



Can I Touch Your Hair? A Conversation

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Editorial Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

A very special book of poems, written by two children as a school project, this is a story to treasure, and should be in every classroom. The two children, Irene, who is white, and Charles, who is black, are horrified when they are unexpectedly put together for the project. Knowing nothing of each other, except that Irene is quiet and Charles talks all the time and that they are of different races, they find it difficult to begin. Charles, who loves poetry, decides they will start with poems about 'shoes, hair, school, and church', and so they do. In the process of writing some thirty-three poems on these subjects and many others, they grow to know each, confront their own racial prejudices (and those of classmates as well), and develop a friendship that may well become life-long. The poems are intensely moving, occasionally funny, and often revealing, and Charles and Irene find much more in common with each other than they thought possible. The illustrations are exceptional, very real people doing very real things, pictured on a white background with lots of intermittent touches of collage. The two children's classmates come to know each other better too, and learn that differences in race don't necessarily mean differences in people. The book is American, and there are a few words that may need explaining, but this is all to the good as phrases like 'Trayvon' and 'Ferguson, Mississippi' can be looked up and learned about. A superb book in a quality production, it will add greatly to the general understanding of kids of all ages.

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