

If You Were Me and Lived in...India: A Child's Introduction to Cultures Around the World

Carole P. Roman

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Carole P. Roman continues her award-winning children's series profiling different cultures around the world in the picture book *If You Were Me and Lived in...India*. Roman's *If You Were Me* books have a simple, winning formula: portray children from other countries and explain how familiar items and customs are the same, and how they differ, in the country being discussed. In this installment, Roman mentions common children's names, the words for "Mommy" and "Daddy," the local currency, common foods, popular sports, and holidays.

The appeal of Roman's *If You Were Me* series is that this information is not offered in the bland style of an encyclopedia entry, but rather as part of a tour of real life in India. For example, Roman writes, "An Indian rupee is what you would use to pay to see a movie in a theater."

The desired information is delivered—a rupee is to an Indian what a dollar is to an American—in a natural way that leads into a mention of Bollywood and a recommendation to see a Bollywood film. It's this organic, conversational tone that keeps the book interesting and inspires kids' own curiosity for other cultures.

The sport of cricket is described, hinting at the similarities to baseball. In this way, Roman gives children enough common ground that when unfamiliar elements are introduced, it's not overwhelming. For example, she discusses the Indian holiday of Holi: "You would be in a group of people throwing colored powder and water at each other."

A pronunciation guide and glossary is provided at the back of the book—a valuable resource, given the number of difficult words used: "Holi (h-o-lee) A joyous celebration filled with dancing, singing, and celebrating colors."

The illustrations are effective and engaging throughout, and they also do much to emphasize the similarities between cultures—pictures of a family eating or children playing, for example—giving kids a comfortable anchor point from which to extend their worldview. Roman's *If You Were Me* series is undeniably successful in achieving its goal of introducing new cultures to children. This book and its companion volumes would make excellent additions to any library or elementary school classroom.

PETER DABBENE (April 14, 2014)

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