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Running Shoes

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~~Not a choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Sophy's father died because there was no hospital to treat him when he became ill. Life in the Cambodian village where Sophy and her mother live with their few animals is harsh. She knows that she needs to go to school to become literate and to have the chance of improving her life. But the school is eight kilometres away and dangerous roads have to be crossed. The answer is the gift of some fine running shoes from the number man sent by the government to count the villagers.

Strong dialogue keeps up the pace of the story and the text is often poetic: Sophy moved so quickly in her running shoes that she sailed through the air 'the way a small flat stone skips over water'.

Fine landscape illustrations show vividly the outdoor environment: the hot dusty road below the steps into the wooden houses and the misty atmosphere of the rice fields before sunrise when Sophy begins her run to school. Pictures of the interior of Sophy's house suggest a simple lifestyle with a wooden floor and cooking utensils spread out on it on a cloth.

We see a one-roomed school house full of boys reminding us how educationally disadvantaged girls can be in some countries. And yet it was Sophy's father who taught her to write her name and the name of her village on a blackboard under the shade of a coconut tree. And the number man shows sensitivity towards her dreams and aspirations and gives practical help.

A book like this teaches so much more than many conventional geography books. It helps young children to find connections between their own lives and those of others in different environments and predicaments and encourages both empathy and analysis. For 6 year olds and upwards. MM

Running Order:

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