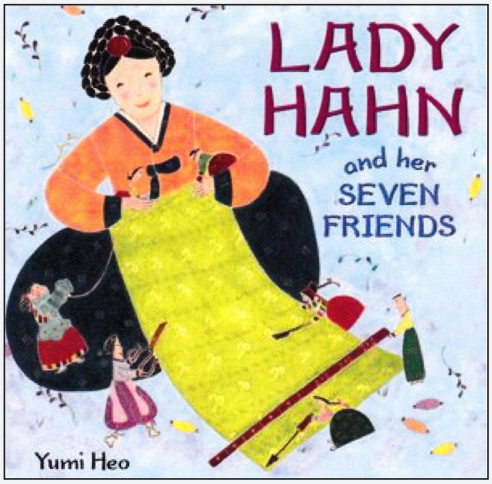
Review: *Lady Hahn and Her Friends:* A Well-Stitched Picture Book

Heo, Yumi. *Lady Hahn and Her Seven Friends*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2012.

Adriana L. Medina



Lady Hahn and Her Seven Friends is a picture book based on a late 1800s Korean text, as explained in the note by the author and illustrator, Yumi Heo. The story seems to simply explain the function of seven sewing tools; yet, stitched within is a meaningful life lesson: there are times when one cannot accomplish some things alone.

The story begins with Lady Hahn, whose "job [is] to sew shirts and skirts," (Heo) and her seven sewing friends:Mrs. Ruler, Newlywed Scissors, Young Bride Needle, Young Bride Red Thread, Old Lady Thimble, Young Lady Flat Iron, and Little Miss Iron. As the story continues, each tool begins to boast about its importance in the sewing process. Lady Hahn hears this and boasts of her own tools—her hands. She goes on to say that without her hands, none of the other seven sewing tools would be of any use. She tells her seven sewing friends that she is "the most important of all" (Heo). Then, she shuts her seven sewing friends in her sewing box and goes to sleep. In the box, the seven sewing tools lament their situation and begin to recall the times when Lady Hahn treated them poorly. They decide to escape from the box and run away. Lady Hahn wakes and opens her sewing box to begin her work. She finds the box empty and realizes her sewing friends have left. She tries to do her sewing work without them. Yet, she cannot measure the fabric without Mrs. Ruler. She cannot cut without Newlywed Scissors. She cannot iron or sew with only her hands. She realizes she needs her seven sewing friends. Lady Hahn cries and begs

for them to return. The sewing tools, which had been hiding behind the screen, hear her cries. Mrs. Thimble feels sad and decides to return to the sewing box, and the others follow her. The next morning Lady Hahn opens her sewing box and finds all seven of her sewing friends in there. She apologizes to them, recognizes their usefulness, and admits their importance in the sewing process. Together and happily, Lady Hahn and her seven friends continue sewing.

The simple nature of the text and the fact that there is a choral element in the beginning of the story allows for this picture book to become a part of a parent or teacher's read-aloud repertoire as well as easily included in a readers' theatre or drama classroom center. The illustrations are colorful and reflective of the culture and the topic of the story. For some children, the illustrations may need some explanations. For example, modern day irons are electric, whereas those illustrated in the text are irons that needed to be heated over coals. Each character is illustrated to resemble the tool she represents. While only seven sewing tools are represented in the story, there are other important sewing tools that are not mentioned (such as pins, chalk, or patterns). This fact might allow for this picture book to be part of a writing and art activity, where children can illustrate a different sewing tool and create the text describing its utility and importance in the sewing process. This picture book would be a great addition to a seamstress or quilter's library. It could be an innovative way to introduce young people to the textile art of sewing and some of the essential tools used to sew. In addition, the message of working together to accomplish something greater than the parts is an important message that is beneficial for the classroom, for home, for the workplace, and for life.

Overall, Yumi Heo has pieced together a classic tale, appliquéd simple and colorful illustrations, woven through the story a clear message about working together and incorporating everyone's talent for a greater purpose, and in that process, produced an enjoyable picture book.

About the Author

Adriana L. Medina is assistant professor at The University of North Carolina at Charlotte. Her interests include adolescent literacy, teacher education, and educational program evaluation. Along with teaching reading, Dr. Medina also teaches sewing to young children. Almost as much as reading, she enjoys a specific textile art that requires a method of sewing . . . quilting!