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Falling Into the Dragon's Mouth

Jarrett Bell

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Book Review

Title: Falling Into the Dragon's Mouth

Author: Holly Thompson

Illustrator: Liz Dresner

Reviewer: Jarrett Bell

Publisher: Henry Holt and Company

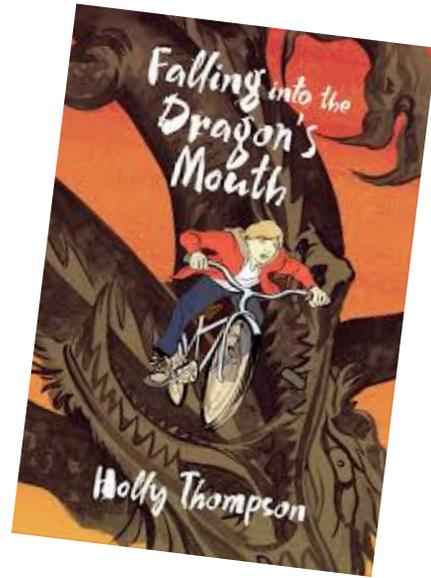
Publication Year: 2016

ISBN: 9781627791342

Number of Pages: 328

Interest Level: Intermediate, Young Adult

Rating: Excellent



Review

Jason Parker is an American foreigner in sixth-grade attending a Japanese public school. Despite the advice of his parents to keep his head held high, Jason keeps his head low to avoid detection and constant harassment at his local middle school in Japan. He finds himself in a culture that condones corporal punishment and turns a blind eye to bullying, and the locals find every excuse to harass Jason just because he is different. His only solace is his brave little sister and his ability to find his center in the Aikido martial arts.

Falling Into the Dragons Mouth is a unique novel completely set in free poetic verse. Like other novels in verse, the reader must pull the emotions of the characters and the development of the plot from implicit and subtle poetic features, a skill that may be difficult for some readers. Thompson creates a diverse novel that intertwines contemporary and modern Japanese culture, complete with a glossary of Japanese terms, a cultural guide, and resources for bullying. Falling into the Dragon's Mouth gives a fresh take on the bullying conversation, provides a perspective on diversity with a white American as the minority, and pushes the traditional boundaries of poetry's purpose as a writing style.