



## Tea Cakes for Tosh

*Kelly Starling Lyons , E.B. Lewis (Illustrator)*

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Tosh loves his grandma Honey and her delicious golden tea cakes. When she tells the story of how the cookies became part of their family, he feels like he's flying back in time. But then one day, Honey starts forgetting things, even an ingredient for the tea cakes. Inspired by his love for his grandma and respect for his family's heritage, Tosh finds a way to give Honey and himself a special gift that keeps the memory alive.

### Tea Cakes for Tosh Details

Date : Published December 6th 2012 by Putnam Juvenile

ISBN : 9780399252136

Author : Kelly Starling Lyons , E.B. Lewis (Illustrator)

Format : Hardcover 32 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Family, Cultural, African American, Food and Drink, Cooking, Realistic Fiction

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## From Reader Review Tea Cakes for Tosh for online ebook

### Jill says

Tea cakes actually came to the U.S. via British colonists, who liked these sweet round buttery cookies served with their afternoon tea. While American slaves working in the kitchens were not allowed to *eat* them, they *were* required to bake and serve them. Following the emancipation of the slaves, however, African-American cooks continued to make them, and they became a tradition in black families.

*Tea Cakes for Tosh* celebrates that tradition with the touching story of young Tosh who loves spending time with his Grandma Honey and hearing her stories of the old days as she bakes tea cakes.

Honey tells Tosh about his “great-great-great-great-grandma Ida”:

’...[she] made the most delicious collards, chicken, and make-you-dance biscuits,’ Honey said.  
‘Her tea cakes were the best around.

But those tea cakes were not for Grandma Ida’s children or any other young slaves. They were never supposed to taste the cookies she baked.

But some days Grandma Ida made a few extra, just the right size for hiding in her pocket. She risked being whipped to give the children a taste of sweet freedom.”

Illustrator E.B. Lewis deftly changes the tone of his watercolors to reflect the mood being conveyed by the text.

As the story continues, Honey and Tosh continue to share stories over tea cakes. But eventually, Honey can’t remember things like she used to do. Tosh even has to take over the cooking.

At the end of the book, the author has included the entire recipe for tea cakes, portions of which appear throughout the text.

**Evaluation:** Who me? Cry over a kid’s book? Don’t be daft! And would you please pass the Kleenex...?.

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### Viviane Elbee says

Beautiful, touching story.

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### Amanda says

A story about the relationship between a young boy and his grandmother. She starts to lose her memory and he helps her remember their favorite story about the tea cakes her grandmother used to make while enslaved.

Beautiful imagery and detailed illustrations. Really makes you want to make the tea cakes! And you can because they give the recipe at the end.

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### **Esmeralda Gregg says**

This book tells of the special relationship between Tosh and his Grandma Honey. Tosh loves listening to Grandma Honey tell family stories. His favorite is about the special tea cakes that smell like vanilla and sunshine. When Grandma Honey prepares the cakes she tells the story of a great-great-great-great-grandma Ida's whose recipe she is preparing and explains what life was like for slaves children. Unlike Tosh, the slave children weren't allowed to have any of the treats, though Grandma Ida always found a way to put the sugary sweetness into their hands anyway. Tosh knows this is an important story and he takes care to remember every word. And when grandma Honey begins to forget, he recounts the stories of grandma Ida's life.

THEMES: Grandparents, Slavery, Cookies

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### **Tameika King says**

This book is about a little boy who loves to hear his Grandmother's stories. I loved this story. It reminded me of the relationship I had with my Grandma. I think that anyone who has a close bond with their grandmother would relate to the book. The illustrations are mostly in color but go to black and white whenever Tosh's grandmother is talking about the past. One thing that I would do with students is have them read the story and then write a journal entry about someone who they are really close to. I would ask them to tell about anything special that they do with that person. I think that the targeted audience would be second or third grade.

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### **Kelsey says**

Age: K-2nd grade  
History: Slavery  
Family: Grandma  
Tough Issue: Alzheimer's

A well constructed story that discusses two unique issues--slavery and Alzheimer's--and blends it around a family's recipe for cookies. The illustrations are emotionally evocative and I love that every other page depicts an ingredient of the tea cakes on a recipe card.

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### **Samantha says**

A beautifully written story about the special bond a grandmother and her grandson share. Tosh's time spent with his grandma Honey are spent eating delicious homemade tea cakes and listening to Honey tell stories

about their family from generations past. When Honey begins to forget things it is Tosh who helps her and carries on the tradition of sharing tea cakes and stories.

The watercolor paintings perfectly support this story. When Honey tells stories the color palette changes to reflect the journey back in time and as Honey's memory problems become apparent a blue wash begins to cover the images of Honey giving readers a visual to represent what's happening in Honey's brain.

Meanwhile, Tosh is learning how to make tea cakes and a recipe card with a single ingredient is pictured on each two page spread in the story that takes place in the present. Following the story is the complete list of ingredients and the directions for baking a batch of tea cakes.

The way the writing and artwork worked together in this picture book touched me. The relationship between grandson and grandmother is well characterized and the benefits of this relationship are apparent from page one. I can't wait to recommend this book!

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### **Shelli says**

This was such a beautifully written and touching story about a young boy who loves to hear his grandma talk about times past. Times in which neither of them lived, during a time of slavery and the struggles their ancestors went through. Grandmother had always told these stories with such detail they both felt as if they are being transported back in time as witnesses. However, when grandma gets older recalling these stories becomes challenging for her aging mind to recall. Through baking and love, her grandson works to keep these stories alive for them both. This book was so moving it brought both my daughter and I to tears.

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### **Marsha says**

Gentle and sweet like the titular cookies, "Tea Cakes for Tosh" is a child's look at the distant past and the worrying present. As the story unfolds, Tosh's grandma Honey starts forgetting things and many adults know what such memory loss could mean for the unfortunate individual.

Tosh's determination to be of help to his forgetful grandma is inspiring to read and tugs gently at the heart. Attaching his grandma's memory to food is a very convincing tactic to take; anyone who has a favorite food will understand just how such a feat is accomplished.

The illustrations are lovely, with the look of modern-day African Americans presented with soft swathes of color, shade and outline (Tosh's cornrows are especially vivid). Mr. Lewis knows how to attach mood to color. We see how Honey's fading memory renders her surroundings in equally fading shades of blue and gray.

As an extra treat, the cookie recipe is shown in the back, as are the ingredients depicted on various pages.

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### **Lewiston-Altura Librarian says**

This is a sweet book about grandparents and grandchildren sharing family history. But it also the sad story

many of know about dementia. It would be a great story to start that conversation with young ones. I appreciate the recipe in the book for tea cakes!

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### **Amelia says**

Tosh loves when his grandma Honey bakes her golden tea cakes, from a recipe passed down from when his grandma's grandma's grandma was a slave cook on a plantation. But then grandma Honey starts forgetting things, like where she parked the car, a phone number, and even the ingredients for the beloved tea cakes. But luckily Tosh has already been taught how to make them, and helps Honey remember the story behind the tradition. An important lesson of learning traditions, recipes, and family history before you are no longer able to learn those stories, but also an introduction for young children to the concept of Alzheimer's and memory loss. A recipe is included in the back if any readers feel inclined to taste a piece of history.

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### **Tasha says**

Tosh loved spending time with his grandma Honey, who baked him tea cakes. She told him stories of the cakes, dating all the way back to his great-great-great-great-grandma Ida who made the best tea cakes around. But those tea cakes were not for her children, they were for her owners since she was a slave. Sometimes though, she would make some extra cakes for her children to promise that things would change. Honey started to forget things, like where she parked her car and phone numbers. Then one day, she forgot how to make tea cakes. Luckily, Tosh knew just how to help.

Lyons has created a relationship between grandmother and grandchild here that is warm and loving and filled with sweet baked good too. She shows the importance of generation in a family by tying in the history of the tea cakes. I appreciate seeing a boy's relationship with his grandmother where the boy is also interested in his heritage and being in the kitchen.

Lewis has illustrated the book with realistic watercolors that capture the relationship of the two main characters. He switches to black and white images when family history is discussed and shows the tea cakes on recipe cards too. The entire book is filled with warm colors that speak to the sunny relationship being depicted.

A beauty of a book, this picture book celebrates family heritage, grandparents and the power of food to bring people closer together. Appropriate for ages 5-7.

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### **Debbie says**

So sweet! Love the message about Grandma getting older and how we can be the memory for our elders. I also always love a book centered around baked goods! (Providing the recipe sealed the deal!)

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### **Kate says**

This book packs a punch. I was tearing up by the end. Grandma gets Alzheimers or dementia of some kind

and Tosh helps her remember important things. Nice illustrations - this felt like a real grandma. Lewis also has a good ear for dialogue, making it all the more realistic (and therefore heartwrenching).

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### **Christina Carter says**

It was a pleasure to finally get the chance to read one of Kelly Starling Lyons books. I have followed her on Twitter this past school year and appreciate the work that she does as a founding member of The Brown Bookshelf.

Tea Cakes for Tosh is the first book of Kelly's that I've read and it warmed my heart! It got me good in that sweet spot where memories of times spent with grandparents dwells. That place where laughter, freshly baked coconut cake, big hugs, and stories still linger. Cherish that time for the incredible gift that it is. Much like this book is a gift. Read it and you'll see what I mean.

In Tea Cakes for Tosh, the relationship he has with his grandma Honey is indeed an unbreakable bond that is filled with lots of love, "stories of courage," and heavenly tea cakes that "smelled like vanilla mixed with sunshine." The two of them spend afternoons together baking and remembering. Honey would share stories about Tosh's great-great-great-great grandma, Ida that were so vivid, it was as though he were being transported back in time. Then one day, Honey's memory begins to fade. She can't quite recall the recipe as well as she used to. Tosh is right there to help grandma remember. To bake tea cakes for her and to tell the story that's connected to them.

What a sweet, sweet story. This is one that I will be adding to my K-5 library. You will want to get a copy for your family. One to keep, and one to give away. Add it to your classroom library too and read it aloud with your students. I guarantee that you will all love it!

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