

American Born Chinese

Gene Luen Yang

Reviewed by: Anika 17

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Jin Wang isn't too happy to be the only Chinese American at his new school. Jin finds racism, bullying, and isolation at every turn. Though things get better when he meets a Taiwanese boy named Wei-Chen and befriends him. But soon, Jin Wang's scrambles to fit in when he finds himself with a crush on a white American girl. Then there's the Monkey King, who rules the land of Fruit-Flower over thousands of monkey subjects, but he wants more. The Monkey King sets off on an endless tirade to be hailed as a god and deity of his own right. His story is one of the oldest Chinese fables. Last but not least, Chin-kee is also out to play. He's the embodiment of all negative Chinese stereotypes, and he's quite intent on ruining his cousin Danny's life. Because of Chin-kee, Danny's always had to move every year out of shame, but things will be much worse this time around. The lives of Jin Wang, the Monkey King, and Chin-kee soon come together in an epic twist to create an amazing modern fable written by Gene Luen Yang.

Gene Luen Yang's graphic novel does an amazing job in blending visual and literary elements to create a multi-layered and complex story that examines ideas of identity, self-acceptance, and culture. There is no other way his story could have been told, which makes the graphic novel such a unique and award-winning work. It has won the 2007 Michael L. Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature, the 2007 Will Eisner Comic Industry Award for Best Graphic Album, and many more. There's no surprise there, knowing the approach Gene Luen Yang takes to explore Chinese stereotypes and the Asian-American experience to showcase the pressures they face regarding assimilation and identity. All in all, Gene Luen Yang's craftful manipulation of the different plots and cast of diverse characters allow for an ultimate finale and ending in his graphic novel, American Born Chinese.

There are minor sexual and violent elements within this book to look out for. Bad language also makes an appearance as there are ethnic slurs present within the story. For those reasons, I would recommend this graphic novel for anyone 12 years or older. American Born Chinese would make a great gift to fans of graphic novels and anyone looking for a story that features a diverse cast of characters.

Recommended Titles:

The Shadow Hero by Gene Luen Yang

Boxers by Gene Luen Yang

Avatar the Last Airbender: North and South Part 1 by Gene Luen Yang

Avatar the Last Airbender: Smoke and Shadow Part 1 by Gene Luen Yang

Secret Coders by Gene Luen Yang