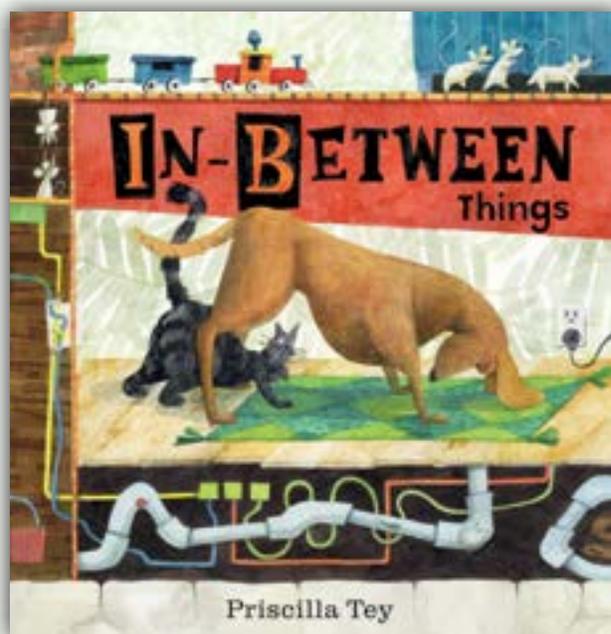


Dive in between the covers of a whimsical, wonderful debut and discover that everything in the world is relative—including you.

IN-BETWEEN Things

by Priscilla Tey

Look over there—the cat is between a table and a chair with a tear. But now look again: the cat is on top of the dog, who’s between the floor and the cat (and not too happy about that!). As you wander through the delightfully detailed illustrations, the more you look, the more you’ll see—including colors made from a mix of two others, hybrid implements such as a spork, warm nooks that are neither too cold nor too hot, and even a cross of a zebra and a cow that makes a . . . zebrow? In an utterly stylish debut, rising star Priscilla Tey leads readers on an engaging exploration of the in-between, a concept with surprising reach and depth.



HC: 978-0-7636-8983-4 • \$16.99 (\$22.99 CAN)

Ages 4-8 • 40 pages



CANDLEWICK PRESS
www.candlewick.com

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A Q&A with PRISCILLA TEY

Can you tell us a little about yourself?

I was born and raised in Singapore, and I moved to the United States to live for a few years before deciding to move back to Singapore. When I am not making picture books, I am an art and English teacher at a local secondary school, so you can say that I am always in between different things.

How would you describe *In-Between Things*?

In-Between Things is about the idea of perspectives and the idea of searching for different ways of looking. And the idea of looking for anything that exists in the middle.

How did you come up with the idea of writing a story about in-between things?

I've always been interested in the idea of in-between things. I remember the picture books that I had when I was young—they were incredibly dog-eared because I was always trying to find more to the story. I was trying to find what was in between the pages; to me, there was always something there. And so it felt natural that my first book be about in-between things.

I also think the experiences that I had living in two different countries often left me feeling that I was in between places. I remember staring at a bunch of wires that were in between the wall and the television set when I was living in the United States. I just kept thinking about all the wonderful things that happen in the few wires from the power outlet to the screen on the television. There are so many glorious things that get transmitted through those tiny wires.

I started to write this story that takes the reader on a journey from a search for tangible in-between things, from looking between two pots or even the idea of doors, to looking for intangible in-between things: the idea of *warmth* or *dim*. These are concepts that are quite difficult to understand sometimes, but I find very, very necessary for young children or any reader, for that matter. I knew that when I was writing that narrative, I needed to have some form of character to help drive the story. So that's when the idea of the cat and the dog came about, and the idea of the two friends going on this journey together and searching for all these glorious in-between things.

How did you execute all the different ways of representing such an abstract concept?

When I was designing this book, it was definitely a joy and a challenge to figure out how to create visuals that really embrace this idea of in-between things. I made use of walls and objects to separate the space into different pockets. And within each pocket of space, our characters, the cat and the dog, search for particular kinds of in-between things—or simply get up to no good. I thought that would be a great way to capture the attention of the reader and really let the reader's mind wander into each of these spaces and start searching for the in-between things.

When I was coming up with an aesthetic for this book, I didn't want the entire environment to feel like it came from a single place. It needed to feel like it was an in-between world. I looked up



different aesthetics from different cultures, different visuals that came from different countries, and put it all together into this one singular environment. Growing up in Singapore, I was surrounded constantly by the idea of fusion art, fusion food, fusion cultures. I was referencing a lot of these cultures, such that in my book you'll find patterns that were inspired by Japanese prints, patterns that were inspired by Peranakan tiles, and even cuckoo clocks that sort of exist on the walls.

All of it together, including the house itself, was very much an in-between space. The house in which everything takes place is actually inspired by a black-and-white bungalow that you often get in Singapore. These colonial pieces of architecture are an amalgamation of Western and Eastern architectures.

Why did you choose rhyming text for the book? Why do you think it works especially well for this story?

I really wanted to play on the idea of rhythm and that lyrical quality that rhyme tends to have. And I wanted the words to form almost a sound track to the entire book. It's almost like one of those old Charlie Chaplin movies, where there's that hectic soundtrack that plays in the background and all the characters are running around, searching for something or chasing after something. I really wanted to have that sort of helter-skelter vibe in my book. So naturally, it just seemed that rhyme would have the rhythm and the lyrical quality to it that would really form the sound track to this idea of searching for in-between things.

If readers of *In-Between Things* walk away with one thought or inspiration, what do you hope that will be?

Whether they are young or old, I hope my readers will be able to go out and find their own in-between things. Write a book of your own! List all the in-between things you can find in your own backyard. And the more you find, the better it will be. The world is simply filled with so many in-between things.



About the Author-Illustrator



Priscilla Tey is a graduate of the Rhode Island School of Design. A native of Singapore, she returned home after completing her degree and splits her time between illustrating and teaching. She loves “being the architect of wonderful worlds for characters to wander in” and observes that “the world is full of strange adventures and stories waiting to be excavated.” *In-Between Things* is her first book for children.



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