



American Born Chinese

By Gene Luen Yang

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Gene Luen Yang is the National Ambassador for Young People's Literature.

Jin Wang starts at a new school where he's the only Chinese-American student. When a boy from Taiwan joins his class, Jin doesn't want to be associated with an FOB like him. Jin just wants to be an all-American boy, because he's in love with an all-American girl. Danny is an all-American boy: great at basketball, popular with the girls. But his obnoxious Chinese cousin Chin-Kee's annual visit is such a disaster that it ruins Danny's reputation at school, leaving him with no choice but to transfer somewhere he can start all over again. The Monkey King has lived for thousands of years and mastered the arts of kung fu and the heavenly disciplines. He's ready to join the ranks of the immortal gods in heaven. But there's no place in heaven for a monkey. Each of these characters cannot help himself alone, but how can they possibly help each other? They're going to have to find a way?if they want fix the disasters their lives have become.

American Born Chinese is a 2006 National Book Award Finalist for Young People's Literature, the winner of the 2007 Eisner Award for Best Graphic Album: New, an Eisner Award nominee for Best Coloring, a 2007 Bank Street Best Children's Book of the Year, and a *New York Times* bestseller.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Indie graphic novelist Gene Yang's intelligent and emotionally challenging *American Born Chinese* is made up of three individual plotlines: the determined efforts of the Chinese folk hero Monkey King to shed his humble roots and be revered as a god; the struggles faced by Jin Wang, a lonely Asian American middle school student who would do anything to fit in with his white classmates; and the sitcom plight of Danny, an All-American teen so shamed by his Chinese cousin Chin-Kee (a purposefully painful ethnic stereotype) that he is forced to change schools. Each story works well on its own, but Yang engineers a clever convergence of these parallel tales into a powerful climax that destroys the hateful stereotype of Chin-Kee, while leaving both Jin Wang and the Monkey King satisfied and happy to be who they are.

Yang skillfully weaves these affecting, often humorous stories together to create a masterful commentary about race, identity, and self-acceptance that has earned him a spot as a finalist for the National Book Award for Young People. The artwork, rendered in a chromatically cool palette, is crisp and clear, with clean white space around center panels that sharply focuses the reader's attention in on Yang's achingly familiar characters. There isn't an adolescent alive who won't be able to relate to Jin's wish to be someone other than who he is, and his gradual realization that there is no better feeling than being comfortable in your own skin.--*Jennifer Hubert*

From Publishers Weekly

As alienated kids go, Jin Wang is fairly run-of-the-mill: he eats lunch by himself in a corner of the schoolyard, gets picked on by bullies and jocks and develops a sweat-inducing crush on a pretty classmate. And, oh, yes, his parents are from Taiwan. This much-anticipated, affecting story about growing up different is more than just the story of a Chinese-American childhood; it's a fable for every kid born into a body and a life they wished they could escape. The fable is filtered through some very specific cultural icons: the much-beloved Monkey King, a figure familiar to Chinese kids the world over, and a buck-toothed amalgamation of racist stereotypes named Chin-Kee. Jin's hopes and humiliations might be mirrored in Chin-Kee's destructive glee or the Monkey King's struggle to come to terms with himself, but each character's expressions and actions are always perfectly familiar. True to its origin as a Web comic, this story's clear, concise lines and expert coloring are deceptively simple yet expressive. Even when Yang slips in an occasional Chinese ideogram or myth, the sentiments he's depicting need no translation. Yang accomplishes the remarkable feat of practicing what he preaches with this book: accept who you are and you'll already have reached out to others. (*Sept.*)

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From School Library Journal

Starred Review. Grade 7 Up—Graphic novels that focus on nonwhite characters are exceedingly rare in American comics. Enter *American Born Chinese*, a well-crafted work that aptly explores issues of self-image, cultural identity, transformation, and self-acceptance. In a series of three linked tales, the central characters are introduced: Jin Wang, a teen who meets with ridicule and social isolation when his family moves from San Francisco's Chinatown to an exclusively white suburb; Danny, a popular blond, blue-eyed high school jock whose social status is jeopardized when his goofy, embarrassing Chinese cousin, Chin-Kee, enrolls at his high school; and the Monkey King who, unsatisfied with his current sovereign, desperately longs to be elevated to the status of a god. Their stories converge into a satisfying coming-of-age novel that aptly blends traditional Chinese fables and legends with bathroom humor, action figures, and playground politics. Yang's crisp line drawings, linear panel arrangement, and muted colors provide a strong visual

complement to the textual narrative. Like Toni Morrisons *The Bluest Eye* and Laurence Yeps *Dragonwings*, this novel explores the impact of the American dream on those outside the dominant culture in a finely wrought story that is an effective combination of humor and drama.—*Philip Charles Crawford, Essex High School, Essex Junction, VT*

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Phyllis Belser:

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Roger Borquez:

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