

Hello, Grand Mamoon!

Donna Steinmann

Tamara Guion, Illustrator

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The timeless fascination with the moon—from the idea of reaching it to the thought of what can exist there—has been endless fodder for films, Broadway musicals, pop songs, and all forms of literature and spoken word pieces. The moon continues to play a major role in children’s books and stories, and appropriately so; its nightly rise in its different incarnations is perfectly timed with reading before drifting off to dreamland.

This book is one of the latest of these lunar stories, inspired by a true account: *Hello, Grand Mamoon!* is the tale of young Tula, whose Grandma Nellie has died, and whom she misses in many different ways, particularly their talks and her stories. Tula’s favorite story is the one Grandma Nellie enchanted her with when there was a full moon, about tribes from long ago who had a “magical way of seeing” it. Tula remembers how Grandma Nellie told her, “They especially liked to tell stories about the moon because, long ago, when the moon was full, our ancestors could see the face of a great round moon mother.”

Grandma Nellie had seen the ancient woman herself, but Tula still hasn’t, and she wonders how she will be able to, now that her grandmother has gone. Tula holds tight to the advice she was given to “look with your heart,” and slowly, the moon begins to appear differently to her. What is finally revealed comes as a result of Tula’s embracing all that her Grandmother shared with her, and realizing that these memories can never be taken away.

The author, of Iroquois heritage and a former University of California design student, draws from her own memories to help bring the large female image of the moon into plain view for the world, and she guides the narrative with a soothing, straightforward tone that is both casual and elegant. As is the case in the best children’s books, not only do the illustrations work in tandem with the story, but they can also stand alone to advance the tale. The illustrator’s drawings are rich in their dark, nighttime colors, and effectively convey Tula’s sense of wonder and discovery. Together, author and illustrator have created a lovely and moving book that has enormous appeal for children and adults.

NANCY SUNDSTROM (August 18, 2009)

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