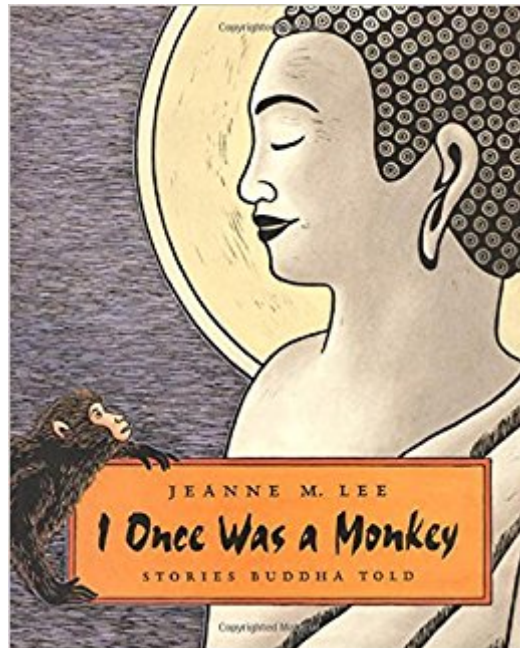




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# I Once Was A Monkey: Stories Buddha Told



## Synopsis

A colorful introduction to Buddhist fablesA monkey, caught in a monsoon, finds shelter in a cave amid the rubble of a temple. The monkey is not alone. A lion, a jackal, a turtle, and a dove bicker in the cramped space, until a statue of Buddha comes to life. "Hush, children, hush." Buddha says. "I will tell you a story to pass the time." From the tale of the clever monkey outwitting a hungry crocodile to that of a bird and turtle rescuing a friend, the six amusing parables told by the Buddha will introduce young readers to the famous cycle of fables in Buddhist literature known as the Jatakas, or birth stories, which Buddha originally told to his disciples to illustrate his teachings. Joined with stunning linocut illustrations, Jeanne M. Lee's *I Once Was a Monkey* form a book notable for both its beauty and its wisdom.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 40 pages

Publisher: Farrar, Straus and Giroux (BYR); 1st edition (March 31, 1999)

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Product Dimensions: 8.9 x 10.5 x 275.3 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.5 out of 5 stars 24 customer reviews

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Age Range: 5 - 9 years

Grade Level: Kindergarten - 4

## Customer Reviews

A monkey that takes refuge in the ruins of Buddha's temple during a monsoon sets the stage for these finely honed retellings of six Jatakas, or birth stories. As the monkey's eyes adjust to the light, he discovers he is in the company of a lion, turtle, jackal and dove, and a statue of "the Enlightened One" begins to speak. In each tale, Buddha assumes a different shape to impart his message of peace, attentiveness, tolerance and respect. Lee (*The Song of Mu Lan*) effortlessly and subtly weaves Buddhist practices and principles into her evenly paced tales. Each story is a study in

brevity and restraint yet, like Buddha, conveys enormous empathy. For instance, after a heron, in a deceptive ploy, consumes all the fish in a lake, a crab outwits him then makes his way back to the water, "weeping all the while for his lost friends." Lee draws the frame story in black-and-white, with Buddha in teaching posture and the animals listening attentively. The full-color illustrations for each Jataka combine the strength of woodcuts and the fluidity of Chinese silk painting, with their serene landscapes in soft colors and confident black lines; the full-spread illustration of a lion heading off a stampede of animals bound for danger is especially moving. Fans of Aesop's fables and the Just So Stories will likely find these characters equally as compelling, while others will discover a gentle and graceful introduction to Buddhism here. Ages 5-up. Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 2-5-A group of animals, sheltering in a cave from the fierce monsoon rains, hears a small statue of Buddha speak. The six stories he tells calm the beasts and teach them wisdom. Chosen from the hundreds of ancient Jataka tales, the selections are, like many of Aesop's fables, gems of moral philosophy. Lee's retellings not only encapsulate some of the teachings of Buddhism, but also suggest the centrality of Buddha in that religion. Each selection begins with a different incarnation of the Buddha: "I was then a willow tree...

This is a very cute book that is suitable as individual bedtime stories or for a sitdown reading of the whole thing. We read the book to our infant, but anticipate this being a book she will also read on her own in the coming years. I like that the stories give something to think about and discuss between parent and child. No prior knowledge of Buddhism is needed for these to be great stories for children.

I bought this to read at night with my 3 year old. After a few reads I've found him picking up the book himself to look at the pictures and ask me questions about the stories. It's short enough to read all the way through, but we'll typically read just one or two of the stories at a time and talk about them. The pictures are well done and very helpful for a little one in keeping their attention and helping illustrate the action. Highly recommended and glad we got it!

Bought this to read to my son before bed. My husband is not Buddhist and was skeptical as to what I was teaching our son (we are raising him to be open minded). Even my husband thought this book was great. It teaches life lessons and has good stories.

I bought this book to read with my 8 yr old son at bedtime. The book is very well written with the language being both accessible and engaging for young children. My son also loved the illustrations which have a wonderful clarity and warmth. Each Jataka we read gave us a great opportunity to talk about kindness, fear, greed and the other myriad feelings we have every day. Best of all, after we finished the book my son went back and read it again himself. Which is a big deal for him since he usually goes for Captain Underpants before anything else.

Perfect stories to share with children and discuss sharing, understanding, kindness and happiness.

The illustrations with the stories kept my kids happy and brought about the thoughtful questions and inquisitiveness that I was hoping. It also helped me start the conversations of religion (we are Buddhists) and our cultural background. I enjoyed these stories myself.

A wonderful collection of Aesop like Buddhist stories. The stories are quite short and thus make perfect divisions of read a few stories each night. The pages contain wonderful imagery. The stories themselves employ a playful use of animals to teach dharma. Each story provides a wonderful opportunity to stop and discuss the meaning of the story.

...this book contains timeless of stories of universal values. The stories will be familiar to all, and they resonate with children. Sure, they could read another mass-market product promoting book, or they can read something of substance with lessons and an ethical/moral framework that is entertaining yet still not preachy.

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