

## TIP's Magical Journey: The Ride of Discovery and Inspiration

**Barbara Mishkin**

**Jason Shiver, Illustrator**

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(56pp)

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*In the lesson-filled children's novel TIP's Magical Journey, a boy meets an interesting variety of people who expand his perception of the world.*

In Barbara Mishkin's novel *TIP's Magical Journey*, an eight-and-a-half-year-old boy spends a day riding his city's rapid transit system, meeting people from around the world and learning about their lives and cultures along the way.

TIP is Thaddeus Isaac Pendleton, who hops on Philadelphia's elevated line early in the morning, before his mother wakes up. He often misses breakfast because his home has little food. This early indication of food insecurity and poverty pops up in various places, though it is never fully integrated into the plot.

TIP is figured as an adventurer, in love with the people he meets regardless of their countries or cultures of origin. The city dwellers he encounters include activists, artists, immigrants, and shop owners. Through them, he learns about foods like tzatziki, Portuguese egg tarts, borscht, and tapas. Indeed, it is primarily through learning about food that he gains insight into their many different cultures.

While the train moves forward, the plot does not. TIP meets many people and they offer many words of advice, but nothing much happens beyond this. TIP stays on the train; there are no climactic moments or conflicts as he travels. And the book's descriptions of other people are flat; encounters with them are too summarized to be engaging, and their conversations with TIP are stilted. This is most true of their farewells, which are meant to impart wisdom but are instead awkward and aphoristic. The book's ending features a quick fast-forward, showing TIP as an adult who has grown beyond the bounds of the story.

The soft-edged colored-pencil illustrations do a better job of fleshing out TIP and the cityscape that he travels. A banner runs across the top of each page as a connective visual thread, often featuring the flags of the people TIP meets. And through the train windows, there are piquing glimpses of parts of the city that match their representatives on the train: Chinese characters are painted on a produce market that acts as a backdrop for 76ers fans Mei and Chang; fishing enthusiast brothers sit in front of a pro shop. The book also features a page of items to search for in the illustrations, encouraging another look at the detailed images.

In the lesson-filled early reader *TIP's Magical Journey*, a boy spends a day riding the train, meeting interesting fellow riders who expand his perception of the world.

CAMILLE-YVETTE WELSCH (November 9, 2023)

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