



GIVING IMMORTALITY

Collecting & Telling Stories

“A single line of words formed on the page. It was the same word, over and over again and to Pinmei’s surprise, she could read it. The word was Stories.”

—WHEN THE SEA TURNED TO SILVER

Pinmei’s early life on the mountain with Amah was filled with stories. Pinmei’s adventures with Yishan were informed and propelled by stories. Without growing up at the side of her grandmother and listening to stories of others on the road, Pinmei could not have solved the mystery of the magistrate that had plagued their corner of China for over 200 years. When she pulled the needle from the robe of the Emperor, she believed in the power of Amah’s stories, and stories saved them all.

Is there an elder in your family or community like Amah? Even the most normal looking person can be full of fantastical stories. Maybe they do not have stories of dragons or tigers, but they do have stories that will tell you who they are and who you could be. They could have stories that can keep you from making a mistake, inspire you to find a new friend, or in some small way, save the world.

If you admire Pinmei and Amah, here are some things you could do with an elder in your family or community:

- 1) Share your favorite books with an elder and discuss them together. Chapter books are not just for elementary school students!
- 2) Ask an elder to teach you a skill or a craft. Teach them something you know in return.
- 3) Write letters to an elder (even if they live down the block). When we take time to put our words on paper, they have more power and meaning.
- 4) Ask an elder’s advice. Sometimes you can feel alone with your problems, but someone has experienced a similar problem before you. For example, did any of Pinmei’s problems ever feel familiar to you? Her problems go back to Ancient China! Someone who has lived before you can help you understand how to live now.
- 5) With your elder’s permission, share their stories and what you learned from them with your classmates. As Pinmei came to understand, stories passed down can save the world, and stories passed down can make even the most ordinary person, immortal.

Who will you make immortal with your stories?

“This shows that the worthy man and the mean will both leave their mark, not to be erased in a hundred generations.” —Su Dongpo, writer, poet, artist, calligrapher, pharmacologist, and statesman (1036-1101)