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# We are Britain!

Books Reviewed:

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Reviewer:

[Clive Barnes](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

This colourful and appealing match of photographs and poems in picture book format has portraits of 13 children of varying backgrounds from across the UK. It celebrates not only a kaleidoscope of cultures but also the common joys of childhood. There is an apparent artlessness and a real lack of pretension in both photographs and poems that creates the impression that readers, say between seven and eleven, would immediately recognise and identify with the children they meet here. Das's photographs have a family album quality that captures, at turns, both the children's self-conscious directness to the camera and their total indifference to it when presented with something else going on more absorbing or exciting. The photographs respect both the children's individuality and the importance to them of the bonds of family and friendship. Zephaniah's poems are like the poems that the children themselves might write. They are direct. They have a carefree use of cliché phrases and the sort of imprecise adverbs and adjectives (very, really, pretty, lovely) that English teachers used to put a red line through. They borrow shamelessly from pop songs: 'We must stick together / No matter what the weather' and - shades of James Brown - 'He flies through the scene / Like a flying machine.' They are put together with a cheeky sense of fun, a love of even the most incongruous rhyme (what about power and cauliflower?), and a scrupulous regard for form and theme that holds everything in place. They are funny, affecting and joyful revelations of the liberating possibilities of growing up, as Zephaniah says, in a 'multicultural, multicoloured land where every child is equal and all children have a poem to call their own.'

Running Order:

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