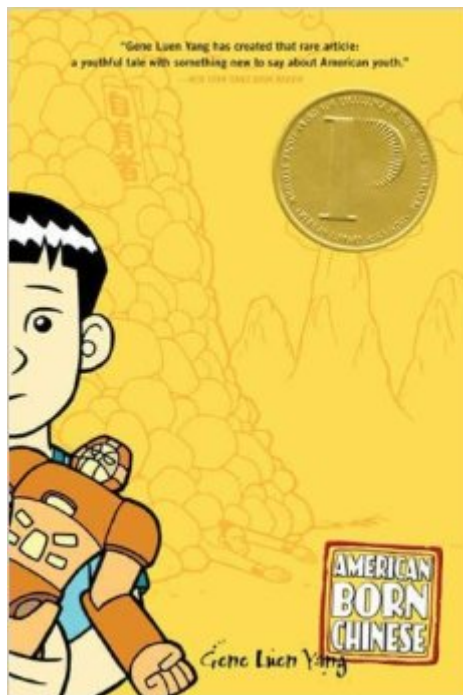


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# American Born Chinese



## Synopsis

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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## Customer Reviews

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 --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Very poignant book that really makes you think. I don't usually read comic styles of books, but this one just hooked me! Absolutely great message that deeply reaches Asian Americans, though could also have a deeper meaning for immigrants all kinds, especially immigrants of color moving to a

white-majority country, or just persons of color in general. But I don't think you **MUST** be any of those to enjoy the book. I'm a white girl who has spent her whole life in America, and I just loved this book! I think this book is great for other white people too, as it will make you open your mind a bit to POC's, and potentially how what you say can be harmful, or understand how they feel. I do feel like besides the main character and his one friend, no one else was really fleshed out, with other just kind of staying as stereotypes (the Chinese Immigrant parents who were too strict, the white jock bullies), but for the shortness of the book I felt like that was fine. I would recommend this book for middle schoolers and up, **MAYBE** late elementary school, but I think the subtlety and the racial stereotypes would be best understood if the reader was a bit older. My boyfriend read it in middle school, and years later when I mentioned that I was reading it for a college course, he instantly perked up and insisted we keep the book after I was done with my class, and it has stayed in our library ever since. I feel like it is a simple to read, and an easily enjoyable classic.

Review first posted on [jenasbookreviews.blogspot.com](http://jenasbookreviews.blogspot.com) Three seemingly unrelated tales interwoven until they all wrap up together at the end. You have the Monkey King who has trained and studied to be accepted into Heaven with the other Gods but is shut out because he is only a monkey. There is Danny, an all-American boy, who is continuously embarrassed every time his cousin Chen-Kee visits from China and behaves as the most horrific characterization of every horrible Chinese stereotype ever. And then there is Jin Wang, a new student in a new school, trying to fit in with his all-American classmates and horrified when a boy from Taiwan starts at the school and wants to be friends with him because what will that do to his chances with the girl he is falling for? All three main characters are dealing the fact that they are not happy in their own skin and looking for acceptance from outside is not working out so well for any of them. My older son read this for his college comics class and recommended it to me. It has won several awards and it's easy to see why. The graphic novel format allows it to swing back and forth between the stories easily and conveys the thoughts much easier than I think the written word alone would have allowed for. The interweaving of the stories was well done although a bit heavy handed at the end on the moral but since it's such an important one, it's easy to forgive.

“Do not make mistakes, little monkey. A monkey I intend you to be. A monkey you are,” said by the god Tze Yo Tzuh in the book *American Born Chinese*. This line stuck with me for the entire book as it seems to express Gene Luen Yang's message well. Yang does a very good job of using multiple storylines and connecting them together although without a little bit

of background knowledge on Chinese lore, it may be a bit confusing at first. I believe that the story is largely focused on accepting who you are. Being an American- Chinese person myself I was immediately drawn to the title of the book since I knew I could relate to the story already. I enjoyed this book so much that within an hour give or take I had finished it. It seems that I am not the only one who enjoyed the book as it's been awarded the Michael L. Printz award and is a national book award finalist. New York Times even says "Gene Luen Yang has created that rare article: a youthful tale with something new to say about American youth." Gene has also written other well known graphic novels such as Boxers & Saints and the Avatar: The Last Airbender series. Another interesting thing about this book is that it's a graphic novel and a well done one at that. Something definitely not expected was the humorous and colorful artwork used that makes it look like a children's book. Although the illustrator did a great job of making each page enjoyable and different with the characters facial expressions and actions. The first storyline follows a monkey king who after being denied entrance to a party, becomes obsessed with changing his image to fit in with the human gods. Then Yang introduces Jin Wang, who is an American born Chinese kid who recently moved into a new town and is bullied for being asian. Lastly we are introduced to Danny, who has a stereotypical "fresh off the boat" cousin who joins him once a year in America. Although these seem like completely different stories, Yang concludes each one so that if you hadn't read on of the stories you'd be clueless. After reading the book I realized that this story shares a lot of the same things with the movie Karate Kid (2010). In both cases the main character has moved into a new environment where they are considered to be different and are shamed because of their race. Eventually they both make a friend that will help them out. Since this is classed as a Young Adult novel, I would recommend it for 13-17 year olds since I think that by then you would've experienced some of the situations in this book and be able to relate more with the character. The ending of the story seems to me a little bit rushed where the three stories all of the sudden join together and stop. It's a difficult thing to explain but when I finished the book my reaction was "that's it?" I'd like to know what happens to Wei Chen and Jin Wang and maybe their futures. Does Jin Wang use his past experiences and pass it onto others? In conclusion I highly recommend taking the time to read this book.

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