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# Beijing

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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This book brings together an award-winning author of information books, Richard Platt, and a well tried concept, the tracking of a city's history through time. The publisher here is Kingfisher, however, not Dorling Kindersley, who pioneered this idea; and what might have been the perfect marriage turns out to be rather an ill match. Platt is allowed little space to develop a narrative, which fits around a series of double page illustrations looking down on episodes in the history of the various settlements and cities that have occupied the area of modern Beijing and the palaces of the ruling elite, particularly the Forbidden City. Knowing very little about this subject, I found the information fascinating, but, outside of Platt's brief contributions, difficult to extract and piece together. A lot of it is scattered around the illustrations in small labels in bold type, which you can read in any order and make your own sense of; and sometimes the particular part of the action or scene that these describe is illustrated on such a tiny scale that you can't tell what is going on without the label. Wally would look like a giant if he wandered into most of these illustrations. There is also a curious omission towards the end of the book. We see the Red Guards gather in Tiananmen Square in 1966, and then, on the next page, we see the 'Museum City' today, when the Olympics are due to arrive. Didn't something happen in Tiananmen Square in 1989; a wonderful opportunity for Manuela Cappon to show tiny brave students standing in the path of a phalanx of tanks? Well, maybe not. There's a four page glossary instead, which includes communism but not democracy.

Running Order:

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