



The Boy Who Drew Cats

By Margaret Hodges

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A young boy's obsession with drawing cats changes his life.

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The Boy Who Drew Cats By Margaret Hodges Bibliography

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Drawing on Lafcadio Hearn's collections of traditional Japanese tales, Hodges (*St. George and the Dragon*) succinctly recounts a legend of the early boyhood of 15th-century artist Sesshu Toyo. The boy, in training to be a priest, spends every spare moment covering the walls and screens of the temple with drawings of cats. His exasperated teacher turns him out with nothing more than the obscure advice, "Avoid large places at night: keep to small." Seeking refuge the following evening in an empty temple, the boy covers all the walls and screens there, too, with paintings of cats. He remembers his teacher's advice and conceals himself in a cabinet for the night. He wakes to the sound of a fearsome battle and, when the boy emerges in the morning, he finds a huge rat-goblin dead on the floor and the mouths of all his painted cats "red and wet with blood." His own creations have saved him. Sogabe's (*The Hungriest Boy in the World*) crisp paper cut-outs, often lined in black, stand out starkly against misty, dramatic landscapes; the winsome cats seem curiously ill-suited to their grisly chore. Haunting images and an unusual vision of the creative power of childhood make this a memorable tribute to a fine artist. Ages 5-8.

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From School Library Journal

Kindergarten-Grade 3--In old Japan, a clever, frail peasant boy training for the priesthood cannot resist drawing cats on every available surface. When his exasperated teacher sends him away, he takes shelter in an abandoned temple late at night, not knowing that a murderous goblin haunts the place. After drawing cats all over the dusty walls, the boy crawls inside a small cabinet to sleep. Terrible noises disturb him during the night. When morning comes, he finds an enormous rat lying dead on the floor, and fresh blood on the mouths of the cats he painted. This story was first told in English more than 100 years ago by Lafcadio Hearn.

Drawing on traditional stories about a picture that comes to life, Hearn fleshed out a short fable about Sesshu Toyo, a famous Zen painter from the 15th century. Hodges has lightly but judiciously pruned Hearn's text, retaining his rhythm and easy grace. Sogabe's cut-paper, watercolor, and airbrush illustrations resonate with the spirit of Japanese woodcuts, and are distinguished by striking composition and harmonious, muted colors. Her picture of the dead goblin is dramatic yet restrained, showing only the boy's appalled face and the rat's large tail. Hodges's direct, clear adaptation stays closer to its source than David Johnson's highly embellished retelling of the same title (*Rabbit Ears*, 1991, o.p.). She also provides a model source note. This shivery page-turner celebrating the power of art belongs in most libraries.

Margaret A. Chang, Massachusetts College of Liberal Arts, North Adams

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From [Booklist](#)

Ages 4-8. Hodges' striking picture book, based on a legend about a fifteenth-century Japanese artist, tells an unusual rags-to-riches tale. Hoping to improve their son's life, a boy's impoverished parents send him to a monastery. The child is clever and obedient, but he's obsessed with drawing cats, and he paints them on screens, walls--everywhere. When the priest commands him to seek his place in the world as an artist, the boy wanders to an empty temple where he quickly begins new cat paintings. Suddenly, his cats spring to life and slay a goblin that has been menacing the community, and not surprisingly, the boy grows up to be a great artist. Veteran storyteller Hodges relates an empowering tale that is smooth, economical, and beautifully paced, qualities echoed in Sogabe's paper-and-watercolor collages. Boldly outlined shapes and clean, uncluttered compositions accented with color bring the boy's journey to life and also provide a bit of humor

in sly details, such as the group of cats that follow the boy. A fine choice for read-alouds or for curricular use. A source note is appended. *Gillian Engberg*
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Adrian Johnson:

Why don't make it to be your habit? Right now, try to ready your time to do the important behave, like looking for your favorite e-book and reading a publication. Beside you can solve your long lasting problem; you can add your knowledge by the guide entitled The Boy Who Drew Cats. Try to the actual book The Boy Who Drew Cats as your good friend. It means that it can for being your friend when you really feel alone and beside that of course make you smarter than in the past. Yeah, it is very fortuned for you personally. The book makes you a lot more confidence because you can know everything by the book. So , we should make new experience and knowledge with this book.

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