

The Dairy of Amos Lee written by Adeline Foo, illustrated by Stephanie Wong.

Reviewed by Sally Ann Jones

Adeline Foo has written a book for all to appreciate! Children from 8 to 11 will enjoy the adventures of the main character Amos who documents his relationships and adventures in a diary written while sitting on the toilet. As he says, "I sit, I write, I flush!". Readers will also appreciate Stephanie Wong's quirky cartoon-like illustrations which add detail and variety to the text.

Amos' parents suggest that he write a diary in an attempt to help him use toilet time productively, improve his writing and his ability to multi-task. Through his own words we follow the ups and downs of Amos' fortunes as he learns the value of money by making things to sell in school to try and buy 'The Gadget'. Some of his schemes are selling T shirts and pineapple tarts and working as a clown. His two best friends are naturally involved in some of these schemes and other school activities such as the National Day Parade preparations, making projects and taking exams with the resultant falling in and out of friendship. However, as Amos' fortunes increase, events make him realise that some things are more important than money and he has to make some hard decisions. In his diary we see how Amos' relationships with his family develop over the course of a school year. He comes to understand and appreciate his sister and realise the strong love his grandfather bears his grandmother when she becomes sick.

Parents will appreciate the educational value of this book in that as well as learning about life, Amos learns about Singapore. During the course of the year, his mother takes a new job which involves mother and children taste testing kopi and teh, eating half-boiled eggs, nasi lemak, prata, kueh and murukku. Mother and children also review their trips to fish spas, frog farms, and goat farms. They ride a in a cable car and on the Singapore flyer and dive into the National Library Book Sale. All these events are of course new experiences to Amos and refreshingly detailed in his diary.

Adeline Foo has described the complexity of the lives of young people in Singapore through Amos' diary. The resilience and patient good humour of the character of Amos will endear him to both adults and children as he learns the lesson of life through living in Singapore.