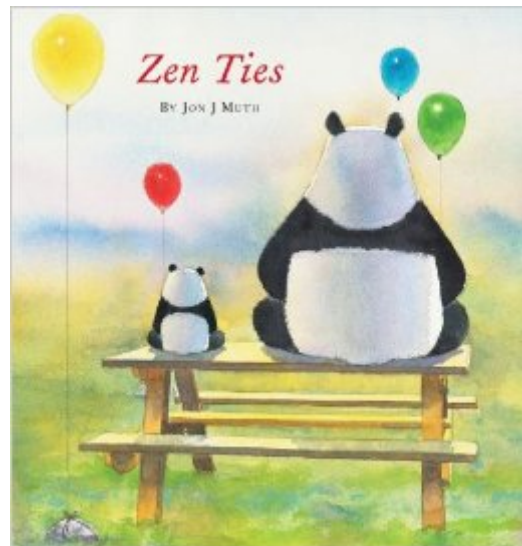


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# Zen Ties



## Synopsis

Stillwater the Panda returns in a delightful companion to his Caldecott Honor Book, Zen Shorts. Summer has arrived -- and so has Koo, Stillwater's haiku-speaking young nephew. And when Stillwater encourages Koo, and his friends Addy, Michael, and Karl to help a grouchy old neighbor in need, their efforts are rewarded in unexpected ways. Zen Ties is a disarming story of compassion and friendship that reaffirms the importance of our ties to one another.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 460L (What's this?)

Hardcover: 40 pages

Publisher: Scholastic Press; 1st edition (February 1, 2008)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0439634253

ISBN-13: 978-0439634250

Product Dimensions: 0.5 x 11 x 11.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 4.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (81 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #46,711 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #159 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Multigenerational](#) #1220 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Friendship, Social Skills & School Life > Friendship](#)

Age Range: 6 - 9 years

Grade Level: 1 - 4

## Customer Reviews

Zen Ties is soothing / like breathing in yoga class / forgetting worries  
Animate readers / with soft, light watercolors / and careful phrases  
Rewards are greatest / when we help one another / teaches Stillwater  
Be kind to planet / remember not to destroy / learns our young wee Koo  
Happier today / for reading this picture book / Many thanks to Muth

I learn so much about life from this fabulous author! He lovingly distills the wisdom of ancient Zen teachings into the most touching and practical stories about the things we all come up against in life and frequently do not, despite our best intentions, know how to handle. I discovered his books while visiting my brother's family. My sister-in-law bought me 'Zen Shorts', and told me that while Muth writes for children, SHE had learned more about HER life from that one book than most adult books

she had read. I bought 'Zen Ties' immediately when it came out because it is one of those books that can just shift your reality enough that it allows you to see life from a completely different angle. It is a short, lovely read and re-read when you, an adult, need a shift in perspective. I recommend his books very highly! And, if you enjoy his books as much as I do, I also highly recommend a book called *Being Here: Modern Day Tales of Enlightenment* by Ariel and Shya Kane. It is easy to read and also based on stories of things that confront all of us in our everyday lives and offers, as Muth does in 'Zen Ties', a completely different angle on how to see life.

This hardcover picture book took my breath away. Not since last summer's *Walt Disney's Cinderella* has a book so impressed me with its marriage of visuals and story. The story is pretty simple. Huge panda Stillwater picks up his visiting nephew Koo -- who only speaks in haiku -- at the train station. They are joined by Stillwater's friends Addy, Michael and Karl. The pandas play with the kids, and Michael tells Stillwater his concerns about an upcoming Spelling Bee. Stillwater then takes them to Miss Whitaker's house, an elderly woman who lives on the kids' street. None of the three children can believe Stillwater would be friends with such a cranky, unpleasant person. Stillwater helps the siblings get to know Miss Whitaker, and they realize she is sad and bitter because she is alone, scared and not well. In the end the kids and the old lady learn to appreciate and help each other. There is such depth here. Consider the wordplay. When Stillwater picks up his nephew, he says "Hi, Koo!" And then, of course, Koo only speaks in the 17-syllable haiku poetry form. The lovely and realistic watercolor renditions of people and pandas make the whole story seem dreamlike. Stillwater sometimes seems normal panda sized, sometimes as big as a house. The wordless -- and haunting -- image of Miss Whitaker, late at night, looking at a painting Karl and Koo made for her is worth the price of the book in itself.

In 'Zen Ties' Jon J. Muth revisits his delightful story of the friendship between siblings Addy, Michael, and Karl with Zen master panda bear Stillwater. Yet, here Muth adds a wonderful surprise - Stillwater's haiku-talking nephew Koo comes over from Japan to visit and in one week they will discover that many times what seems is not always what is. When Stillwater makes friends with an angry neighbor, the siblings are speechless. They can not understand how Stillwater could ever want to spend a day with the bitter old lady who is always screaming at them to not play on her yard. Combining his peaceful messages with Koo's simple haikus, Stillwater shows Addy, Michael, and Karl that being alone and scared often makes people angry, but with a little love, patience, and care a person's true personality will come shining through. 'Zen Ties' is a wonderful story, beautifully

illustrated by Muth's watercolors. It a great read in classes and in the home if you are teaching a lesson on morality and caring for grandparents and the elderly. Muth's addition of Koo's character also adds a creative journey into different forms of poetry - you can pair this up with a lesson on Japanese culture and a 'write your own haiku' exercise with the class. (Literature teachers of older students can use this too!) This book is a great addition to your Muth collection and could be read before or after reading 'Zen Shorts'.

This is a very cute story for children which shows the way we are all part of humanity and how one receives help through helping others. It is a very warm book with beautiful illustrations. It is my new favorite. I also love the previous book Zen Shorts. For young and Old, Buddhist and non-Buddhist.

We are huge fans of The Three Questions and Zen Shorts, so snapped this one up upon publication and are not disappointed. Lovely, lovely illustrations that visually celebrate the community that the story endorses. Stillwater, like some sort of modern-day Nana (the dog nanny in Peter Pan), teaches his human companions how simple acts help us overcome our fears. And Koo is a hilarious addition.

I really wanted to like this book. I enjoy the concept that we should be kind to others and not judge harsh people too quickly but the book is kinda all over the place and I still haven't figured out the point of the small panda in the story. I did like that its short enough that my 2 1/2 year old can sit through it and enjoys it, but that is about it.

My kids and I are big fans of Jon Muth. We have several of his books and are very fond of his stories and the artwork found within. You can't help but fall in love with a big panda that teaches kids about the lessons of Zen Buddhism. Don't worry this isn't a religious book but more a book about being a good person and helping others. You will find the story to be insightful, humorous, and full of life and joy. I can read these books over and over again without getting bored.

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