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# Flip

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

14-year-old Alex wakes up to find himself in a different body, with a different home and a different life to which he must get accustomed. Furthermore, he has 'lost' six months. He finds the process of adaptation painful and difficult. How can he reconcile his mind with the body and social scene belonging to Philip, or Flip, as he is significantly nick-named? Is there any way back? Eventually, Alex realises that his own 'self' is in a long-term coma, following a hit-and-run accident, and his psyche is now lodged in the body of a boy who was born on the same day as him, and in the same hospital.

Bedford has written a profound and moving novel on these themes. Far from being a body-swap comedy, this book is an examination, from Alex's point of view, of the pain and anguish arising from a disconnection between mind and body. We get a penetrating study of what it is like to be a studious, thoughtful boy who suddenly finds that he has greater muscular strength and can attract the best-looking (but not the most intelligent) girls. On the way, the book subtly suggests the class and social differences between Alex and Flip's families and confronts the issue of being true to oneself. Yet clearly Alex's mind is the stronger of the two, despite Flip's physicality and popularity. These themes are supported by the use of some arresting descriptions: school-work becomes 'a foothold on the scary, insurmountable cliff-face of what had happened to him?', while the windows of the hospital where he was born resemble 'rows of eyes whose make-up had streaked from too much weeping'. In addition, however, there are some Americanisms such as 'snuck' which seem anomalous in this English scene.

The book should appeal alike to boys and girls of 14 or over, who will appreciate its insights into the difficulties of finding one's true self. The section which considers the relationship between the soul, psyche and mind requires some maturity, but the scene where Alex tracks down his condition on the Internet will seem familiar to many readers. This is an absorbing book which makes you think a little differently.

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