

gene yang american born chinese

Gene Yang American Born Chinese: Exploring the Impact of a Graphic Novel Pioneer

gene yang american born chinese is a phrase that resonates deeply within the worlds of graphic novels and Asian American literature. Gene Luen Yang, the creator of the celebrated graphic novel **American Born Chinese**, has profoundly influenced how stories about identity, culture, and assimilation are told in the medium of comics. His work not only entertains but also educates, bridging cultural gaps and inspiring readers from diverse backgrounds. If you're curious about the significance of Gene Yang's **American Born Chinese** and why it continues to be a touchstone in graphic storytelling, you've come to the right place.

Who is Gene Yang?

Gene Luen Yang is an acclaimed cartoonist, educator, and writer known for integrating themes of cultural identity and heritage into his stories. Born in 1973 in California, Yang grew up as a Chinese American navigating the complexities of bicultural identity. This personal experience profoundly shaped his creative vision. Before becoming a full-time cartoonist, Yang worked as a computer programmer, but his passion for storytelling eventually led him to pursue a career in comics.

Yang's unique ability to blend humor, mythology, and social commentary has won him numerous awards and critical acclaim. He was the first graphic novelist to be named a MacArthur Fellow—often referred to as a "Genius Grant"—a testament to his innovative storytelling and impact on literature and education.

The Significance of American Born Chinese

American Born Chinese is perhaps Gene Yang's most well-known work and holds a special place in both graphic novel circles and Asian American cultural discussions. Published in 2006, the novel weaves together three distinct narratives that eventually converge in unexpected ways. These stories explore themes like cultural identity, stereotypes, and self-acceptance.

Synopsis and Themes

At its core, **American Born Chinese** follows three characters:

- **Jin Wang**, a Chinese American boy struggling to fit in at a predominantly white school.
- **The Monkey King**, a mythological figure from Chinese folklore who battles with his identity and acceptance among the gods.
- **Danny**, a white American boy whose life becomes complicated when his cousin Chin-Kee, an exaggerated embodiment of Asian stereotypes, visits.

Through these interwoven tales, Yang confronts the stereotypes and challenges faced by Asian

Americans, often using humor and fantasy to deepen the narrative. The book's exploration of self-identity, assimilation, and cultural pride resonates with readers who have experienced similar struggles or who seek to understand the Asian American experience better.

Breaking Barriers in Graphic Novels

Before *American Born Chinese*, graphic novels focusing on Asian American themes were relatively rare in mainstream publishing. Yang's work broke significant ground by bringing these stories to a wider audience. The novel was the first graphic novel nominated for a National Book Award and won the prestigious Michael L. Printz Award for excellence in young adult literature.

Its success helped pave the way for other Asian American voices in graphic storytelling and highlighted the importance of diverse narratives in literature. Educators and librarians often include *American Born Chinese* in their collections, recognizing its value for young readers grappling with questions of identity and belonging.

Gene Yang's Storytelling Style and Influences

Gene Yang's storytelling style is a blend of traditional comic artistry, mythology, and contemporary issues. His ability to merge the fantastical with the everyday creates a compelling narrative flow that keeps readers engaged while provoking thoughtful reflection.

Use of Humor and Mythology

One of the most distinctive features of *American Born Chinese* is how Yang uses humor and mythological elements to tackle serious topics. The Monkey King's storyline draws from the classic Chinese tale *Journey to the West*, introducing readers to rich cultural heritage while paralleling Jin Wang's struggles. This blending of folklore and real-life experiences allows Yang to address themes of acceptance and transformation in a creative, accessible way.

Visual Storytelling Techniques

Yang's artwork is characterized by clear, expressive lines and a straightforward style that makes the story approachable for readers of all ages. His use of visual metaphors and carefully planned panel layouts enhances the emotional impact of the narrative. For instance, the contrast between the brightly colored, exaggerated portrayal of Chin-Kee and the more subdued, realistic depictions of Jin's life underscores the tension between stereotype and reality.

The Cultural Impact of American Born Chinese

American Born Chinese has had enduring cultural significance since its release. It is often credited

with opening doors for Asian American narratives in graphic novels and beyond.

Representation Matters

For many Asian American readers, *American Born Chinese* was one of the first graphic novels that reflected their own experiences—something rare in popular media. Its honest, nuanced portrayal of identity and cultural conflict offers validation and representation, which are crucial for young readers seeking to understand their place in society.

Educational Use and Influence

Teachers and librarians frequently use *American Born Chinese* as a tool to discuss topics such as race, identity, and discrimination in classrooms. The novel's approachable format makes it an excellent entry point for conversations about multiculturalism and empathy. Gene Yang's work has inspired other creators and educators to embrace graphic novels as powerful storytelling and teaching tools.

Exploring Gene Yang's Other Works

While *American Born Chinese* remains Yang's signature work, his other graphic novels also explore themes of identity, history, and culture.

Boxers & Saints

This two-part graphic novel set during the Boxer Rebellion in China delves into historical conflict and cultural clashes. It showcases Yang's dedication to exploring complex Asian histories while humanizing the people involved in these events.

Dragon Hoops

In *Dragon Hoops*, Yang turns to a non-fiction narrative about high school basketball, blending sports with broader themes of perseverance and community. This work highlights his versatility and ongoing commitment to storytelling that connects with diverse audiences.

Tips for Readers New to Gene Yang's Work

If you're just starting with Gene Yang's graphic novels, here are a few tips to enhance your reading experience:

- **Read with an open mind:** Yang's stories often challenge stereotypes and encourage self-reflection.
- **Explore the cultural references:** Understanding Chinese folklore and Asian American experiences can deepen your appreciation.
- **Discuss with others:** Sharing your thoughts with friends, book clubs, or online communities can provide new perspectives.
- **Look for educational resources:** Many schools and libraries offer guides and lesson plans on *American Born Chinese* that enrich understanding.

Gene Yang's *American Born Chinese* remains a landmark in graphic literature, blending artistry and cultural insight to tell stories that matter. Whether you're a longtime fan or new to his work, exploring Yang's narratives offers valuable windows into identity, acceptance, and the power of storytelling.

Frequently Asked Questions

Who is Gene Yang in the context of American Born Chinese?

Gene Luen Yang is the author and illustrator of the graphic novel 'American Born Chinese,' which explores themes of identity and cultural assimilation.

What is 'American Born Chinese' by Gene Yang about?

'American Born Chinese' is a graphic novel that weaves together three stories to explore Asian American identity, stereotypes, and self-acceptance.

Why is Gene Yang's 'American Born Chinese' significant in literature?

The book is significant for its unique storytelling, blending graphic art with themes of race and identity, and it won multiple awards including the National Book Award for Young People's Literature.

Has Gene Yang received any awards for 'American Born Chinese'?

Yes, Gene Yang won the 2007 Michael L. Printz Award and was a National Book Award finalist for 'American Born Chinese.'

How does Gene Yang incorporate his cultural background into

'American Born Chinese'?

Gene Yang draws from his own experiences as an Asian American to address issues of cultural identity, stereotypes, and the challenges faced by immigrant families.

Is 'American Born Chinese' by Gene Yang suitable for young readers?

Yes, the graphic novel is often used in middle and high school classrooms to discuss themes of diversity and identity.

What inspired Gene Yang to write 'American Born Chinese'?

Gene Yang was inspired by his desire to tell stories about Asian American experiences and to challenge stereotypes in popular culture.

Are there any adaptations of Gene Yang's 'American Born Chinese'?

As of 2024, there is a Disney+ series adaptation of 'American Born Chinese' in development, with Gene Yang involved as a writer and producer.

How has 'American Born Chinese' impacted Asian American representation in media?

'American Born Chinese' has been praised for increasing visibility of Asian American stories and encouraging more diverse narratives within graphic novels and popular media.

Additional Resources

Gene Yang American Born Chinese: A Critical Examination of Cultural Identity Through Graphic Storytelling

gene yang american born chinese is a phrase that encapsulates both the creator and the subject of a groundbreaking graphic novel that has left an indelible mark on contemporary literature and the representation of Asian American identities. Gene Luen Yang, an acclaimed author and cartoonist, crafted *American Born Chinese* to explore themes of identity, cultural assimilation, and the complexities of growing up as an Asian American. This work has not only earned critical acclaim but has also played a pivotal role in expanding the scope of graphic novels as a serious literary medium.

Understanding Gene Yang's Contribution to Graphic Novels

Gene Yang's *American Born Chinese*, published in 2006, stands out as a seminal work that bridges

cultural introspection with engaging narrative artistry. Yang, who is himself an American-born Chinese, uses his personal insights to weave a story that resonates with a broad audience. His ability to intertwine humor, mythological allegory, and real-world struggles offers readers a nuanced perspective on the Asian American experience.

The graphic novel is notable for its innovative structure, combining three seemingly disparate storylines that gradually converge. This narrative technique highlights the fragmented nature of cultural identity and the internal conflicts faced by many first- and second-generation immigrants. The work's success is evidenced by its numerous accolades, including the prestigious Michael L. Printz Award and the Eisner Award, affirming its literary and artistic merit.

Thematic Depth and Cultural Representation

At its core, *American Born Chinese* addresses the challenge of reconciling one's heritage with the desire for acceptance in mainstream American society. Through its characters—such as Jin Wang, a Chinese American boy struggling with self-acceptance, and the legendary Monkey King, who symbolizes transformation and self-empowerment—Yang crafts a layered exploration of identity.

The novel confronts stereotypes head-on, dismantling simplistic portrayals of Asian Americans often found in media. By presenting multidimensional characters grappling with real issues like racism, alienation, and cultural pride, Yang offers a refreshing counter-narrative. The inclusion of folklore, particularly the Monkey King from *Journey to the West*, serves as both a cultural touchstone and a metaphor for the protagonist's journey towards self-understanding.

Gene Yang American Born Chinese in the Context of Asian American Literature

American Born Chinese occupies a distinctive place within Asian American literature and graphic storytelling. While Asian American narratives have historically been underrepresented, Yang's work has broadened visibility and accessibility through the graphic novel format. His approach contrasts with traditional prose by combining visual and textual storytelling, making complex themes more approachable to younger readers and diverse audiences.

This novel's impact can be compared to other pivotal works in Asian American literature, such as Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* or Jhumpa Lahiri's *Interpreter of Maladies*, albeit through a different medium. Yang's use of graphic art enriches the narrative, providing visual symbolism and emotional nuance that complement the written word. The integration of cultural idioms, visual motifs, and humor enhances the storytelling in ways unique to comics and graphic novels.

Educational Influence and Adaptations

The educational sphere has embraced *American Born Chinese* as a valuable resource for discussions about multiculturalism, ethnicity, and identity formation. Its inclusion in school curricula

across the United States reflects its effectiveness in engaging students with questions about race and belonging. The graphic novel's approachable format encourages critical thinking and empathy, often sparking conversations that traditional textbooks may not achieve.

Moreover, the novel's popularity has led to adaptations and expansions of its themes. For example, Gene Yang has continued to explore Asian American experiences in subsequent works, including **Boxers & Saints** and **Dragon Hoops**, further cementing his role as a leading voice in diverse storytelling.

Analyzing the Artistic Style and Narrative Techniques

Gene Yang's artistic style in **American Born Chinese** is characterized by clean lines and expressive character designs that effectively convey emotion and cultural nuance. The illustrative work, done in collaboration with artist Lark Pien, balances simplicity with detail, allowing the story's themes to shine without overwhelming the reader.

The narrative employs a sophisticated use of parallel storytelling, where the three narratives—Jin Wang's school life, the Monkey King's mythological saga, and the sitcom-like story of Chin-Kee—intersect in unexpected ways. This technique not only enhances narrative complexity but also mirrors the multifaceted nature of cultural identity. The humor embedded in Chin-Kee's exaggerated stereotypes serves as a satirical critique, challenging readers to reconsider preconceived notions.

Pros and Cons of Gene Yang's Approach in **American Born Chinese**

• Pros:

- Innovative narrative structure that deepens thematic exploration.
- Effective use of humor and myth to address serious cultural issues.
- Visual storytelling that appeals to a wide demographic, including reluctant readers.
- Rich cultural representation that challenges stereotypes.

• Cons:

- Some readers may find the interwoven storylines initially confusing.
- The satire, particularly involving Chin-Kee, may be misinterpreted without contextual understanding.
- The graphic novel format might limit appeal among traditional literary purists.

Gene Yang's Role in Expanding Asian American Narratives

Beyond *American Born Chinese*, Gene Yang's broader contributions have significantly influenced how Asian American stories are told and perceived. He is among the few high-profile Asian American authors who have successfully merged mainstream appeal with cultural specificity. His work often addresses the balancing act between cultural heritage and assimilation, a theme deeply relevant to immigrant communities in the United States.

Yang's background as both an educator and artist informs his storytelling approach, prioritizing accessibility and depth. This dual expertise allows him to create works that are not only artistically compelling but also pedagogically valuable. His success has paved the way for other Asian American creators in comics, film, and literature, fostering greater diversity in popular culture.

Comparisons with Contemporary Graphic Novels

When compared to other influential graphic novels such as Art Spiegelman's *Maus* or Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, *American Born Chinese* shares a common thread of using personal and cultural history to address broader social issues. While *Maus* deals with Holocaust trauma and *Persepolis* with Iranian political upheaval, Yang's narrative focuses on the subtleties of cultural identity and adolescence in a diasporic context.

These works collectively demonstrate the power of graphic novels as a medium for memoir and social commentary. Yang's contribution lies in foregrounding Asian American experiences, which have been historically marginalized in mainstream media.

Implications for Future Storytelling and Representation

American Born Chinese exemplifies how graphic novels can serve as powerful platforms for underrepresented voices. Gene Yang's success underscores the importance of authentic storytelling in fostering cultural understanding and empathy. As the entertainment and publishing industries strive for greater inclusivity, works like Yang's highlight the demand for diverse narratives that resonate across cultural boundaries.

The novel's enduring popularity suggests that future storytellers will continue to explore hybrid identities and the complexities of cultural heritage, using innovative formats and narrative techniques. Gene Yang's work has not only expanded the boundaries of graphic literature but also set a benchmark for culturally conscious storytelling.

As readers and educators seek stories that reflect the multifaceted realities of American society,

American Born Chinese remains a vital touchstone. Its blend of myth, humor, and heartfelt exploration of identity invites ongoing dialogue about race, culture, and belonging in contemporary America.

Gene Yang American Born Chinese

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gene yang american born chinese: American Born Chinese Gene Luen Yang, 2006-09-05 A tour-de-force by rising indy comics star Gene Yang, *American Born Chinese* tells the story of three apparently unrelated characters: Jin Wang, who moves to a new neighborhood with his family only to discover that he's the only Chinese-American student at his new school; the powerful Monkey King, subject of one of the oldest and greatest Chinese fables; and Chin-Kee, a personification of the ultimate negative Chinese stereotype, who is ruining his cousin Danny's life with his yearly visits. Their lives and stories come together with an unexpected twist in this action-packed modern fable. *American Born Chinese* is an amazing ride, all the way up to the astonishing climax. *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 and a 2007 Bank Street - Best Children's Book of the Year. This title has Common Core Connections

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gene yang american born chinese: American Born Chinese Gene Luen Yang, 2024-01-11 Now a hit TV show on Disney + starring Michelle Yeoh! A tour-de-force by New York Times bestselling creator Gene Yang, *American Born Chinese* is a groundbreaking graphic novel about race, friendship and the American Dream, with full-colour artwork. All Jin Wang wants is to fit in. But when his family moves to a new neighbourhood, he suddenly finds that he's the only Chinese-American student at his school . . . Born to rule over all the monkeys in the world, the story of the Monkey King is one of the oldest and greatest Chinese fables . . . Chin-Kee is the ultimate negative Chinese stereotype, and he's ruining his cousin Danny's life . . . These three apparently unrelated tales come together with an unexpected twist, combining unlikely friendships and Chinese mythology in a modern fable that is hilarious, poignant, and action-packed. *American Born Chinese* is an amazing ride, all the way up to the astonishing climax. Don't miss *Lunar New Year Love Story*, Gene's heartwarming YA graphic novel, created with LeUyen Pham, about fate, family and falling in love. To best display the stunning illustrations, this ebook is in fixed format rather than the

reflowable format of most ebooks. We recommend you download a sample to your device before purchase if in doubt.

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gene yang american born chinese: Reframing the Perpetrator in Contemporary Comics Dragoş Manea, 2022-08-29 This book foregrounds the figure of the perpetrator in a selection of British, American, and Canadian comics and explores questions related to remembrance, justice, and historical debt. Its primary focus is on works that deliberately estrange the figure of the perpetrator—through fantasy, absurdism, formal ambiguity, or provocative rewriting—and thus allow readers to engage anew with the history of genocide, mass murder, and sexual violence. This book is particularly interested in the ethical space such an engagement calls into being: in its ability to allow us to ponder the privilege many of us now enjoy, the gross historical injustices that have secured it, and the debt we owe to people long dead.

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gene yang american born chinese: Challenging Genres Paul L. Thomas, 2010-01-01 Comic books achieved almost immediate popularity and profitability when they were first introduced in the U. S. throughout the late 1930s and early 1940s. But comic books soon suffered attacks concerning the quality of this new genre/medium combining text and artwork. With the rise of graphic novels in the mid-1980s and the adaptation of comics to films in the twenty-first century, comics and graphic novels have gained more respect as craft and text—called sequential art by foundational legend Will

Eisner—but the genre/medium remains marginalized by educators, parents, and the public. *Challenging Genres: Comic Books and Graphic Novels* offers educators, students, parents, and comic book readers and collectors a comprehensive exploration of comics/graphic novels as a challenging genre/medium. This volume presents a history of comic books/graphic novels, an argument for valuing the genre/medium, and several chapters devoted to examining all subgenres of comics/graphic novels. Readers will discover key comics, graphic novels, and film adaptations suitable for the classroom—and for anyone serious about high quality texts. Further, this volume places comics/graphic novels within our growing understanding of multiliteracies and critical literacy.

gene yang american born chinese: Sinophone-Anglophone Cultural Duet Sheng-mei Ma, 2017-07-26 This book examines the paradox of China and the United States' literary and visual relationships, morphing between a happy duet and a contentious duel in fiction, film, poetry, comics, and opera from both sides of the Pacific. In the 21st century where tension between the two superpowers escalates, a gaping lacuna lies in the cultural sphere of Sino-Anglo comparative cultures. By focusing on a "Sinophone-Anglophone" relationship rather than a "China-US" one, Sheng-mei Ma eschews realpolitik, focusing on the two languages and the cross-cultural spheres where, contrary to Kipling's twain, East and West forever meet, like a repetition compulsion bordering on neurosis over the self and its cultural other. Indeed, the coupling of the two—duet-cum-duel—is so predictable that each seems attracted to and repulsed by its dark half, semblable, (in)compatible for their shared larger-than-life-ness.

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gene yang american born chinese: Theology in Avatar: The Last Airbender Anthony G. Cirilla, Michael Riggins, 2025-08-21 The beloved Uncle Iroh once told Prince Zuko, It's time to start asking the big questions. This statement is as true for us as viewers of *Avatar: The Last Airbender* as it is for the banished prince. This collection invites fans of one of the most popular animated shows in America to contemplate how the Avatar Universe prompts big questions about meaning. *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and its sequel series, *The Legend of Korra*, combine philosophical thoughts from both Eastern and Western perspectives, and this collection of twelve essays helps readers to recognize and consider those influences more deeply, from ideas as grand as the soul's relationship to the universe to the role tea can have in making a Zen master. Contributors consider the show from perspectives such as Buddhism, Taoism, the Hero's Journey, the theory of the elements, and many more.

gene yang american born chinese: Perfect Copies Shiamin Kwa, 2023-01-13 Analyzing the

way that recent works of graphic narrative use the comics form to engage with the “problem” of reproduction, Shiamin Kwa’s *Perfect Copies* reminds us that the mode of production and the manner in which we perceive comics are often quite similar to the stories they tell. *Perfect Copies* considers the dual notions of reproduction, mechanical as well as biological, and explores how comics are works of reproduction that embed questions about the nature of reproduction itself. Through close readings of the comics *My Favorite Thing Is Monsters* by Emil Ferris, *The Black Project* by Gareth Brookes, *The Generous Bosom* series by Conor Stechschulte, *Sabrina* by Nick Drnaso, and *Panther* by Brecht Evens, *Perfect Copies* shows how these comics makers push the limits of different ideas of “reproduction” in strikingly different ways. Kwa suggests that reading and thinking about books like these, that push us to engage with these complicated questions, teaches us how to become better readers.

gene yang american born chinese: *Transforming Monkey* Hongmei Sun, 2018-04-02 Able to shape-shift and ride the clouds, wielding a magic cudgel and playing tricks, Sun Wukong (aka Monkey or the Monkey King) first attained superstar status as the protagonist of the sixteenth-century novel *Journey to the West* (Xiyou ji) and lives on in literature and popular culture internationally. In this far-ranging study Hongmei Sun discusses the thousand-year evolution of this figure in imperial China and multimedia adaptations in Republican, Maoist, and post-socialist China and the United States, including the film *Princess Iron Fan* (1941), Maoist revolutionary operas, online creative writings influenced by Hong Kong film *A Chinese Odyssey* (1995), and Gene Luen Yang’s graphic novel *American Born Chinese*. At the intersection of Chinese studies, Asian American studies, film studies, and translation and adaptation studies, *Transforming Monkey* provides a renewed understanding of the Monkey King character as a rebel and trickster, and demonstrates his impact on the Chinese self-conception of national identity as he travels through time and across borders.

gene yang american born chinese: *Drawing New Color Lines* Monica Chiu, 2014-11-01 The global circulation of comics, manga, and other such visual mediums between North America and Asia produces transnational meanings no longer rooted in a separation between Asian and American. *Drawing New Color Lines* explores the culture, production, and history of contemporary graphic narratives that depict Asian Americans and Asians. It examines how Japanese manga and Asian popular culture have influenced Asian American comics; how these comics and Asian American graphic narratives depict the look of race; and how these various representations are interpreted in nations not of their production. By focusing on what graphic narratives mean for audiences in North America and those in Asia, the collection discusses how Western theories about the ways in which graphic narratives might successfully overturn derogatory caricatures are themselves based on contested assumptions; and illustrates that the so-called odorless images featured in Japanese manga might nevertheless elicit interpretations about race in transnational contexts. With contributions from experts based in North America and Asia, *Drawing New Color Lines* will be of interest to scholars in a variety of disciplines, including Asian American studies, cultural and literary studies, comics and visual studies. *Drawing New Color Lines* makes an exciting contribution to the rapidly expanding inquiry at the crossroads of Asian American literary studies, graphic narrative studies, and transnational studies. Foregrounding the shifting meanings of race within, across, and between various national contexts, the fifteen essays in Chiu’s collection explore the visual dimensions of Asian American transnational literary culture with originality and offer particular insight into the complexities of production, interpretation, and reception for graphic narrative. — Pamela Thoma, author of *Asian American Women’s Popular Literature: Feminizing Genres and Neoliberal Belonging* An informative, smart, and necessary collection. *Drawing New Color Lines* investigates a growing and important field—transnational Asian American comics—with sophistication and breadth. — Hillary Chute, author of *Graphic Women: Life Narrative and Contemporary Comics* and *Outside the Box: Interviews with Contemporary Cartoonists*

gene yang american born chinese: *Picturing Childhood* Mark Heimermann, 2017-03-01 Comics and childhood have had a richly intertwined history for nearly a century. From Richard

Outcault's Yellow Kid, Winsor McCay's Little Nemo, and Harold Gray's Little Orphan Annie to Hergé's Tintin (Belgium), José Escobar's Zipi and Zape (Spain), and Wilhelm Busch's Max and Moritz (Germany), iconic child characters have given both kids and adults not only hours of entertainment but also an important vehicle for exploring children's lives and the sometimes challenging realities that surround them. Bringing together comic studies and childhood studies, this pioneering collection of essays provides the first wide-ranging account of how children and childhood, as well as the larger cultural forces behind their representations, have been depicted in comics from the 1930s to the present. The authors address issues such as how comics reflect a spectrum of cultural values concerning children, sometimes even resisting dominant cultural constructions of childhood; how sensitive social issues, such as racial discrimination or the construction and enforcement of gender roles, can be explored in comics through the use of child characters; and the ways in which comics use children as metaphors for other issues or concerns. Specific topics discussed in the book include diversity and inclusiveness in Little Audrey comics of the 1950s and 1960s, the fetishization of adolescent girls in Japanese manga, the use of children to build national unity in Finnish wartime comics, and how the animal/child hybrids in Sweet Tooth act as a metaphor for commodification.

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