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Where Children Sleep



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Synopsis

Where Children Sleep presents English-born photographer James Mollison's (born 1973) large-format photographs of children's bedrooms around the world--from the US, Mexico, Brazil, England, Italy, Israel and the West Bank, Kenya, Senegal, Lesotho, Nepal, China and India--alongside portraits of the children themselves. Each pair of photographs is accompanied by an extended caption that tells the story of each child: Kaya in Tokyo, whose proud mother spends $1,000 a month on her dresses; Bilal the Bedouin shepherd boy, who sleeps outdoors with his father's herd of goats; the Nepali girl Indira, who has worked in a granite quarry since she was three; and Ankhohxet, the Kraho boy who sleeps on the floor of a hut deep in the jungle. Photographed over two years with the support of Save the Children (Italy), Where Children Sleep is both a serious photo-essay for an adult audience, and also an educational book that engages children themselves in the lives of other children around the world. Its cover features a child's mobile printed in glow-in-the-dark ink.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"a remarkable series capturing the diversity of and, often, disparity between childrenÃ¢â ¬â„¢s lives around the world through portraits of their bedrooms" (Maria Popova Brainpickings)

This book is an eye-opening, conversation starter for children ages 8 and up, as well as teens and adults.Here's what I love about it:-Many of the photos are both beautiful and sad; some are

haunting, and you will be changed after studying them.-There’s much food for thought here about the influence that ethnic group, socioeconomic status, family and community politics, and similar factors have on both a child’s actual, physical place in the world and his/her perception of her place in the world. The book doesn’t preach, but sparks much wonder.-The book does not imply that materialism equals happiness. There’s much for our children to be thankful for after reading this book, but without suggesting that children living in less modern locales, or with fewer toys and wealth are somehow "less than" themselves. In fact, this book led a young child I know to wonder aloud if both extreme poverty and extreme wealth might be challenging for children, in different ways.-Here, there are also paths to be traveled when considering our own beliefs about personal space and the child’s role in the family and community. There is an underlying theme of parents trying hard to do what they hope is best for their children.A few things I wish were different about the book:-The choice of locales is odd and somewhat lacking. The author’s travel budget was limited, and it shows. For example, we meet eight children from Nepal, yet none from India. Many parts of the world were skipped altogether, including Australia, the Pacific Islands, and islands of the Caribbean, as well as most very cold climates.Three of five children representing Europe were are from Italy, with the the other two from England and Scotland. In the US, we meet a whopping 12 kids, but eight of them are from New York or New Jersey and three from Kentucky. While I can see the advantage of showing contrast within one area (such as poverty and prosperity in the same city) at times it seemed obvious that the author’s access to children in other areas was limited.-The photos seem to perpetuate stereotypes in a few cases. For example, the ONLY children in the US living outside New York and New Jersey are a camo-clad, gun-toting deer hunter, a make-up clad little pageant princess, and an child living in an Appalachian shack (all in Kentucky) and a young man at a rustic-looking boarding school for obese kids in North Carolina. While these may be honest depictions of these children’s actual lives, readers in other countries could easily be lead to believe that extreme stereotypes of the American South are reality for all children living away from the east coast.It made me wonder about generalizations my own children might form about other countries. Based on the extremes captured by the book, one might deduce that most Japanese children are coddled dolls, while most children in Great Britain are punks or antisocial misfits. The book is an eye-opener because of the extremes, but you found yourself wondering, "Are there any ordinary, average, healthy children anywhere?" Might younger readers answer that question with "Nowhere but here."? (Not the author’s intent, I’m sure!)-Some photos sometimes show children’s belongings spread out across the floor and/or beds of their rooms. I understand the photographer’s intent here, but think it could be confusing to young readers. For example, does the child who competes in

karate really have a floor so crammed with trophies that she cannot reach her bed? If the book is to be a tool for learning about other cultures, I would have preferred the photos to be true captures of the child's room as it is, without much "artistic arrangement" from the photographer.-Some photos are very dark - almost too dark to see. In a few cases, it represents a lack of natural or electric lighting - it really is dark in this child's room. In a few others, it just seems that someone opted not to turn on the lights. Why? The reader must strain to try to interpret details.In summary, it is a fascinating and visually striking book that will leave readers changed. Glanced through or poured over, it will open eyes and raise questions.It often benefits - and occassionally suffers - from the extremes depicted by the subject matter.There are a breathtaking number of "sparks" for contemplation, discussion, research, and writing within these covers, and even the book's weaknesses can be used as strengths, such as encouraging children to research "forgotten" countries, or challenging children to debate about stereotypes.This is a book that can grow with the reader. A nine-year-old may find herself pondering the fact that some children struggle to get enough to eat, while others never give thought to where their meals come from. A nineteen-year-old may find herself wondering what her own world view might be is she were the younger sister of a suicide bomber, as is one of the children from the West Bank.Highly recommended for older kids, teens, and adults.

James Mollison wrote in the preface that he wrote this book for children 9-12. However, before deciding to get this and sharing with your children (and I highly suggest you do) , please bear in mind that this is a book based on reality - about how different children live in different parts of the world and some children, like it or not, are not living their lives ideally.The photos of the children profiled and their places of sleep (hence the title) are stark and vivid. It's a hyper-real book about the world we live in today. There are photos of children living in wealth, and there are happy. healthy middle-class children (by American standards) and then there are the images that haunt you after you close the book - the two that broke my heart and stayed with me long after I read it are the ones of a 14 year-old pregnant Brazilian girl who had been pregnant 3 times since she was 12; There is also the of the child in Asia whose home is a literal garbage dump, his bed a collection of old tires swarming with disease-ridden flies.This is not a fairy-tale book, it is a sobering window, looking out to the world - a take that I think benefits not only children but all of us to take stock of our very own lucky lives and appreciate what we have.

Without question, the best book for visuals when teaching global socioeconomics and cultural

awareness to children. Beautifully printed, full-page photos of bedrooms belonging to children around the world bring poverty, wealth, and diverse lifestyles to life. Generous paragraph descriptions give a brief bio of the child pictured so kids can see first-hand how "regular" kids can have such drastically different backgrounds. For schools with large immigrant populations, this book is a must. Anyone could find something of interest in here. The only downside I've found is in its binding. While the binding is durable on the inside, the papery matte finish to the cover does not stand up well to heavy handling in a classroom, so if you have the option to wrap or bind it, do that before making it available to the masses.

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