



# Street of Tall People

Books Reviewed:

[Street of Tall People](#) [1]

Issue:

[192](#) [2]

Reviewer:

[Clare Poole](#) [3]

~~Not a Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

3

This story is set in the East End of London in 1936. Jimmy lives in a flat with his widowed mother and Benny lives nearby with his Orthodox Jewish family. Jimmy and Benny both train at the same boxing gym. Their relationship does not have a promising start as Benny beats Jimmy in a fight which leaves Jimmy feeling desperate. He has problems at home where his mother seems to be starting a relationship with the rent collector, Mr. Searle, an unpleasant bully of a man whom Jimmy dislikes and distrusts.

Benny and Jimmy gradually become friends just as the fascist threat of Oswald Mosley and his Blackshirts is increasing. Jimmy finds out that Mr. Searle is a Blackshirt and knows that he cannot tell his mother about his friendship with Benny, or tell Benny about his mother's boyfriend. Ultimately Jimmy and Benny are reunited in their joint battle against the fascists, which is based on the action actually taken by thousands of East Enders at the Battle of Cable Street when local people built and defended barricades to stop Mosley and his fascists from marching through the East End. Gibbons has written a gripping depiction of this time when the people trying to turn ethnic groups against each other failed; their struggle has parallels with issues today. The book would be a valuable resource for any school library but is also a good read in its own right.

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## Links:

[1] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/childrens-books/street-of-tall-people-0>

[2] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/issue/192>

[3] <http://booksforkeeps.co.uk/member/clare-poole>