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Bone Talk

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~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

4

What happens when two cultures meet head on? It is 1899, Bontok in the Cordilleras in the Philippines. Samkad is elated and nervous; his father has just told him he is become a man. But his journey to the Tree of Bones is not smooth; his life is turned upside down when an American arrives in the village. The army follows. Samkad suddenly finds himself facing terrifying new ideas ...as he says ?I had not known it possible for there to be people with hair a colour other than black...?

Books ? stories ? can take the reader anywhere and here Candy Gourlay transports us to the other side of the world, the Philippines. This is a story that does not appear in our history books ? but the parallels are clear. Gourlay introduces us to Samkad and his people still living according to the patterns that have been followed for ages. We see their beliefs, their preoccupations, their practices through Samkad?s eyes. Superficially they are unfamiliar, strange perhaps. But Samkad is a boy we can recognise, telling his story with an immediacy that opens a door to understanding. Pervading the novel is the sense of place. The isolation ? even the tribes have little real knowledge of each other ? the lush landscape, and presiding over all the Tree of Bones, the avatar guiding thoughts and ideas.

Gourlay is an accomplished novelist who looks to explore different challenges in every book, all springing from her own background. Here she boldly takes her readers into a very different world, a past that is both specific yet universal. This is a book to recommend ? accessible, exciting and challenging.

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