

Saints

Gene Luen Yang

Reviewed by: Anika 17

Star Teen Book Reviewer of Be the Star You Are! Charity

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Being the fourth born in her family, Four Girl has always been shunned. The number four means death and Four Girl's family couldn't bear to give her a proper name as a result. They saw her as a devil up to no good and because of it Four Girl spends most of her days as an outcast. After talking with a strange raccoon, Four Girl embraces her "devilish" nature. Her unshakeable devil-face scares off everyone, except for the acupuncturist who breaks through her act. Ever since then, Four-Girl finds herself drawn to "foreign devils" and Jesus Christ. Beginning to see visions of Joan of Arc, Four Girl decides to learn more about Christianity and soon converts with a new name, Vibiana. As a newly made Christian, Vibiana sets off away from home to find her true calling. In her long journey of faith, Vibiana will face many painful choices and lose much more than she once thought.

Saints is the second book in the Boxers & Saints duology by Gene Luen Yang. Compared to Boxers, Saints is on the shorter side, which makes for a nice quick read! Just as he did in the first book, Gene Luen Yang examines themes of religion and revolution in a multifaceted light. He especially does that this time around from a different perspective, Vibiana's. No one character is good or bad or right or wrong. The readers get the opportunity to see where Vibiana and Little Bao's stories begin to intertwine along with seeing how their roles play out in the end. I definitely appreciated the list of resources provided at the end of the books as it was a great start for further reading on the Boxer Rebellion. Gene Luen Yang also made some sweet artistic choices in his depictions and golden coloring of Joan of Arc. I again really enjoyed his expressive art. It just added to the intrigue and animated feeling I saw pouring off the pages. In this final book for the Boxers & Saints duology, Gene Luen Yang brings the story to an end with great closure and storytelling.

Readers may also want to be aware of some of the themes and drawbacks presented in Saints. The book has much bloodshed like Boxers but is toned down with the same cartoonish style as used in the first book. I also have to admit that Saints wasn't quite as action-packed and eventful as Boxers was. In terms of romance, Vibiana floats the idea of marriage with another character, but it ends up going nowhere as she becomes a "maiden warrior". There is also one character who is an opium addict, which might not be the most pleasant image for some readers. For these reasons, I would recommend this novel for readers 12 years and up. Saints would make a great gift for fans of graphic novels and history.

Recommended Titles:

The Joy Luck Club by Amy Tan

The Good Earth by Pearl S. Buck

Anya's Ghost by Vera Brosgol

The Ginseng Hunter by Jeff Talarigo

Little White Duck: A Childhood in China by Na Liu