



Urban Playground: What Kids Say About Living in San Francisco

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Urban Playground is an entertaining introduction to San Francisco thanks to the charm, sense of wonder, and joy of its participants.

In *Urban Playground*, San Francisco attorney and journalist Katie Burke delves into the hopes and daily lives of the city's child residents with a unique look at the metropolis through their eyes.

Using general discussion topics like "Who is your hero?" and "What is your school like?," Burke interviewed fifty children between the ages of 5 and 9, giving them the opportunity to make innocent, funny, poignant, and perceptive observations about life in the Bay Area.

Organized as a workbook for parents and children, there are open questions at the end of each interview to provoke thought and further discussion. Although the interviews are straightforward, the interviewees are often creative in their responses. Some of the funniest bits occur when the children are asked to come up with an imaginary holiday, resulting in unusual concepts such as cotton candy rain and families running through the street in their pajamas.

Although the book doesn't aim to be a in-depth look at families from every demographic, San Francisco's diversity shines through. The interview subjects come from a multitude of backgrounds: gay parents, multiethnic families, and single and adoptive parents are included.

True to its title, *Urban Playground* views San Francisco as a wonderland of possibilities seen through its interviewees' eyes. Local institutions like Golden Gate Park and Green Apple Books are cited as places of education and fun. Burke's interviews also address San Francisco's negative aspects, including income inequalities and trash-ridden neighborhoods, but what stands out the most is the city's cosmopolitan nature.

The children in this book reveal sophisticated tastes and activities, including language classes and folk dance lessons, tea parties in Japantown, sandwich bars at school, and sushi for dinner. Many of the subjects are mature and empathetic for their age. One offers a nuanced explanation of how heroes are everywhere, even if they're imaginary, while another uses proceeds from sales of his art to help the city's homeless population.

Still, kids will be kids. Mentions of cupcakes and ice cream abound, and for every child who dreams of becoming an archaeologist, YouTube influencer, or video game designer, there's another with a more tried-and-true ambition of becoming a policeman, ballerina, or astronaut.

Urban Playground is more effective as a sampling of modern urban children's attitudes and lifestyles than it is as a comprehensive primer on San Francisco's delights. Sometimes the city even seems incidental to the interviewees' lives, especially for those who spend major portions of the year elsewhere. Still, *Urban Playground* is an entertaining introduction to the city thanks to the charm, sense of wonder, and joy of its participants.

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