

Adding to the Collection of Parkside Elementary School

In a recent evaluation of the student population and the library collection of the Parkside Elementary School library collection, it became obvious that we need to add materials to the collection to support a growing interest in Indian and Hindu cultures. Thirty percent of the school's population identifies as "Asian" and the shift in international population is evident in the needs of our library patrons who are requesting books about cultural identities, traditions, and fiction books with Asian main characters.

The following books have been selected to be added to the collection. The school campus is PK-5.

Heydlauff, Lisa. (2005). *Going to School in India*. Charlesbridge: MA.

ISBN 1-57091-666-7. 99 pages. Gr. K-3 Photographs by Nitin Upadhye.

Describing schools and students in many parts of this diverse nation, this volume offers more information about contemporary India than most books for children. Details about food, transportation, geographic regions, religion, economics, and political issues are woven into the text. The trendy but overbearing collage and design elements sometimes obscure the clear, vivid photos in this unique offering. It contains a glossary and an index. (Horn Book review).

Indian actress and education activist Sushmita Sen, Miss Universe 1994, write the forward for this book. It has captivating photographs, engaging text and a contemporary, innovative design open a window to this vibrant culture.

I was able to check out a copy of this book from a nearby public library. The above reviews were spot on when describing this book. I feel that the book addresses the needs of our patrons in expanding their understanding of Indian cultures through the very identifiable daily events of going to school. Readers can compare and contrast the "going to school" process in each of the countries. The images are vibrant and interesting. One thing to note is that some of the pages do fold out and they might need to be maintained more frequently than regular pages. In my opinion, the guided reading level for this book would be K-1 and independent reading for grades 2-5. The graphics would be distracting for a new reader and there are unfamiliar vocabulary words that students will need help with.

Sehgal, Kabir, and Sehgal, Surishtha.(2015). *The Wheels on the Tuk Tuk*. New York, NY: Beech Lane Books.

40 pp. Illustrated by Jess Golden.

ISBN 978-1-4814-4831-4 Ebook ISBN 978-1-4814-4832-1

In an amusing adaptation of the children's song, young readers ride in an Indian tuk-tuk (also known as an auto-rickshaw) and encounter a smattering of the subcontinent's sights including the traditional "namaste-ji" greeting, the holy cows that wander freely, and a Diwali celebration. The author's note and glossary explain these elements simply. Festive watercolor, pastel, and colored-pencil illustrations enhance the ride. (Horn Book Review).

PreS-Gr 2—This adaptation of "The Wheels on the Bus" is set in a city in India aboard a tuk-tuk, an auto-rickshaw used by many for public transportation. The tuk-tuk wala, or driver, travels throughout the city picking up more and more passengers as they travel to a Diwali celebration. Along the way, they encounter a cow blocking the street, a chanting yogi, an elephant decorated in paint, and some local fare, including papadoms and chai. The illustrations are vibrant with pastels and bright watercolors and the amalgam of people, animals, foods, and buildings blend together effectively to transport readers to a location with which many children will not be familiar. Every detail in the illustrations feels deliberate and organic to the locale. An author's note is included that shares a brief narrative from the events that inspired this adaptation, as well as a definition of some of the terms used in the story. **VERDICT** An enjoyable and original picture book that will allow readers to experience a different culture while maintaining the familiarity to a classic childhood song. (*School Library Journal*, Nov. 2015)

Motorized rickshaws are used around the world, and in India and other parts of Southeast Asia, they are called tuk-tuks. "Tuk tuk wala says 'Squish in together!' All through the town," write the Sehgal's (*A Bucket of Blessings*), a mother-and-son team, in this lovely take on "The Wheels on the Bus," set in an Indian city. As an overstuffed tuk-tuk makes its "bobble-bobble-bobble" way through town, "People in the street jump on and off," paying their fare with rupees that go "ching ching ching." Readers get a taste of Indian life as the book nods to Hindi beliefs and customs (the tuk-tuk stops for a cow, and readers are taught the greeting "namaste-ji"), poppadoms, and the joyous festival of Diwali. Golden (*Snow Dog, Sand Dog*)—working in bright watercolors, pastels, and pencils with the texture and hues of Diwali color powder—portrays a busy, friendly metropolis where getting sprayed by an elephant can be par for the course. It's

a wonderfully accessible introduction to daily life in another place. Ages 4–8.
(Publishers Weekly *August 24, 2015*)

This book plays upon the popular children’s song “The Wheels on the Bus”. It would be very appropriate for our lower level patrons as they can make a quick connection and recognize the change in vocabulary while still be able to follow along with the main idea. I was able to evaluate this book online. It has very detailed and humorous illustrations that children will connect with.

I was not able to secure a copy of this book to review. However, I was able to evaluate ten pages from an online preview. The writing and pictures flowed in a predictable sequence making it a great book for new readers that still need help from illustrations to interpret the text. All of the reviews were glowing for this book and I can see why. The author started writing in grade school and never stopped. He is a New York Times bestselling author of several books, a jazz musician and an award-winning producer. He lives in New York City.

Bajaj, Varsha. (2014). *Abby Spencer Goes to Bollywood*. Chicago, Illinois: Albert Whitman and Company.

250 pp. ISBN 978-0-8075-6363-2

Lifelong Texan Abby Spencer, thirteen, had no idea that her absent father is a Bollywood movie star — and none of his millions of adoring fans know he has a daughter. When she departs for Mumbai to finally meet him, Abby doesn’t know what she’s getting into. The mostly lighthearted plot holds few surprises, but Mumbai’s beauty — and poverty — are creditably developed. (Horn Book Review).

Abby Spencer, 13, is thrown for a loop when she learns that her estranged father is actually a Bollywood heartthrob, Naveen Kumar. Naveen is equally shocked to hear that he has a daughter (he never saw a letter Abby’s mother sent when she was pregnant), and he invites Abby to visit him in Mumbai. Picture book author Bajaj’s (T Is for Taj Mahal) first middle-grade novel conveys Abby’s mixed emotions about meeting her father, getting her first taste of celebrity, and visiting India, though not always believably (“The muddy color of poverty was interspersed by the bright blue color of tarpaulin people used to keep the rain out,” reflects Abby about Mumbai’s slums). Information about India is laced throughout the story, and although the father/daughter reunion is slightly canned and the dialogue sometimes difficult to swallow (“At first, the hurt and the feeling of rejection felt like shackles that I could never break free,” Abby’s mother says of her failed romance with Naveen), Abby’s extravagant travels and first romance are enough to satisfy and amuse. Ages 9–13. (Publishers Weekly).

Gr 5–8—Thirteen-year-old Abby Spencer longs for excitement in her happy but uneventful life as a middle schooler in Houston, Texas. After she has a severe allergic reaction to coconut, Abby finds the excitement for which she has been waiting. Needing details about Abby's inherited medical history, her mother contacts the girl's father for the first time in more than 13 years. Soon after, Abby finds herself traveling to India on a whirlwind trip to meet him—a Bollywood film star—for the first time. If not for the Indian setting, Abby Spencer would be a typical, cute-but-nothing-special story of a young girl meeting her estranged father. Abby is a sweet, relatable character, but it's the lush backdrop that sets this book apart. The narrator describes the beauty and extreme poverty of Mumbai. She feeds beggars and street dogs and reflects on her own day-to-day luxuries in comparison. She learns some Hindi words and phrases, tastes Indian foods, and spends a day on a Bollywood film set. A light, clean romance adds a second plot thread, but this story is mainly about the teen's exploration of her Indian heritage and the relationships between Abby and her parents. Pair with Narinder Dhami's *Bollywood Babes* (Random, 2006) or Kashmira Sheth's *Boys Without Names* (HarperCollins, 2010).—Leigh Collazo, Ed Willkie Middle School, Fort Worth, TX --This text refers to the Hardcover edition. (School Library Journal).

Fan site Goodreads gives this book 3.9/5 stars. Amazon readers give the book 4.5/5 stars with the lowest review being a 3.

I was able to check this book out from a nearby public library. The quick beat of the book and an interesting view of India from the eyes of a young woman allows readers to quickly connect with the story of discovering who she is and where she comes from. Throughout the book, the main character makes Tex-centric references that Texas readers can easily connect with for a greater understanding. The Horn Book review was a bit vague but the Publisher's Weekly review gave much more description to help flesh out what the book is about. This would be a good addition to our Young Adult Fiction section for more mature fourth and fifth-grade patrons.