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Take What You Can Carry

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Book Review

Take What You Can Carry

It's 1977 and Kyle has just moved to suburban Chicago. He quickly makes friends in a neighborhood where the most interesting things to do involve property destruction, harassing construction workers, and shoplifting. It's a thrilling adrenaline rush in an otherwise boring place—until Kyle and another friend get caught by a store owner and find themselves in jail. The store owner doesn't press charges in exchange for having Kyle do odd jobs around the store, but it's obvious that Mr. Himitsu doesn't want him there. Time allows for reflection, and Kyle soon learns that they have more in common than he'd have ever guessed. Told concurrently is the story of the Himitsu family, who are forced to relocate to a Japanese-American internment camp during WWII. With their lives thrown into chaos and uncertainty, the teenage son fights to find purpose and meaning in his new circumstances.

Take What You Can Carry blends important personal and historical narratives with a medium that may be more accessible to middle-grade and young adult readers than more common textbook-style approaches. Teens may easily relate to the difficulty Kyle has in adjusting to a new area and new friends, as well as to that indescribable restlessness that is often associated with adolescence and frequently leads to thrill-seeking. While in vastly different contexts, Kyle and Mr. Himitsu come up against similar issues of growing up, frustration in a world that doesn't understand you, and the need for a sense of freedom. The connections between Kyle and Mr. Himitsu are not obvious and would benefit from a guided study. Mr. Himitsu's history is told without any exposition or dialogue, which can make the details of the story hard to pick up on at times, though the sense of emotion carries through.

Author

Kevin C. Pyle

Illustrator

Kevin C. Pyle

Reviewer

Emily Loveless

Rating

Dependable

Level

Intermediate, Young Adult

Pages

176

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2012

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Square Fish

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9780805082869