



## ***Mystery of the Missing Luck***

Jacqueline Pearce

illustrated by Leanne Franson

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AR Quiz # 143863

### **About the Book**

Sara loves her grandmother's bakery. It's a special place—not only because of its delicious Japanese buns and pastries. She enjoys spending time with her obaachan, her grandmother. But things aren't going well for the bakery. When the bakery's lucky cat statue goes missing, Sara wonders if the bakery's luck is gone for good. But then a mysterious cat appears in the backyard one night and inspires a plan. With the help of her friend, Jake, Sara just might find the statue and restore the bakery's lost luck.

### **About the Author**

**Jacqueline Pearce** grew up on Vancouver Island. As a child, she enjoyed playing sports, climbing trees and exploring nature, as well as reading books, writing stories and drawing. By about age ten or eleven, she knew she wanted to be a writer. After high school, Jacqueline worked her way through university doing a variety of jobs, including helping at a multicultural summer day camp, identifying artifacts behind the scenes at a forestry museum, teaching an after-school "Adventures in Nature" class to young kids, and once she even got paid to watch children's cartoons. In university, Jacqueline studied a variety of subjects, including art, history, English literature, anthropology, and environmental education. She has degrees in English Literature and Environmental Studies. She currently lives on the edge of a ravine near Vancouver, British Columbia, with her husband, daughter, dog and two cats. Her stories are inspired by the people, cultures, history, nature and animals in the places she's lived and the places she's visited.

### About the Writing of the Book

When author Jacqueline Pearce was a girl, she used to walk downtown with her best friend every Saturday to visit a local craft supply store and the bakery next door. The baker always claimed to have saved the biggest piece of apple strudel just for her. That must have been when her interest in bakeries started (helped by a sweet tooth). Jacqueline first saw a cat statue with a raised paw in a Chinese restaurant in Vancouver (the statue is sometimes called a Chinese Lucky Cat). When she discovered the Lucky Cat was actually from Japan (known there as a Maneki Neko, or Beckoning Cat) just before she left on a trip to Japan, she knew she wanted to find out more about the friendly-looking statue, and perhaps write a story about it. While in Japan, Jacqueline also discovered An-Pan Man, a cartoon character based on a popular Japanese food, a sweet bun filled with bean paste. There must be something special about a bun that has a super hero named after it, Jacqueline thought. But it wasn't until she returned to Canada that Jacqueline tasted her first an-pan and began to think of setting a story about a Maneki Neko in a bakery.

The Maneki Neko in the story is modeled after an old much-loved Maneki Neko statue that a shop-keeper in Kyoto, Japan, showed Jacqueline. It was passed down from his grandmother. The bakery in the story is partly modeled after a Japanese bakery in Vancouver, as well as memories of the favorite bakery from Jacqueline's childhood. The love Sara feels for her grandmother was inspired by Jacqueline's relationship with her two grandmothers.

### Teaching Ideas—Curriculum Connections

*The Mystery of the Missing Luck* contains themes of friendship, family, community, multiculturalism and problem-solving.

#### *Prereading Questions*

- Is it easier to do something by yourself or to accept help from a friend?
- Are there good and bad ways of giving advice? For example, can telling someone a different way of doing things sometimes hurt their feelings? Is there a way of wording advice or suggestions that is less likely to hurt someone's feelings?
- Should kids always discuss their plans with an adult? When is it okay to keep something secret or a surprise?
- Do you have any special objects in your family that were brought from a different country or passed down from one generation to another? What makes the object special? What other ways do we have of remembering family roots or family history?

*Classroom Discussion Questions*

1. Why is the Maneki Neko statue so important to Sara and her grandmother? Why does Sara feel that the cat statue is like a real cat?
2. Why does it take some time for Sara to trust Jake?
3. When the bakery's Maneki Neko statue goes missing, Sara creates "lost pet" style posters. Do you think people who saw the poster would have reacted differently if they knew the cat in the poster was not real?
4. What do you think the connection is between the mysterious nighttime cat Sara sees and the missing Maneki Neko statue?
5. How does Sara think her plan to find the missing Maneki Neko will help the bakery? How does the end result differ from what Sara planned?
6. How would the story have been different if Jake had refused to try or didn't like the bun Sara first shared with him at school?

*Suggested Activities*

- Discuss food associated with different countries, or have students talk about their favorite foods. Use drawings, photographs and images from magazine or restaurant flyers to show different foods. Bring food to share in class.
- What do the Japanese words *Obaachan* (chapter 1) *Maneki Neko* (chapter 2) and *an-pan* (chapter 5) mean? (Refer to explanations in the story.) Sara explains that the word *pan* is actually Portuguese and that it was introduced to the Japanese language when people from Portugal first brought bread to Japan. Have students think of non-English words that have become part of the English language (for example, the Japanese word *tsunami* and the French word *toque*.)
- Find out more about Maneki Neko, the lucky beckoning cat (see the blog: <http://luckymanekineko.wordpress.com>). Have students seen this statue anywhere? (It is often found inside entrances to Japanese and Chinese restaurants and stores.) Traditionally, the statue is said to beckon good luck, customers and wealth. In modern times, a pink Maneki Neko is said to welcome love, a red Maneki Neko is supposed to bring good health and a green Maneki Neko is said to help with academics and good grades.  
**Option:** Have students draw a Maneki Neko and imagine it could beckon or welcome whatever they wanted. Color and decorate the Maneki Neko accordingly.
- Create a neighborhood map, listing the businesses, stores, churches, parks, etc., in the neighborhood surrounding your school.

- When the bakery's Maneki Neko statue goes missing, Sara thinks of a plan to find the lost statue. She starts by searching the bakery for it, then makes posters to put up in the neighborhood. She hopes the posters will let people know to look out for the missing statue and also get them to come to the bakery. Discuss what else someone could do to find a missing pet or lost object. Discuss what advertising is and what else Sara and her grandmother could do to bring more customers to the bakery.

### Other Titles and Websites of Interest

*The Reunion* by Jacqueline Pearce

*Naomi's Road* by Joy Kogawa

*I am Tama: A Japanese Legend* by Wendy Henrichs, illustrated by Yoshiko Jaeggi

*Maneki Neko: The Tale of the Beckoning Cat* by Susan Lendorth, illustrated by Kathryn Otoshi

*The Tale of the Lucky Cat* by Sunny Seki

*The Beckoning Cat* by Koko Nishizuka, illustrated by Rosanne Litzinger

*Naomi's Tree* by Joy Kogawa, illustrated by Ruth Ohi

*The Kids' Multicultural Cookbook: Food & Fun Around the World* by Deanna F. Cook, illustrated by Michael Kline

*Everybody Bakes Bread* by Norah Dooley, illustrated by Peter J. Thornton

<http://luckymanekineko.wordpress.com> (Jacqueline's blog about Maneki Nekos)

[www.jacquelinepearce.ca](http://www.jacquelinepearce.ca) (Jacqueline's website)

<http://wildink.wordpress.com> (Jacqueline's personal blog)

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anpan> (history of an-pan in Japan)

### Other Books by the Author from Orca Book Publishers

*Discovering Emily*

*Dog House Blues*

*Emily's Dream*

*Manga Touch*

*The Mystery of the Missing Luck*

*The Reunion*

*The Truth About Rats (and Dogs)*

### Reviews

"Readers new to chapter books will find this paperback, with its many full-page drawings, a good place to start."  
—*Booklist*

"Short chapters and nicely detailed pencil illustrations by Leanne Franson will definitely keep even reluctant readers turning pages. Recommended."  
—*Resource Links*

"[*Mystery of the Missing Luck* has a] tightly focused plot, well supported by a manageable cast of characters...Will fit nicely into reading programs as well as offering newly independent readers [an] engaging option for first chapterbook reads."  
—*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*