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Half A World Away



Synopsis

A kid who considers himself an epic fail discovers the transformative power of love when he deals with adoption in this novel from Cynthia Kadohata, winner of the Newbery Medal (*Kira-Kira*) and the National Book Award (*The Thing About Luck*). Eleven-year-old Jaden is adopted, and he knows he's an epic fail. That's why his family is traveling to Kazakhstan to adopt a new baby to replace him, he's sure. And he gets it. He is incapable of stopping his stealing, hoarding, lighting fires, aggressive running, and obsession with electricity. He knows his parents love him, but he feels...nothing. When they get to Kazakhstan, it turns out the infant they've traveled for has already been adopted, and literally within minutes are faced with having to choose from six other babies. While his parents agonize, Jaden is more interested in the toddlers. One, a little guy named Dimash, spies Jaden and barrels over to him every time he sees him. Jaden finds himself increasingly intrigued by and worried about Dimash. Already three years old and barely able to speak, Dimash will soon age out of the orphanage, and then his life will be as hopeless as Jaden feels now. For the first time in his life, Jaden actually feels something that isn't pure blinding fury, and there's no way to control it, or its power. From camels rooting through garbage like raccoons, to eagles being trained like hunting dogs, to streets that are more pothole than pavement, the vivid depictions in *Half a World Away* create an inspiring story that celebrates hope and second chances. (Publishers Weekly, starred review).

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 670 (What's this?)

Paperback: 256 pages

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars See all reviews (19 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #46,541 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #31 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Adoption #47 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Difficult Discussions > Illness #47 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Explore the World > Asia

Age Range: 10 - 14 years

Grade Level: 5 - 9

Customer Reviews

This is an outstanding book. My sons (ages 8 and 5) are adopted, and my older one is starting to wonder about his story. He's known he was adopted since birth, but now that it's become an interesting topic for him, he loved this book and it really helped us open up some important conversations. I would suggest the parent read the book first (I didn't) so he or she is prepared for the discussions this book makes possible. However, it's the first book about adoption that my son had ever shown an interest in, and it gave us a chance to talk about some things that had clearly been plaguing him. If you're an adoptive parent, by all means, buy this book, read it, and decide when is the right time to have your child read it.

This is an extraordinary book, beautiful and thoughtful, about growing a family through adoption. Jaden, adopted from Romania as a young boy, heads to Kazakhstan with his parents to adopt a sibling. The story - of Jaden's own challenges, life in a Kazakh baby house, and the adoption process - are told honestly and unflinchingly. This is a book for young readers drawn to contemporary themes. A wonderful story. Highly recommended.

Summary: Twelve-year-old Jaden is traveling to Kazakhstan with his parents to adopt his new baby brother. Jaden himself was adopted from Romania at the age of 8, and he knows he has failed to be the son his parents wanted. He starts fires in the house, steals, hoards food, and tries to hurt himself. His adoptive parents still tell him they love him, but he doesn't even understand what love is. When he gets to Kazakhstan, he finds himself bonding with 4-year-old Dimash who is about to age out of the baby house orphanage. Although his parents are there for a real baby, Jaden finds himself on a mission to rescue Dimash. Pros: This story is so compelling I read it in 24 hours. I was rooting for every single character (Jaden, Dimash, Jaden's parents Penni and Steve) even though every one of them had the odds astronomically stacked against them. The real hero of the story is the power of love. Cons: For most kids, this is a story that would be most effectively read with some adult guidance. Kids may find it difficult to understand Jaden's behavior, or think Penni and Steve are crazy to be adopting such difficult children.

Very touching story. Jaden's parents adopted him from Romania when he was eight. He is now 12

and he is one of those children that every adoptive family has nightmares about...he starts fires, has not bonded or attached to his parents, lies and manipulates, skips school...and most of all, he feels as though he does not-and never will-fit in. When his parents decide to adopt a new baby from Kazakhstan, Jaden feels like maybe they are trying to get the child they WISH they had gotten in Jaden. As they travel to this new place, Jaden learns new things about who he is and what he may be capable of. He bonds with Sam, their driver, in a way he never has with anyone else. He also surprisingly bonds with a special-needs toddler at the orphanage where his new baby brother is coming from. It's great to see Jaden grow throughout these weeks and see how he not only changes his own mind about love, but how he gets his parents to see some things, too. The story is told through Jaden's eyes, and it would have been fascinating to see things from his parents' perspective, too, but I still thought it was wonderful. A very uplifting novel about the power of love.

Half a World Away by Cynthia Kadohata Atheneum, 2015 Realistic Fiction 228 pages Recommended for grades 4-8 This book burrowed deeply inside my heart. Jaden is a young boy from Romania, adopted by American parents when he was four. Jaden had plenty of time to grown without a bonded family, and the effects are lasting. When Jaden's parents are ready to adopt another child, Jaden has a mix of emotions that he can't put a finger on. The family travels to Kazakhstan to adopt a baby. But "their" baby was given to another couple. The new baby they are urged to bond with seems vacant and not quite well. Jaden doesn't want to bond with the new baby, but he does befriend a four-year-old boy with some developmental disabilities. Does Jaden see himself in this young boy? Whether he does or not, Jaden bonds with the boy and begs for his parents to adopt this boy instead. As a mother, this book hurt at times. I wonder how kids will experience it.

I personally like this book a whole lot. It seems emotional some. Like the kid talks about his emotions and feelings but not in a mushy way. In the book he is supposed to be a "Troubled Child" but he mostly acts like any normal kid his age. A lot of times I agreed with the things the kid said and thought in the book. His character seemed relateable and even humorous. If I knew the kid in real life I would like him. His adoptive parents obviously love him but I thought they actually handled things in the wrong way when it came to, Jaden. Which in honesty is real. Some parents just don't know how to handle any kid. Especially when they get old enough to have and voice their own opinions. I actually haven't finished the book in completion yet but I love it so far. And whatever the ending, is just life I guess. I would recommend this book for any kid 8+ Even a high school kid would read it. It has such a common subject that any body can relate too. Getting a new brother or

sister,son/daughter. But this subject can be broad and emotions can run high! The subject is so real. I learned new things about adoption as well. Which I was glad to learn. It's odd that as an adoptive family you can pick and choose a kid like some kind of store item. But you want to make sure that the kid fits in and you are the right family for them. Flights,money,time,bonding,language barriers,etc. things can get in the way of your goal. It's exhausting and time consuming but your ultimate goal is something we all need and desire...LOVE.

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