

Girl in Translation

Jean Kwok

Reviewed by: Pia Visaria, 13

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

www.bethestaryouare.org

Imagine moving to a country you know nothing about, speaking not a word of English, having a home with rats and mice scattered all around, and no heat in the treacherous winters. Well, this was the life for 10-year-old Kimberly Chang (Kim). Kim moved to America from Hong Kong in 5th grade not speaking a word of English. On top of not fitting in at school because of her so-called weird accent and homemade clothes, life at home was not much better. After school, Kim had to travel alone through the suburbs of NYC to help her mom at the clothing factory where they were paid by the piece (an illegal job). Despite having nothing and having to live a “double life” her entire childhood, Kim worked hard and made her way to the top with the help of the couple of everlasting relationships she made on the way.

Personally, I really enjoyed this book. The way Kwok integrated a great plot with several romantic relationships could not have been done better. Kwok has a way of making this book truly authentic and heartfelt which also makes this book really relatable for teens. Throughout the book, Kwok has done such a fantastic job of staying within Kim’s character that she has developed which makes the reader feel as if they are in Kim’s shoes themselves. Kwok has woven a series of literary elements with multiple plot twists along the way making this book truly unique and like no other before. Additionally, it is no surprise that Kwok was the 2011 recipient of the Alex Awards. All in all, Kwok minor details and the author's craft techniques are truly what make “Girl in Translation” one of a kind.

There are heavy sexual elements and minor violent elements in this book to look out for. For that reason, I would recommend this book to anyone 13 or older. Girl in Translation would be a great read or a great gift for someone who enjoys reading realistic fiction or anyone who just wants a taste of something new to read!

Recommended Titles:

- “Mambo in Chinatown” by Jean Kwok
- “Kira-Kira” by Cynthia Kadohata
- “A Step From Heaven” by An Na
- “Searching for Sylvie Lee” by Jean Kwon