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There's More to a Banana

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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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The four stories in this collection are set in Central America, probably Belize on the Caribbean coast, which has a similar history and culture to the Caribbean islands. The stories feature Melanie and her younger sister Flora, and though they spring from everyday reality, these stories are brought to life by assured storytelling, featuring lively, spirited dialogue and by an infectious delight in the pranks and rivalries of the siblings. Apart from their intrinsic appeal, this book should give British children valuable insights into elements of a different culture. The stories have a contemporary setting and feel, but the illustrations, whilst not lacking warmth, seem somewhat dated, particularly in the characters' clothes. Also, the banana plants, illustrating the title story, bear only a passing resemblance to the real thing. Banana bunches taper down like an inverted pyramid with the new (upward pointing) fruits or 'fingers' making their appearance at the growing point nearer the ground. For this reason, the larger, established fingers are to be found at the top of the bunch, not the bottom. Yet these illustrations show exactly the opposite. Also the artichoke-like layering of the stem as portrayed in the illustrations is quite inaccurate. It may seem churlish to dwell on these lapses, as the illustrations are a secondary aspect of the book, but they do illustrate a story which sets out to be educational, providing factual data on the banana plant and fruit, their varieties and uses etc. Ultimately it is the publisher's responsibility to commission illustrators familiar with the subject matter in question, as artists can only do the best they can.

Running Order:

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