



A Grain of Rice

Helena Clare Pittman

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When a humble farmer named Pong Lo asks for the hand of the Emperor's beautiful daughter, the Emperor is enraged. Who ever heard of a peasant marrying a princess? But Pong Lo is wiser than the Emperor knows. And when he concocts a potion that saves the Princess's life, the Emperor gladly offers him any reward he chooses--except the Princess.

Pong Lo makes a surprising request. He asks for a single grain of rice, doubled every day for one hundred days. The baffled Emperor obliges--only to discover that if you're as clever as Pong Lo, you can turn a single grain of rice into all the wealth and happiness in the world!

Praise for A Grain of Rice:

"Clever and quietly told in simple, yet evocative language." -*Kirkus Reviews*

"Pittman invites readers into her story through her choice of concrete objects, sensory images, and universal messages. She borrows from the motifs of oral literature, and also weaves in information about arithmetical progression and 15th-Century Chinese people, patterns, and traditions. Pittman's well executed pencil drawings ooze with emotion, and there is a fusion of text and illustrations...**[A] book that is wise and humorous, and one to be perused and savored.**" -*School Library Journal*

"Gracefully illustrated with finely shaded drawings, this picture book tells of Pong Lo, a poor Chinese peasant who wins the hand of the emperor's daughter through his knowledge of mathematical principles." -*Booklist*

A Grain of Rice Details

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From Reader Review A Grain of Rice for online ebook

C.J. Milbrandt says

A common (but clever) young man humbly asks the emperor of China for his daughter's hand in marriage. Unthinkable! But where there's a will (and quick wits), there's a way. An engaging short story with classic themes ... and a bit of math.

Cody says

My students loved this story. Myself? Likewise; 100%

Kathy says

Just read this story outloud to 4 of my kids ages 7-14 and they all sat and listened to it. They were fascinated by the math involved. Great story.

Alex (not a dude) Baugh says

A wonderful retelling of the story of Pong Lo, a poor farmer who wanted to marry the Emperors's daughter, and how he did, using exponential math and a single grain of rice. A great way to introduce kids to the power of numbers - pun intended.

Lance Greenfield says

Excellent!

This book is such a simple variation on the old grains on a chessboard example of exponential growth. The story is charming, but not exceptional. It is the almost familiar story of a peasant who wishes to marry the princess and uses his brain to achieve his goal.

I'd recommend it to anyone with bright young children or grandchildren to read it to. And you are bound to enjoy it yourself too.

Milky Mixer says

Part fairy tale, part math lesson.

Barb Dixon Palmieri says

This tale of clever Pong Lo would be great for a school read for many different lessons. Pong Lo desires the hand of the emperor's daughter, Chang Wu. This cannot be as Pong Lo is a peasant. But the optimistic and very clever Pong Lo has other ideas. All it took was one grain of rice.

This book contains a math lesson at the end. It explains in clear detail and simple to understand wording what "exponential growth" is and how it can be calculated. The tale is a very good example. This book and math lesson are written for children 8-12. If any adults have trouble figuring out exponential growth and how to calculate it, I strongly suggest this book.

Ginger says

Lovely just lovely

Lisa Vegan says

I've read two other versions of this mathematical folk tale, and I think I enjoyed both of those stories more than this one. They took place in India and the motive for requesting the grain of rice was to better the condition of the people of the land. The illustrations were colorful and appealing. These two books are One Grain Of Rice A Mathematical Folktale by Demi and The Rajah's Rice A Mathematical Folktale from India by David Barry. They each have the subtitle: A Mathematical Folktale.

I enjoyed this book too. It takes place in fifteenth century China. I love most how doubling the grains of rice every day leads to such a large number of grains of rice in not that many days. I appreciated the work ethic of Pong Lo, and how he worked hard and worked his way up. The cover illustration is the only one in color. The black and white and gray illustrations are okay; I really liked a few of them.

What I didn't like as much here as in the other two books was the motive. This is more of a traditional fairy tale. The young man wants the princess for a wife and it quickly becomes obvious that she feels the same way about him. So the longed for reward is the princess for himself; there's no altruism here as in the other books. I enjoyed the altruism part of the other books, especially in the Barry book; it was much more emotionally touching.

Still, it was an enjoyable story and the math is sensational.

Unfortunately, there is no chart showing the rice accumulating as there is in the other two books. Those charts were fun, especially the one in Demi's book.

Jodie Warner says

Oh my! I just read a book about maths! I don't remember reading this as a child, but it's a PERFECT introduction to exponential numbers. Pong Lo asks for the Emperor's daughter's hand in marriage but, because Pong Lo is a peasant, he is rejected. He finds work in the palace, working his way up and gaining the trust of the Emperor. One day, the Princess falls ill and the Emperor offers anything to anyone who can save her. Pong Lo to the rescue! He asks for one grain of rice in return. The Emperor is bemused and asks "is that all?", Pong Lo, the clever thing, eventually says "ok, well, if you insist, you can double it for 100 days". The Emperor clearly didn't study Year 9 maths because what he doesn't realise is how quickly this will add up and by day 40 he's sent broke (at 5 billion + grains of rice- about 20000kgs) and there's no rice left in the kingdom. The Emperor gives in and Pong Lo and the princess marry.

Moral of the story? Stay in school kids! (And do your maths homework!)

Katy says

I had read this years ago but bought it again for my granddaughters. I had forgotten how clever this story is about clever Long Po!

Sara Arrigoni says

When my daughter finished this in minutes and said it was good, I had to find out for myself. A charming story!

David Bhadreshwar says

A Grain of Rice is a nice book about a farmer's son named Pong Lo who wants to marry Princess Chang Wu. This book is perfect for any time of day, and for ages 2-100. I enjoyed this book and I recommend this book to you. Jess, age 9

Barbara says

I have long loved Demi's picture book version of this folktale set in fifteenth century China, and I might have read this particular book when it was published three decades ago. Still, the story is fresh, vibrant, and appealing now as it was in those earlier versions. Black-and-white drawings capture the essence of the characters' personalities and the book's setting, somehow taking readers back in time, and the updated cover highlights the reason for the protagonist, Pong Lo's hard work--the Emperor's daughter, Chang Wu. When Pong Lo boldly asks for her hand in marriage, the Emperor refuses him; after all, he is a mere commoner. But Pong Lo has a keen mind and a solid work ethic, and he slowly rises in the man's court, becoming invaluable and even saving the Princess's life. But even then, the man won't budge, and refuses to give Pong Lo the only thing he wants. Pong Lo outwits the Emperor by asking for one grain of rice, to be doubled each day for 100 days. This simple request threatens to bankrupt the Emperor who cries for mercy on the fortieth

day. Not only will romantics relish the story's outcome and delight in the rise of a man who seemed to have nothing but intelligence and determination, but math fans will love learning more about the math behind the story from the afterward, which even uses a graph to get the point across. I'm delighted that this story will be able to find its way to a modern audience by means of this version of the story. Obviously, it's a great read aloud choice but also an excellent one to use in a math classroom. When most folks hear about the story, they are quite doubtful until they start doing the math and learning about exponents.

Summitsonthetop says

I loved this book for all elementary ages. It is fun to extend it by doing a math experiment. Agree to pay your child a penny and then double the penny each day for ten days. How much money would he have? (You can actually do this right now.) You can also talk about how Pong Lo was a humble farmer, but he was always thinking of others and helping them, and everyone liked him.

Great book and fun story.
