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# The Beautiful Take Away Palace

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

0

The title turned me sour. I'm tired of seeing children from Hong Kong or China labelled as 'Take-away kids'. The author in fact attempts to illustrate my very concern by raising the issue in a story line, which tells what happens to Kai-Cheng, a newly-arrived immigrant orphan who meets prejudice as soon as he reaches school. It's a worthy idea but Geraldine Kaye's treatment creates problems for me. I'm not at all sure we should tolerate such phrases as 'He's Chinky boy' and 'not bad for a loony from Kowloon' even if they are in the story to illustrate unkindness and intolerance. Once it's in print it's acceptable to many of the children we guide towards these books. Racist phrases are easily and naively introduced to children's vocabulary even when the author's aim is to achieve the opposite. I feel this book backfires sadly. It makes little attempt to sort out the roots of the prejudice the boy experiences. On one level the story has happy ending. Kai-Cheng is accepted because he makes a beautiful model and also overcomes the language barrier. Everyone cheers. On another, level the happy ending is Kai-Cheng's own, in his own terms, understood by none of his English school friends (except perhaps Amy). Geraldine Kaye raises the difficulty of Kai-Cheng explaining his culture: 'How could he tell all that to Mrs Knight?' (his teacher). Superficial readers may miss the point too and see him in their terms as rather foolish. This one needs talk to ensure it is understood. Otherwise not for me. Too dangerous.

Running Order:

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