

The uphill battle for graphic novel acceptance referenced by reviewer Betty Bush still rages as kids and librarians continue to preach the genre's worthiness, but proponents had a major victory when *American Born Chinese* became the first graphic novel to win the Printz Award in 2007. Almost fifteen years later, the book remains an exemplar of the format and a compelling reminder that visual narratives tap into a gut-level type of emotion that can't always be captured by text alone. Take, for example, the absolute rage conveyed by the Monkey King's transformation from a cartoonish primate in one panel to the enormous Great Sage, Equal of Heaven in the next; or the painful fall in the shoulders of Jin and his friends after being called racial slurs in a brilliantly structured four panel scene; or, of course, the palpable insecurity behind Wei-Chen's cool guy bravado as we get a quick grayscale flash of a monkey between the images of the sunglassesed smoking rebel. There are three storylines here but really just one conflict: Jin's struggle to negotiate his cultural and ethnic identity within an overtly racist society. The two other plots offer seemingly two different solutions: take the high road like the Monkey King and own who you are, critics be damned, or see your heritage as a shameful embarrassment and treat it as such. Of course, it's more complicated than that, and Yang cleverly brings all three threads together in a climactic scene, underscoring the inescapable vulnerability inherent in any search for identity. The art again plays an essential role as the steady paneling becomes jagged and torn as Danny/Jin fights with Chin-Kee/Monkey King and readers see the visual representation of Jin's internal struggle. It's one thing for a book to be groundbreaking, but it's quite another to remain relevant and compelling more than a decade; *American Born Chinese* does just that.

- *Kate Quealy-Gainer, Assistant Editor*