



If you were me and lived in... South Korea: A Child's Introduction to Cultures around the World

Carole P. Roman

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Keeping culture shock to a minimum by speaking directly to young readers rather than relaying facts, this picture-book author creates a distinct sense of place.

Young people still discovering their own environments often have little or no knowledge of other cultures. Carole P. Roman has written a wonderful picture book designed to help introduce children to cultures and customs from the other side of the world.

Roman has proven her skill at writing children's books with her Captain No Beard series, as well as with the other volumes in her cultural series. *If you were me and lived in... South Korea* uses a technique of speaking directly to the child reading or listening, similar to Laura Numeroff's *If You Give a...* series. This strategy is well suited to a book about foreign cultures as it gives little imaginations a boost by helping children envision themselves growing up with customs and traditions different from the ones they're familiar with.

Rather than a third-person description that young readers might lump into the same brain space as fictional locales like Oz, Hogwarts, or Neverland, the text makes it clear that South Korea is a real place, and that children grow up there, too, albeit with different names: "Your name could be Minjoon, Jihoo, or Minjae if you are a boy, and Soobin, Jiwoo, or Yeeun if you are a girl."

Roman also keeps the culture shock to a minimum by couching new concepts in familiar terms: "When you buy toys, you would pay with a won, which is like a dollar bill."

The illustrations contain some loose and imprecise use of perspective at times, resulting in tables and stairs that look uneven. Even the interior image that's also used on the front cover (two Korean children with a large globe) has a rough, freehand feel to it; the world doesn't quite look spherical. But the pictures convey the required information and, most importantly, a strong sense of place; computer-aided drawings of backgrounds—floorboards, grasslands, and wallpaper—help to add texture. The lack of measured lines seems a minor flaw or stylistic quirk because, overall, the illustrations carry the visual aspects of the book well.

If you were me and lived in... South Korea is the perfect length for an early-childhood classroom; it is long enough to give a good overview of life in South Korea, but not so long as to test shorter attention spans.

PETER DABBENE (August 19, 2013)

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