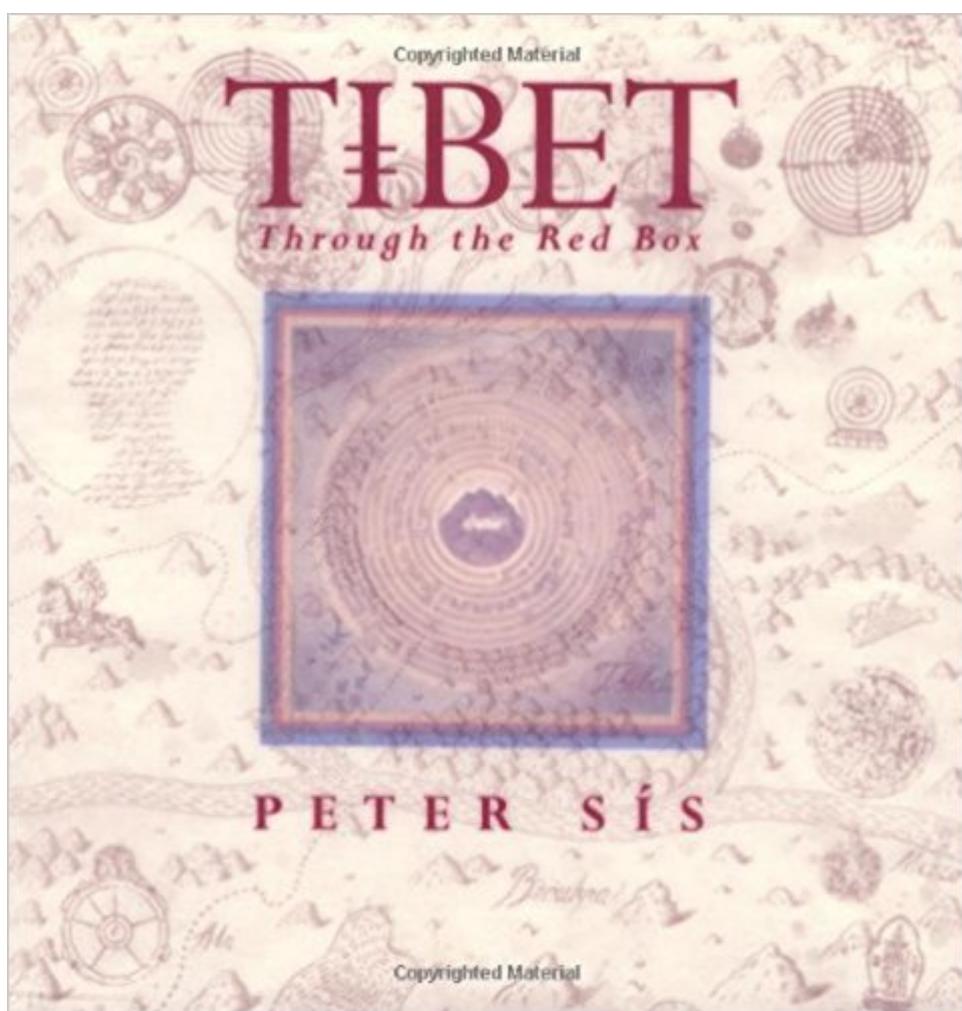


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Tibet Through The Red Box (Caldecott Honor Book)



Synopsis

A father's diary, an artist's memoir. By the author of the best-selling *Three Golden Keys*. While my father was in China and Tibet, he kept a diary, which was later locked in a red box. We weren't allowed to touch the box. The stories I heard as a little boy faded to a hazy dream, and my drawings from that time make no sense. I cannot decipher them. It was not until I myself had gone far, far away and received the message from my father that I became interested in the red box again . . . In New York, Peter Sis receives a letter from his father. "The Red Box is now yours," it says. The brief note worries him and pulls him back to Prague, where the contents of the red box explain the mystery of his father's long absence during the 1950s. Czechoslovakia was behind the iron curtain; Vladimir Sis, a documentary filmmaker of considerable talent, was drafted into the army and sent to China to teach filmmaking. He left his wife, daughter, and young son, Peter, thinking he would be home for Christmas. Two Christmases would pass before he was heard from again: Vladimir Sis was lost in Tibet. He met with the Dalai Lama; he witnessed China's invasion of Tibet. When he returned to Prague, he dared not talk to his friends about all he had seen and experienced. But over and over again he told Peter about his Tibetan adventures. Weaving their two stories together - that of the father lost in Tibet and that of the small boy in Prague, lost without his father - Sis draws from his father's diary and from his own recollections of his father's incredible tales to reach a spiritual homecoming between father and son. With his sublime pictures, inspired by Tibetan Buddhist art and linking history to memory, Peter Sis gives us an extraordinary book - a work of singular artistry and rare imagination. This title has Common Core connections. *Tibet Through the Red Box* is a 1999 Caldecott Honor Book and the winner of the 1999 Boston Globe - Horn Book Award for Special Citation.

Book Information

Series: Caldecott Honor Book

Hardcover: 64 pages

Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR); 1st edition (November 5, 1998)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0374375526

ISBN-13: 978-0374375522

Product Dimensions: 11 x 0.4 x 11.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.4 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 35 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #824,242 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #38 in Books > Teens > Education & Reference > History > Asia #70 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Art & Architecture #541 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Parents

Customer Reviews

As a child in 1950s Czechoslovakia, Caldecott Honor-winning artist Peter Sís would listen to mysterious tales of Tibet, "the roof of the world." The narrator, oddly enough, was his father--a documentary filmmaker who had been separated from his crew, caught in a blizzard, and (according to him, anyway) nursed back to health by gentle Yetis. Young Sís learned of a beautiful land of miracles and monks beset by a hostile China; of the 14th Dalai Lama, a "Boy-God-King

In this visually enticing, magically appealing, oversized volume, Czechoslovakian-born illustrator Sís applies his considerable gifts to painting a spellbinding portrait of his father's experiences in Tibet, where he was sent in the 1950s to instruct the Chinese in documentary filmmaking. Vladimir Sís was actually drafted by the Chinese government to record the construction of a highway from China into Tibet; he was to be gone more than two years, unable to communicate with his family. During that time, China invaded the neighboring country, and Sís senior witnessed events he dared not describe even after he returned home, except through "magical stories" he related to his son. The diary he kept during his sojourn in Tibet was locked in a red box, which his son only saw for the first time in 1994, when he received a cryptic message from his father: "The diary is now yours." Here Sís re-creates a facsimile of the diary with excerpts handwritten upon parchment-like backgrounds on double-page spreads brimming with pencil sketches of the events described (e.g., "The road looks like a cut into a beautiful cake"). He then magnifies the more uncanny aspects of the journal via the tales told to him by his father, recollected from childhood, which are printed on the succeeding spread. One entry describes a boy wearing bells who tracks down the filmmaker in the middle of nowhere to deliver a letter from his family; Sís then follows with "The Jingle-Bell Boy," festooning the account with a trail of rhododendron-leaf markings that lead his father ultimately to the Dalai Lama. The guileless prose of both father and son makes Sís's juxtaposition of the journal records with his own childhood memories all the more poignant. The luminous colors of the artwork, the panoramas of Tibetan topography and the meticulous intermingling of captivating details and the mystical aspects of Tibetan culture make this an extraordinary volume that will appeal to readers of all ages. Author tour. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc.

I have not yet shared this book with my granddaughters. I purchased it to go along with Barbie doll from Tibet. It was not easy to find something on Tibet for children. However, this is not really a children's book. Sis opens a box which contains his father's diary. His father had left his family for an assignment in China where he was to teach a group of Chinese men how to do filming, as this was his father's expertise. They are to film the building of a road that stretches into the Tibetan Himalayas. But things go wrong and the father and his aide fall into a series of events that are told in the diary. Some of the entries are vague and surreal. We are left wondering if the father was hallucinating from illness, or has been given medicines that might cause them, or is attributing his experiences to real magical events that rightfully belong in the high Himalayas, either from the thin air effecting the brain, or from association with the monks. Because adults can look back in retrospect from the murderous invasion of the Chinese into Tibet, the adult reader feels a tension from the diary entries that reveal the Chinese building the road to Tibet that will allow that invasion to take place. All the while the peaceful gentle people of Tibet have no inclination that this is going on. There is a story within a story here as well. Sis has a serious illness as a child and his memories of his father are effected by that illness, as well as the way in which he handles the fact that his father does not return. No one knows what has happened to the father. The family endures hardships and anxiety on this account. The artistry by Sis is appropriate to the text, but is not particularly appealing to children. Neither is the story-line. I would not recommend it for children, but it does not have the elements that you would want in a book for adults either. It doesn't really have a plot, nor well drawn characters. It might be called a poetic prose piece. It is informative, realistic, and revealing at the same time that it is magical, sensitive and heart wrenching. In short, it stands alone as a literary type. I did enjoy it.

Having been to Tibet in 2012, this book brought tears to my eyes for its beauty and poignancy. This is the real story - a real, personal story. If you have any interest in Tibet, you will want to read this. And Peter Sis's drawings are exquisite.

A great book. But it is all but illegible/unreadable on Kindle. Until picture books are designed for tablet reading, publishers are ripping off we poor dupes who buy them thinking digital versions are remotely close to the real thing.

Tibet: Through the Red Box is an entrancing and beautiful book. However, it is one of the new

subgenre of "children's books for adults" - it may look like a picture book, but it is *not* suitable for young children. Tibet is very like *Maus: A Survivor's Tale*, the award-winning graphic novel that bears only superficial resemblance to a standard graphic novel. In Tibet, as in *Maus*, a son tells his father's story - and what a story it is. Peter Sis' father was a documentary filmmaker who was hired by the Chinese to make a documentary about the building of a bridge in a remote province - and instead ended up losing his crew and witnessing the taking of Tibet. Sis does a remarkable job of transmitting to the reader his father's love of Tibet and its mysteries and magic. Using tales his father told him, he creates an image of a dream land, a fantasy land, where weird and wonderful things happen. It's impossible not to love Sis' vision of Tibet - and therefore, impossible not to be sad that the Chinese take it. I've said that the book is not for children, and I stand by that. However, I do believe that a child who is 6 or older could enjoy this book, provided it was read to him by an adult, and provided that that adult could cushion and explain some of the harder truths, not to mention some of the blending of fantasy and fact. Peter Sis' father's story is incredible, and the book is marvelous. Any adult who loves books or history would love *Tibet: Through the Red Box*.

I loved this story and the magic of it all....it makes one wonder about the magic and possibilities in our own lives that may seem quite humdrum at times...but are all of the coincidences that we encounter really coincidences or is there more meaning than we are open for or looking for in our life experiences....the people that we meet..etc.

This is such a cool dreamlike book. I don't know if it's real or surreal, but the stories and pictures are captivating. I have it sitting atop my kids' bookshelf with one other book I don't want them to mess up (*Billy's Balloon Ride*), and now that my kids are three, I think I need to start reading it to them.

Bought second hand book. It's great!

A superb story with the most engaging illustrative style. Was the greatest part of the adventure the inward journey? As an adventure into unknown worlds in the physical realm, the author also shifts our awareness to the contemplative spaces within simultaneously.

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