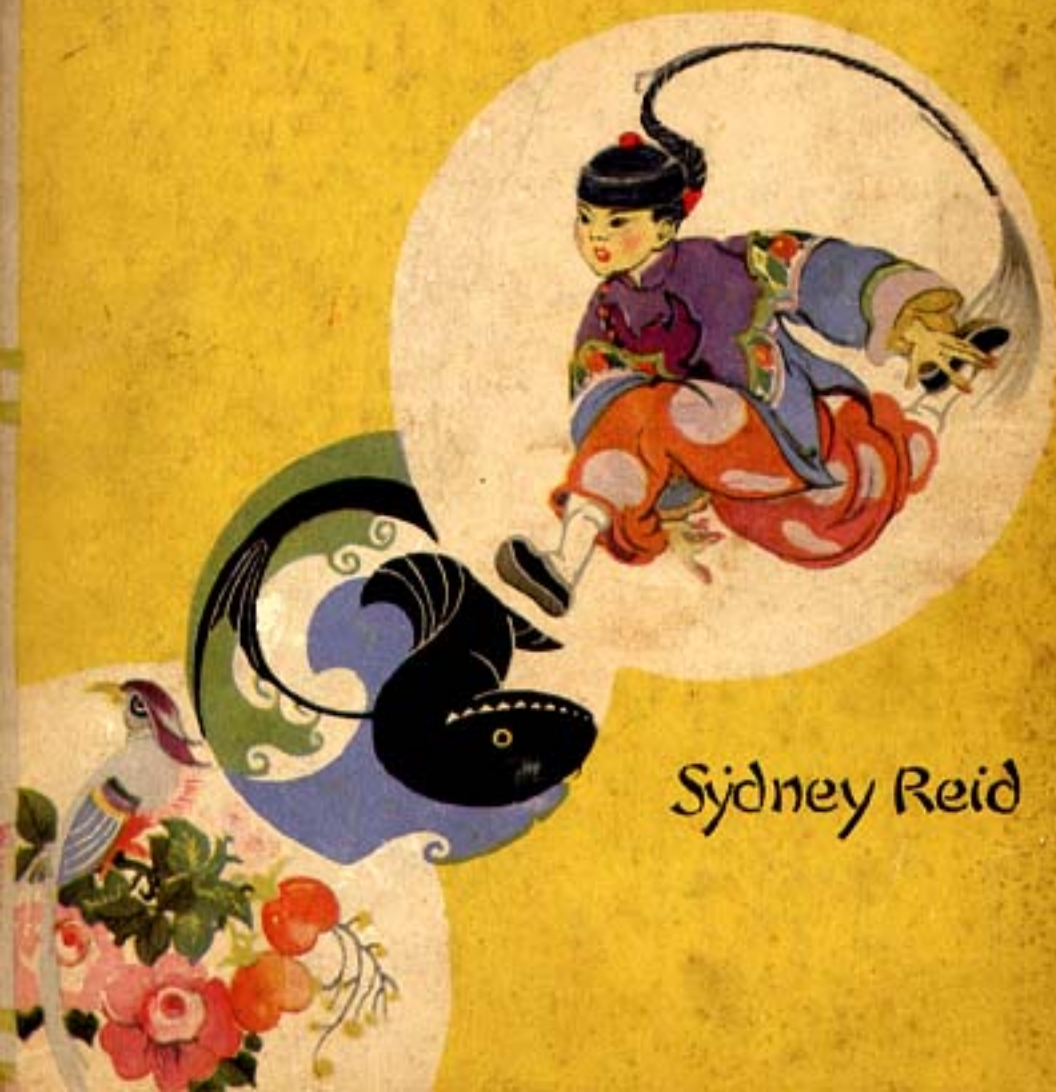


HOW SING FOUND the WORLD is ROUND



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Written by
Sydney Reid

Illustrated by
Katharine Sturges Dodge





To Blossom I, Blossom II, and every other
bright boy and girl who asks questions
and so assists in World Progress,
this Sunny Book is dedicated.

S.R.



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HOW SING FOUND THE WORLD IS ROUND



ONCE upon a time there was a little
boy named Sing, who lived in the village of Ping,
at the foot of the mountain of Ming, in the land
of Ting-Ling-Ding.

They were all Sings in that village—ten
thousand of them—for such is the custom of
Ting-Ling-Ding. Wings and Sings and Tings



and Jings, Woos, Foos, Poos, and Moos, all live in separate villages. If a Wing were to get in among the Sings, or a Moo among the Poos, the wisest man in all the land cannot tell what might come of it.

So little Sing lived in this village, running barefooted with the other boys, playing their games, chasing birds and wild animals, watching the fishermen on the river, or sometimes swimming, till he became eight years of age. He was happy as happy could be,—a chubby yellow boy with soft, brown eyes and a long shining pig tail, part hair and part silk.

But one morning, when he was eight, he rose to work in the fields so early that there was no sun in the sky.

The hills in the east turned smoky red, then fiery red, then the sun poked up a rim, and finally came boldly out to begin another day.

Little Sing stared, with his mouth wide open, and then began to squeal so that they all came out to see.

"Come! Come! Run! Run!
Here come Sun top side up!"

"What is it? What is it?" Cried the men and the boys.

"Sun come top side! Sun come top side!" screamed Sing, pointing.

The wise teacher of the school where they learned to make pictures,—rain, sun, tiger, spear, gate, cage,—
that are used for



writing in Ting
Ling-Ding, took a rod and beat
Sing on the soles of his feet,

Till he did cry,
"Ki yi! Ki yi!"
And he did sigh,
"Oh my!
How poor a thing
Is a boy in Ping!"

"Another time you will remember the words of the sages: 'It is for the young to learn.' 'Let the voice of foolishness keep silence.' "

The teacher looked very wise as he stood there with folded arms, for his pig-tail was long and his grey mustaches hung down like tusks of walrus.

But, although whipping is very well in its way, it does not answer questions, and little Sing was full of questions which he soon asked his elder brother, his father, mother, grandfather and teacher, approaching each in turn with reverence and due respect.

His brother said: "Such knowledge is not for children, but only for men like me." (He was twelve years old.)

His mother kissed him and gave him preserved ginger, but she said: "How should I know? Such matters are not for women. Remember they all speak of me as 'the foolish one of the family.' You must ask your father, who is very learned, or your grandfather, who has all wisdom."



His father said: "The sun is the brother of the Emperor, who looks each day upon the land, giving it light and heat so that the rice may grow, and watching over the people to see that they are obedient and preserve the customs of their ancestors."

"But he does not look like a man," said Sing, "and where does he come from and go to, and how does he get up in the sky?"

Then his father was angry and beat him.

His grandfather, who was very deaf, leant on his staff and answered Sing: "Ten thousand years ago, when our glorious emperor Tang Yang conquered the dwarfs who live in the islands of the sea, he commanded them that every day they should send the sun across the land. It is a shield of brass made white-hot in the furnaces upon the mountains."

His teacher said: "Every morning the giant Kong Wong who lives in the Chee Lee sets fire to a great ball of pitch and hurls it across the sky. That is the sun."

Said Sing: "Who is Kong Wong? Where is Chee Lee? How does the giant throw the ball so far, so high, so straight and how does it come back to him?"

Then the teacher was very angry and beat Sing upon the soles of the feet, saying: "Learn to be content with the answers of your elders."

His mother gave him preserved ginger and a chicken wing that she had saved for him, also money to buy a yin ball. She told him to think no more about the sun. But he said he must know. Then said she:

"On the mountain of Ming lives Jing, the greatest sage in all the land of Ting-Ling-Ding. He can tell you about the sun, because five hundred years ago he saved the sun's life from the dragon that was devouring him.

"You may read about it in your books. The dragon had seized the sun in his mouth, all the land was dark, the people lay prostrate, groaning, and in a few minutes all would have been over, when Jing rushed out from the temple and shouted so loud, and beat so upon his shield with his spear, and turned such somersaults, that the dragon was astonished and frightened, and, releasing the sun, flew away again into the darkness."



"Then," said Sing, "I will climb the mountain of Ming and ask Jing."

"Do not go, my son," said the mother; but he declared that he must. All the way to the top of the mountain of Ming he kept repeating:

"What is the sun? Where does he come from? Where does he go?"

When the mountain-top was reached he found Jing seated in a great chair. He was such a very old man that his pig-tail was white, his skin was brown, and his finger-nails were long and curving, like swords.

As Sing drew near, another boy of his own age ran and made kow tow before Jing, and cried:

"O, Light of Ting-Ling-Ding, greatest of all sages, have compassion upon thy slave, and grant that I may know what is the sun, where it comes from, and where it goes."

He laid an offering of money on the stool before the sage.

The Venerated One slowly swept the money into a box. Then he opened his mouth, closed it again, nodded three times, and shut his eyes at the same time that an attendant shouted:

"Begone, the knowledge is not for you!"

At this Sing rushed forward and, throwing himself on the ground, made the kow tow, and addressed to Jing the same questions that the other had asked.

Then he put upon the stool the money his mother had given him.

The sage slowly reached out his hand and swept the coins into his box, opening his mouth, shutting it again, and wagging his head from side to side. Then he shut his eyes, and an atten-

dant, seizing Sing by the arm, pushed him away, saying:

"Begone, the knowledge is not for you!"

A little distance away Sing found the other boy waiting and said to him:

"Who are you, and why did you ask about the sun?"

"My name is Wing, of the village of Ping, at the foot of the mountain of Ming, in the land of Ting-Ling-Ding."

"I am eight years old, and never knew trouble till I saw the sun go down behind the mountains four days ago. Since then I have asked my elder brother, my mother, my father, my grandfather and my teacher about the sun, what it is, where it comes from, and where it goes. Twice I have been beaten, and once my ears have been boxed, and I have been told that the sun is the brother of the Emperor,



that it is a shield of brass, and that it is a ball of burning pitch."

Then Sing told his story, and both were astonished, so exactly did it agree with that of Wing.

They gathered fruit from the trees and ate, and Wing said:

"I have seen where the sun goes to, but not where he comes from, and to that place I will journey."

Then said Sing:

"I have seen where he comes from, but not where he goes, and I will journey there, and in another moon we will return here and meet again."

That was agreed, but said Wing:

"This is a high mountain, the sun must pass close. Let us wait in hiding. When he

comes tomorrow we can then see what he is; you can follow as he passes, and I will go to the place from which he comes and watch him coming."

And that was agreed to, but when the sun came over the next day he seemed as high above them as ever, and when they looked to see what he was, they were blinded for a minute till they shielded their eyes.

"He is the Emperor's brother, I saw his robes!" cried Wing, blinking.

"No, I plainly saw a flaming brass shield," said Sing.

"Go, then—go," said Wing. "Follow him closely and watch where he goes. I will watch at the place where he comes out, and next moon we will return here to tell of it."

Away went Sing, walking carefully, for he did not want the sun to see him, but by and by



Sing and Wing decide to go separate ways and search for the Sun's hiding place.

he found that, though the sun did not seem to move at all, it got further and further ahead.

"We climbed up a high mountain, yet he seemed as far away as ever. I cannot see him move, yet he goes faster than I walk," said Sing.

And he wondered and wondered, and walked faster and faster, and then ran harder and harder; but the sun kept slipping away from him,—further and further away—and at last went down in a shower of gold and a blaze of fire and then of dull, smoky red, behind the hills at the end of a plain.

"Never mind," said Sing to himself. "I will sleep here tonight and tomorrow I will walk to those hills and see where he goes." So he ate the fruit from the trees, and drank water from the spring, and, curling up at the foot of a large tree, fell asleep.

In the morning, when he saw the sun, Sing laughed.

"I know where you're going, and I'll be there before you," he said, and set out, walking briskly toward the hills, among which he hid himself.

But the sun came on and passed, seeming no nearer than before, and went down behind another range of hills.

Sing ran after him, but could not catch up, though he said,

"I must now be quite close to the place."

Yet the next day, when the sun went down, he was still no nearer.

"What is this?" asked Sing. "The sun flies from me like a bird!"

Next day he met a man with a white camel and said:



"O man, I am seeking the place where the sun sleeps. Lend me thy camel. I have need of him, and when I return I will bring a present."

"What is your name and country?" asked the man.

"My name is Sing, of the village of Ping, at the foot of the mountain of Ming, in the land of Ting-Ling-Ding."

"Take the camel, O Sing," said the man.

So Sing took the camel and rode on and on for many days, eating the fruit of the trees, and drinking water from the springs; yet every evening when the sun went down he was as far away as ever.

Sing thought of his promise to Wing to meet him on the mountain of Ming at the time of the new moon, and was angry and astonished.

"I am mocked," he said. "The sun makes

a new bed every night, but I will never go back till I come up with him."

He rode the camel till he came to the shore of a great sea, and there he had to dismount.

While he was waiting, uncertain what to do next, the sun passed over and went down far out beneath the waves.

Sing was more puzzled than ever, for if the sun were the Emperor's brother, the sea ought to drown him, and a ball of fire would be quenched by the water.

"I will never go back till I learn the answer to my questions," he cried.

Then he stood on the seashore and called:

"I am Sing, of Ping, by the mountain of Ming, in the land of Ting-Ling-Ding, and I must follow the sun and see where he goes at night. To the fish that carries me there I will give a great reward."



Immediately there was a commotion in the ocean, and many fish came and looked at Sing, but a whale with a flail of his tail dove up to the beach and shouted as he spouted:

“O, sunny little Sing, of Ping,
In the happy land of Ting-Ling-Ding,
I'll take you on my comfy head
To where the sunbeams go to bed.”

And Sing answered:

“O, thank you, large and friendly whale,
With shining skin and swishing tail,
I know that I could never wish
To see a more obliging fish.”

Then Sing stepped from the shore to the broad head of the whale, and in a minute they were off, flying through the sea.

So quick had been their departure that Sing had forgotten to carry anything to eat or drink.

“Never mind,” he said. “If the sun is



really the brother of the Emperor, there will be plenty to eat in his palace."

The whale tore through the sea, straight for the place where the sun had gone down. Far swifter than any ship he went, and Sing rejoiced.

Up over high white waves they soared, and down into the pretty blue valleys between the waves, leaving a long trail behind them. They passed many fish of all kinds, and all of them greeted Sing and the whale as they hurried by. White sea-gulls flew down to speak to them, but Sing had only time to wave his hand at the birds.

"Now I will soon be there," he said. But when next the sun went down, he still seemed to plunge into the water no nearer than before.

The next evening and the next it was the same,—no matter how fast the whale swam, the sun passed over and went down still no nearer.

So angry was Sing that he almost forgot to

be hungry or thirsty, yet he was glad when they came to land again.

"Pardon me, Sing," cried the whale. "I have done my best. I thought I knew where the sun went to bed, and that I could take you there, but I have failed, and now, I am sorry to say, you must go on alone."

"You are pardoned," answered Sing, "and for your kind intention, I freely give you permission to eat all that is good for you that you find in the sea, and also to live to be a thousand years old."

(That is how it happens that to this very day whales do eat all that is good for them, and some do live to be a thousand years old.)

Sing now landed, and going to the nearest house, asked the people for some food, telling who he was, where he was from and why he was journeying.

"The sun goes to bed far in the west, and the road at our door will take you there," said the man to whom he had spoken.

He gave Sing food and drink, and they parted with many good wishes.

"The sun is cunning," said Sing to himself. "He watches me in daytime, but I will outwit him by travelling in the night. Then I will find him sleeping."

As the road was straight and smooth, and there were no wagons upon it, he ran fast up hill and down dale, sure now that soon he would find the sun in his bed.

He ran on and on, till he plunged down in a dark valley, where suddenly he bumped violently into somebody who was running the opposite way.

Both fell back and said:

"Who are you?"

And the answers were:

"I am Sing!"

"I am Wing!"

For a moment they were so surprised that neither spoke. Then Wing asked:

"What Sing?"

And the answer was:

"Sing of Ping, by the mountain of Ming, in the land of Ting-Ling-Ding."

"How came you here?"

"I have sought the place where the sun sleeps at night, and have followed him all the way from Ming, in the land of Ting-Ling-Ding."

"Wonder of wonders!" cried Wing; "I also have come straight from the mountain of Ming, in the land of Ting-Ling-Ding, to this spot, yet I journeyed toward the place where the sun comes out in the morning!"



"Then," cried Sing, "the world must be round!"

"It must be," said Wing. "Let us tell the sages."

"Alas," answered Sing, "I may not return. I vowed that I would never go back until I found where the sun goes at night. Now I see that he stays in the sky."

"And I," said Wing, "vowed that I would never go back until I had found the place from

which the sun comes in the morning, and I will keep my vow. We need not go back. Let us go forward, as we were going, and sooner or later we will certainly meet again on the mountain of Ming."

"Then," said Sing, "let us go quickly, that we may tell the great news to the sages."

Accordingly they parted, and after long journeying, arrived again upon the mountain of Ming, where all the sages assembled to hear their words.

But when they told how they had found that the world was round, the sages all rose with a roar:

"Who are you to deny the wisdom of our ancestors?"

And they cried again:

"Off with their heads!"



But the chief officer was a merciful man and he replied:

"Their heads are young and growing and perhaps they may yet come to wisdom. These things they tell about are dreams. Let us put them where they cannot see the sun and where he can see them."

So Wing and Sing were put in little cages on the tops of tall posts, and for a week they were fed bread and water handed up to them on the end of a pole.

And there they swung with every little passing breeze, and some laughed to see the boys in such a ridiculous position and some sympathized with them—but all thought it a good lesson for them.

When they were released, their fathers said:

"If you know so much about the earth you should make good farmers," and they gave them hoes and sent them to the fields.



Yet the story of Sing and Wing was told far and wide, and here and there was someone who thought it might be true, and at last a man sailed around the world in a ship, and then people knew it was true, and Sing and Wing were honored above all the sages.

And then Sing remembered the kindness of the man who owned the white camel and sent for him, and when the man bowed down before him he exclaimed:

“Arise and stand, for you befriended me at a time of need, and now I am minded to make your fortune. Upon you I freely confer all the undiscovered treasure that there is in Ting-Ling-Ding.”

Then the man rejoiced greatly, and all the people applauded the generosity of Sing.





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