



# I Have the Right to Be a Child

Books Reviewed:

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~~Editors Choice:~~

~~Editors Choice~~

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

Imagine the challenge of creating a picturebook from the 54 articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: putting the articles into a language that can be understood by younger children, and, through words and pictures, encouraging your readers to think about the implications of the Convention. It's easy to see how the result might be worthy (how could it be otherwise) but dull; or perhaps shocking in showing children whose rights were not respected. This book confounds such expectations. It is the work of a French author and illustrator, and put into English by prize-winning translator, Sarah Ardizzone. While the book's images are positive, showing children enjoying rights that they may even take for granted rather than children who live in poverty or are abused, it asks questions that invite children to imagine what it might mean, for instance, not to have a name, a family or a country to call one's own. The text is a clever mix of such questions with small assertions of individuality. A question about the right to grow up healthy is followed by the statement 'Oranges are my favourite food: you can drink them and you can eat them.' So general rights are linked back to individual children with unique personalities, although the children who speak are never identified and could be any of those who appear in the illustrations. The illustrations are perhaps the book's greatest triumph. They have the quality of a child's own art-work and show children of all complexions and cultural backgrounds, indicated by the clothing, toys and animals that are pictured. Colourful and vibrant, they express complex ideas in a simple form. The question, 'Do I have the right to a roof over my head?' is accompanied by the illustration of a girl sleeping peacefully in a blanket which has a design of the map of her community with its buildings, roads and woodland. Gradually, through the book, the illustrations build up a picture of the interdependence of individuals, communities and the natural world, through which all our lives are realised. This is a brilliant piece of work from author, illustrator and translator and congratulations and thanks are due to Phoenix Yard, its British publisher.

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