



2007

When Heaven Fell

Holly Dickman

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr>

BYU ScholarsArchive Citation

Dickman, Holly (2007) "When Heaven Fell," *Children's Book and Media Review*: Vol. 28 : Iss. 1 , Article 12.

Available at: <https://scholarsarchive.byu.edu/cbmr/vol28/iss1/12>

This Book Review is brought to you for free and open access by the All Journals at BYU ScholarsArchive. It has been accepted for inclusion in Children's Book and Media Review by an authorized editor of BYU ScholarsArchive. For more information, please contact scholarsarchive@byu.edu, ellen_amatangelo@byu.edu.

Marsden, Carolyn. *When Heaven Fell*. Candlewick Press, 2007. ISBN 9780763631758. \$15.99. 183 p.

Reviewer: Holly Dickman

Reading Level: Intermediate

Rating: Excellent

Genre: Contemporary realistic fiction;

Subject: Family life--Vietnam--Juvenile fiction; Aunts--Juvenile fiction; Culture conflict--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;

Nine-year-old Binh dreams of being able to go to school; however, it is her harsh reality that she must spend every day on the streets selling fresh fruit from a cart. Living in a small village, this Vietnamese girl must do all she can to help contribute to her family's meager income. One evening Binh's grandmother (Ba Ngaoi) confesses to having had a baby with an American Soldier during the war, and Binh's hopes seem as if they may become her new reality: Binh's aunt, Thao, who was adopted and grew up in America, is coming to Vietnam to meet Binh's family. Binh has seen American movies, and she knows that her aunt will come with many treasures and fortune to share. However, Binh's Vietnamese family is greatly disappointed with what actually occurs when Thao arrives. Binh must work with her aunt to teach her the ways of Vietnamese culture, while her aunt describes American culture. Finally, an understanding between the two cultures is reached, and Binh's dreams become more real than she could ever have imagined.

Marsden has created a simple story with many underlying cultural complexities. *When Heaven Fell* illustrates the common misunderstandings that can occur, and the learning that needs to take place, when two different cultures are thrown together. Although the reader may feel that the story is anti-climatic, the lesson of acceptance and understanding is profound. Binh is a young and lovable character, whose voice is accurately portrayed by her thoughts and feelings throughout the story. Useful for realistic depiction of life in Vietnam. A great addition to any multicultural section in a library or personal book collection. This story provides a refreshing reminder that sometimes it is the differences (instead of similarities) among people that build unity.