Tales from Outer Suburbia

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Reviewer: Alison Canar  
Reading Level: Intermediate, Young adult  
Rating: Outstanding  
Genre: Short stories; Fiction;  
Subject: Suburban life--Australia--Juvenile fiction; Short stories--Juvenile fiction; Books--Reviews;  

Far from the simple life, Tan's suburbia is full of exotic characters and strange situations. Made up of fifteen short stories, *Tales from Outer Suburbia* explores various issues related to the rise of the suburbs. Several stories deal with the consequences of consumerism. There is even a how-to guide on creating a lovable pet from discarded electronics. Another tale describes two children who travel across town searching for the end of the concrete sprawl. At last they come to the end of the road and find nothing exists beyond the sheer drop-off. Other memorable stories range from cold war fall-out, a neighborhood full of idle "backyard missiles" which have found diverse practical uses over the years, to tracing the fate of discarded poems.

Throughout Tan's masterful blend of visual and written art, the reader is taken on a nostalgic journey. Every inch of the book is carefully designed, alternating between various mediums-paint, pencil, and colleague-to bring the ideas to life. The stories each stand on their own, while also uniting to complete a holistic vision of modern suburbia. *Tales from Outer Suburbia* is ideal for use in the classroom as it can be studied and analyzed either lightly or in great depth depending on the students' individual levels. One reading is not enough, and readers will continue to glean more each time they visit "Outer Suburbia."

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