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Picture Books

The Stone Hatchlings
Sarah Tsiang
Quin Leng, illustrator
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Kids love to give free reign to their imaginations, and in *The Stone Hatchlings*, little Abby's rich creativity fills the pages. When the girl discovers two stones in her back yard she decides they are eggs and nominates herself their caregiver. Over the pages that follow she builds a cozy nest and sits on it, declaring "I'm hatching eggs." Her pragmatic mother, who prefers that her daughter come for dinner, points out that they are stones, not eggs. "But Abby knew an egg when she sat on one," writes poet Sarah Tsiang.

Abby watches as the eggs hatch and talks back to her pretend chicks, feeding them sunflower seeds and painting feathers on their stone bodies. She points out their features to her mother and whistles so her father can understand how they sound. Together with her pretend friends, Abby paints happily, bathes, and sings. "Do the birds have to sing so early?" her parents ask. "But you can't tell birds when to sing," writes Tsiang, with a trace of irony.

One day the birds lose their appeal to the little girl. Their feathers don't seem as bright and their songs are fainter. Perhaps she is growing up and moving on to other toys; perhaps the pretense no longer interests her as much. "They need a vet," she decides, but her parents are uncooperative. When she cannot bring them back to the friends they once were to her, Abby decides the chicks need their freedom and sets them back in the yard. Later, she declares, "Those aren't my birds. Those are stones." From that day, she sings every morning from her window, enjoying the sounds of the garden birds around her.

Coupled with Quin Leng's distinct artistic style, Tsiang tells a compelling story about a child's imaginative powers—and does it from the child's point of view. Her young readers will enjoy watching her bring stones to life as birds, only to set them free and focus her creativity elsewhere. *The Stone Hatchlings* is a sweet tale that children ages three through six will certainly enjoy and identify with.

Lauren Kramer