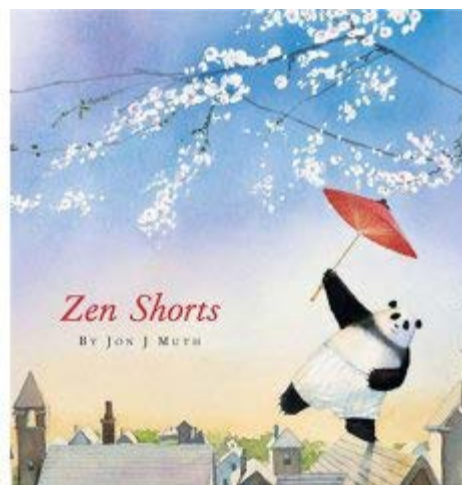


Zen Shorts



Zen Shorts

by Jon H Muth

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Beautifully illustrated in two distinct styles, this book introduces readers to a Zen approach to the world, wrapped in a story about three siblings and their new neighbor, a panda. One by one, the children visit Stillwater, enjoying his company and listening to him tell a brief tale that illustrates a Zen principle. Each time, there is a link between the conversation shared by Stillwater and his visitor and the story he tells; it's somewhat tenuous in regard to the two older siblings, quite specific in the case of Karl, the youngest. The tales invite the children to consider the world and their perceptions from a different angle; for Karl, the panda's story gently but pointedly teaches the benefits of forgiveness. Richly toned and nicely detailed watercolors depict the "real world" scenes, while those accompanying the Zen lessons employ black lines and strokes on pastel pages to create an interesting blend of Western realism and more evocative Japanese naturalism. Taken simply as a picture book, *Zen Shorts* is interesting and visually lovely. As an introduction to Zen, it is a real treat, employing familiar imagery to prod children to approach life and its circumstances in profoundly "un-Western" ways. An author's note discusses the basic concept of Zen and details the sources of Stillwater's stories. Appealing enough for a group read-aloud, but also begging to be shared and discussed by caregiver and child, *Zen Shorts* is a notable achievement.