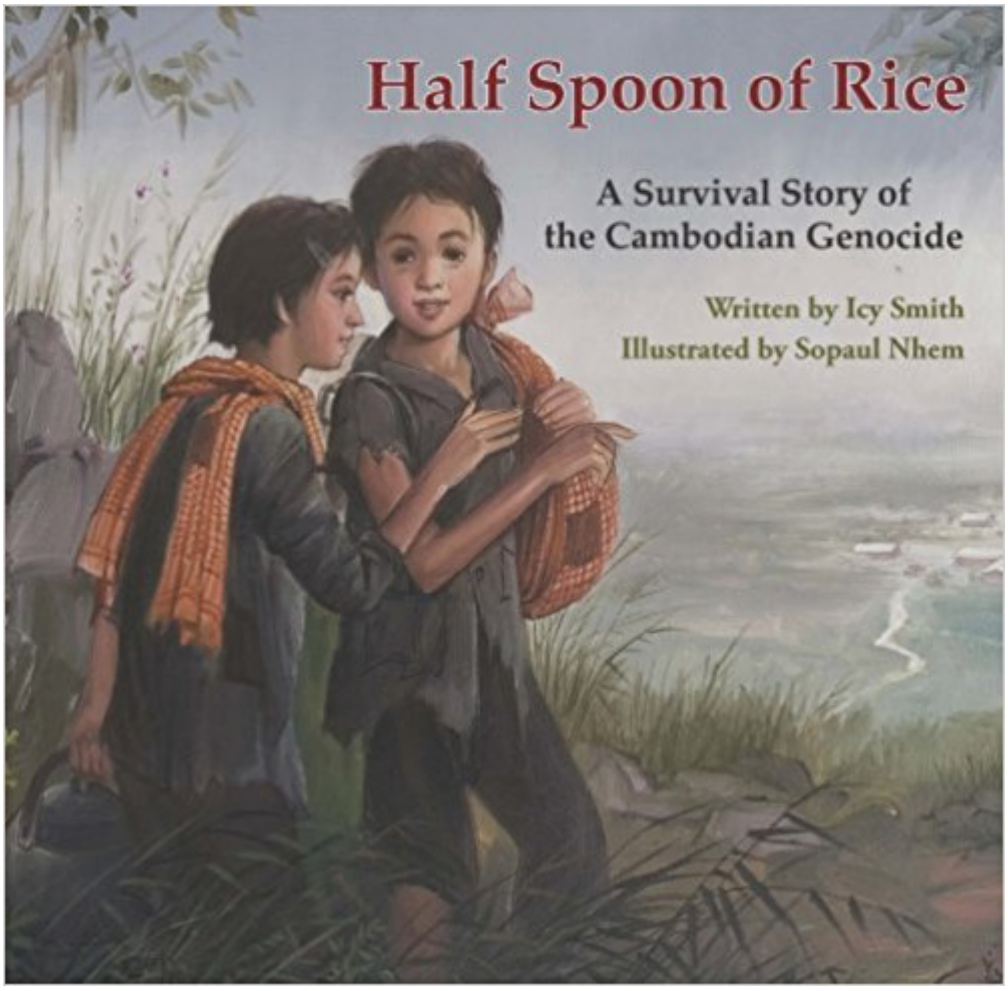
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Half Spoon Of Rice: A Survival Story Of The Cambodian Genocide



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Synopsis

Nine-year-old Nat is forced out of his Cambodian home and marched into the countryside when the Khmer Rouge comes into power. Nat is separated from his family and endures forced labor in rice fields from dawn to midnight with little food. Over the next four years, Nat confronts starvation, fear, and brutality. With the help of his friend Malis, Nat finds hope and the strength to escape, eventually reuniting with the family he loves. Half Spoon of Rice is based on true stories of courage, friendship, survival, and the triumph of the human spirit. The book features vivid illustrations and historical photographs documenting the Cambodian genocide from 1975 to 1979. Book Awards: Benjamin Franklin Silver Award California Book Award Finalist Society of School Librarians International Honor Award Cooperative Children Book Center Choices Skipping Stones Honor Award Moonbeam Children s Book Award

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Grade 5Ã¢â ¬â œ8Ã¢â ¬â •Young Nat narrates this harrowing story of his family’s experience during the Cambodian genocide of the mid-to-late ’70s, when a quarter of the country’s population "Ã¢â ¬Â¦died of starvation, torture, or execution." The Khmer Rouge army evacuated millions of citizens to the countryside in an effort to create a classless society of peasant farmers. Subsisting on watery rice soup, Nat’s family walks for days until they reach a rice field where the children, men, and women are all separated. Along the way, the boy befriends Malis, a girl his age who cannot find her family. At one point, on the verge of starvation, he sneaks off and finds a frog and pulls its legs off to eat. "It tastes horrible, but it satisfies my stomach." Days, months, and years pass until the

Vietnamese Liberation Army finally frees them. Though Nat eventually finds his parents, who adopt Malis, the journey is treacherous. "We are shocked to see so many dead bodies along our routeÃ¢â ¬Â¦we sometimes walk on top of the bodies to avoid stepping on a mine." An author's note gives background information about the Cambodian genocide. Bold, impressionistic oil paintings, mainly full page but some full spreads, speak volumes, and archival photographs are appended. This powerful child's-eye view of war is harsh and realisticÃ¢â ¬â •like its subjectÃ¢â ¬â •though accessible and thought-provoking.Ã¢â ¬â •Barbara Auerbach, New York City Public Schools Copyright Ã Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Ã¢â ¬Å"I see some terrible things and I do not want to die.Ã¢â ¬Â• Based on the stories of survivors, this stirring picture book for older readers tells of the Cambodian genocide in a present-tense narrative from the viewpoint of Nat, nine, who is driven from his city home by the Khmer Rouge in 1975, separated from his parents, and forced to labor in the fields. The brutality is ever-present, and dramatic oil paintings show the stream of survivors, the familyÃ¢â ¬â„¢s breakup, people being shot for disobeying orders, and others who die of starvation. While foraging in the woods, Nat meets a young girl, Malis. Four years later, after the soldiers leave, the children reach a Thai refugee camp, where Nat finds his parents, who take Malis with them when they leave for San Francisco in 1979. The long, readable authorÃ¢â ¬â„¢s note, paired with sepia-toned photos and a map, tells more of the horrific history, including the role of the U.S., whose secret war in Cambodia fueled support for the Khmer Rouge. An important addition to the Holocaust curriculum. Grades 4-7. --Hazel Rochman

So glad this exists to show the next generation of kids in the family what grandma went through. Beautiful illustrations and a digestable story of what happened during the genocide that doesn't damper the terrible things that happened but is kid-friendly.

A hard story told in an accessible way for children. Fabulous pictures. I would like to see it in softback.

The new year had just arrived in Cambodia and Nat's family was still celebrating when soldiers began to enter the city shouting, "Leave immediately!" "Leave immediately!" Nat was only nine-years-old and many of the soldiers were not much older than he was. Phnom Penh began to

teem with activity as people were forcibly ousted from the city. His family began to gather together a few belongings and began to march into with the others. The soldiers lied to them, saying it would only be a few days before they could go home. Instead they were on a grueling three-day march away from home.Nat, who was carrying some rice, began to ache with the exertion. His feet began to blister, but he had to keep moving. Millions were walking and many began to die. Nat and his family passed them by the roadside, fearful for their own safety. Families were separated and desperate to find their loved ones. The Khmer Rouge Army had a plan for them. Once they arrived in the countryside, they were forced into slave labor. Nat found Malis, a young girl separated from her family. Soon the family was forced to separate, children in one camp, "Youths to another, women to another, and men to another." Would any of them come out of this alive? Would Nat ever see his parents again? The body count escalated and the years began to pass by him . . .This is a sobering portrait of a young boy who was unfortunately caught up in the Khmer Rouge's vicious "reign of terror." The story is gracefully written and tries to portray the Cambodian genocide in a sensitive manner for its intended audience. The stunning artwork has a surreal quality about it that somehow captures the fearful nature of the events experienced by the young during that era. In the back of the book are some excellent historical vignettes and a two-page black and white photographic essay to browse. There are two photographs of mass graves in the killing fields. This courageous story of a young survivor is one you may wish to consider for your homeschool or library shelves!

When you consider how many utterly terrifying characters, actions and events populate the fantastic world of children's literature, it makes perfect sense to recommend (very highly indeed) Icy Smith's "Half Spoon of Rice: A Survival Story of the Cambodian Genocide". The award-winning author writes her story of 9-year-old Nat, his parents, and Malis, a young, lost girl Nat befriends. Ms. Smith utilizes a straightforward prose, using no embellishments, allowing the tale itself to unfold with all the terror, violence and suspense of war revealed by young Nat himself. From the sudden, forced evacuation of Phnom Penh to the child labor camps in the Cambodian countryside to liberation four years later and his eventual immigration to America, Nat's story is simply told here, simply matter of fact. It is an epic, breathtaking, heroic and poignant adventure! Adding a haunting, thrilling quality to this book is its collection of inspired illustrations by Sopaul Nhem, a renowned Cambodian artist whose father (also an artist) is a survivor of the "killing fields" era. This is Nhem's first childen's book collaboration, and his art brilliantly supports the text. At its heart, Icy Smith's "Half Spoon of Rice" is an intimate story of family, friendship and courage during one of the least documented civil

wars/genocides in contemporary history (1975-1979). Writing such a book for the children's market might be considered daring, to be sure; writing one so masterfully is a bonus, but hardly surprising when the author is Icy Smith, who was honored with the Clarion Award for best nonfiction book for "The Lonely Queue", and whose "Mei Ling in China City" received the Moonbeam Childen's Book Award, Chinese American Library Association Best Children's Book Award and Independent Publisher Book Award. Ms. Smith deserves special commendation for this children's book -- "Half Spoon of Rice" is a genuine service to history and education. Its topic is as American as it is Cambodian, and "Half Spoon of Rice" deserves to be in every library, period.

"Half Spoon of Rice: A Survival Story of the Cambodian Genocide" is the historical interpretation of a surviving boy of 9 who endures the Cambodian Genocide events perpetrated by the Khmer Rouge in response to the American war in Viet Nam, Laos and Cambodia from 1975 - 1979. Forced to work at rice farming more than 12 hours a day with barely a half spoonful of rice rationed to survive on, 9-year old Nat and his friend Malis endure many horrors and deprivations. Separated from his parents, Nat is forced to scrounge for frogs or anything that can sustain him during this harsh enforced agricultural slavery. After many sufferings and moments of terror and sadness, Nat and Malis are allowed to leave and escape into Thailand, where they manage to find Nat's parents at a Refugee Camp. In October of 1979, Nat and Malis, who is adopted by Nat's parents when she cannot find her own, are brought to San Francisco, California. The story told in "Half Spoon of Rice" is not a pretty one, but it needs telling. Sensitive illustrations show conditions and details experienced by the Cambodians in their time of trial and death. It is a good teaching book for children ages 7-12.

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