



## The Boy & the Bindi

*Vivek Shraya , Rajni Perera (Illustrations)*

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## **The Boy & the Bindi** Vivek Shraya , Rajni Perera (Illustrations)

A beautiful children's picture book that showcases a young Indian boy's fascination with his mother's bindi, the red dot commonly worn by Hindu women. Rather than chastise her son, she teaches him about its cultural significance and doesn't flinch when he asks for one himself. Wearing it allows him to joyfully explore and express his difference.

## **The Boy & the Bindi Details**

Date : Published October 11th 2016 by Arsenal Pulp Press (first published September 13th 2016)

ISBN : 9781551526683

Author : Vivek Shraya , Rajni Perera (Illustrations)

Format : Hardcover 32 pages

Genre : Childrens, Picture Books, Gltb, Queer, Gender, Fiction

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## **From Reader Review The Boy & the Bindi for online ebook**

### **Ashley says**

I read this for my English Literature for Children class (396) and had the pleasure to actually hear a lecture given by the author! Who I must say, is extremely fashionable, knowledgeable and conscious of social issues.

From our analysis of picture books, I have learned that children's books sometimes address political and social issues and are actually more complicated than what we expect.

I appreciate how the author depicted a darker skinned Indian individual, the acceptance of the mother in giving a bindi to her son (which is most traditionally worn by women), and how the young protagonist is proud of wearing his bindi.

In one scene of the book when he is confronted by his classmates, I had the fear that they would begin to make fun of him for being different. However, the protagonist interpreted it as a sign of curiosity and pride where he believed that they also wanted a bindi to wear themselves.

The pictures in this book are beautiful drawn and the narrative of the book alongside it makes for a great read!

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### **Hannah says**

Glad the library has this in the collection.

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### **Rachel says**

In this rhyming picture book, a young boy decides to wear a colourful bindi between his brows just like his Ammi. He is fascinated by its beauty, and its relevance, once his mother explains why she puts it on. Like her, the boy finds that it calms him and opens his mind. It is a source of identity, and even cultural pride.

Others may find it a curiosity, but to him, it is important. The most disappointing thing about this book is that the quality of the writing doesn't match the beauty of the idea. The rhyme is uninspired, and the lines seem to have been pieced together with little care for meter or formula; when read aloud, it sounds rather awkward. Shraya explains well, but doesn't express well. The illustrations on the other hand do a lot to raise the quality overall. Perera portrays both the everyday, and the more spiritual experience of the boy, pulling out all the stops in terms of colour for the latter. The bindi is such a little thing, but it is significant in the Hindu culture and others. More books like this are needed, both for the children who can benefit from seeing their own culture represented, and for the children who can benefit from learning about, and from, a culture that is not their own.

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### **Krissy says**

A sweet story that would be a wonderful addition to anyone's library!

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### **Ana says**

For all children aged 3 to 103.

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### **Liaken says**

Gorgeous illustrations with a gentle look at gender non-conforming exploration during childhood. Really lovely book.

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### **Elisabeth says**

Wow! This little picture book explores so much in such a tiny space. I loved the illustrations: they're saturated with color and are glorious in depicting the little boy, his Ammi, and what the bindi means to both of them. I really liked Ammi's response to her son and how the son learned and grew from it. I learned so much about bindis and it was fascinating!

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### **Ben Truong says**

*The Boy & the Bindi* is a children's picture book written by Vivek Shraya and illustrated by Rajni Perera, which tells a story about a boy questioning his mother about her bindi and asking for one himself.

Shraya's text is rather simply wonderful – it's simplistic, straightforward, yet has a innocence and almost poetic tone to it. Through the inquisitiveness of the boy, we get to learn about what a Bindi is and what the purpose of wearing one. Perera's illustrations are simply wonderful and one can almost feel a spiritual connection with some of the pictures. It depicted the text extremely well.

The premise of the book is rather straightforward. A boy's fascination with his mother's bindi, the red dot commonly worn by Hindu women just on their forehead between their eyes, has her teaching her son about its cultural significance. She doesn't even flinch when he asks one for himself and by wearing it allows him to joyfully explore and express his difference to his friends and culture – as a bindi is traditionally worn by women.

All in all, *The Boy & the Bindi* is a wonderful children's book depicting the cultural and spiritual significance of a bindi and touches (if you squint) gender stereotypes.

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### **Kerri says**

While the rhymes were a bit clunky at times, I appreciate that this book exists. Finding children's books by queer authors in the library is so encouraging, especially when I think about how much I would have

appreciated these kinds of things when I was younger. (Which really wasn't all that long ago, but things have changed so much in even just the past fifteen years, I'm so excited to see more LGBTQA literature out there.)

This book touches on identity, gender, culture, and it's all done in a really positive way. I like that it doesn't treat any of those things as a "very special" issue -- the story itself feels really down to earth and authentic, despite the sometimes awkward writing.

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### **Kathleen O'Dell says**

This book is a truly beautiful book, and I am glad that there are LGBTQQ-related books that include different cultures. The illustrations are wonderfully done and full of rich color. The rhyming makes this an easy read, and I think that it would really draw in children's attention. This book would show children that it is okay to explore the world around them. I think that the book would be a good way to also introduce something about a different culture as well. The main character also uses some words that represent their culture, and you could even compare these words with what students in a classroom are familiar with. I would still only use this as an introductory text, because it only touches upon some superficial information about a culture. Overall though, a very good book.

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### **Elizabeth says**

The Boy and the Bindi is a very sweet story about a young boy's connection to his mother's Bindi and his own Bindi. The gentle rhyming pattern works very well, and delivers the story in a smooth way that is easy for read-alouds. The illustrations are lovely and really bring the story to life.

I look forward to reading more from the author. I definitely recommend this one.

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### **Serena Yates says**

While I am no expert on children's books by any stretch of the imagination, I did enjoy reading them to my nieces and nephews when they were younger. Some books originally intended for younger audiences can be enjoyed at any age, and I think that 'The Boy and the Bindi' is a good example. The target age may be 4 to 8 years, but the message behind this beautifully illustrated story is compelling and applicable to people of any age.

On the face of it, the story is simple. A young boy is fascinated by the red bindi his mother wears in the middle of her forehead. Like for many other Indian and South Asian women, it might have religious meaning for her, or it could be a signal that she is married. The explanation she gives her son is that it reminds her of where she is from and of her own mother. The boy, of course, wants one as well, and the mother gives him one of a different color. The boy's bindi is yellow, and he goes on to explore its effect on himself and his environment.

Like another children's book I read recently, this one challenges the gender stereotype that "only girls wear bindis". This has not been the case historically, according to my (brief) research bindis have been worn by

men as well as women, and in some regions of Asia they still are. But for many young children who grow up with the majority belief that “bindis are for girls”, this book may help open their eyes to a different reality.

There is also a powerful message for children (and adults) outside the Indian culture. It shows what a bindi is and what it can mean. But it is also a book with nonwhite characters, and in that sense, celebrates diversity through its existence and the message it sends. As the author says in one of the press releases about this book:

“The Boy & the Bindi is about the relationships between a boy and his mother, his family, his culture, his friends, his gender, and social norms. There is a need for books that address these themes, especially through the lens of a boy of colour. In 2014, of the 3,500 children’s books received by Cooperative Children’s Book Center, only 112 were about Asian Pacific Americans (just under 4%).”

I can recommend this book for many reasons: its celebration of diversity and the fact that its main characters are people of color - although it makes me sad that this is celebration-worthy, it should be the norm! Then there are the beautiful illustrations, the awe in the boy’s telling of how he figures out what the bindi means to him personally, and the message about how his different approach to tradition is accepted. It’s a beautiful fairy tale and a great vision of how things might be one day. I loved it!

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NOTE: This book was provided by the author for the purpose of a review on Rainbow Book Reviews.

### **Kris Dersch says**

Really lovely book. I love it when children's books teach me things and I learned about the bindi from this one, as well as it being an awesome depiction of acceptance and a little boy's relationship with his mother. I agree with other reviewers that the rhyme scheme isn't perfect but to me that just made it sound more like his voice, trying it his way. I think this one worked really well in first person.

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### **CaseyTheCanadianLesbrarian says**

Beautiful rhyming musical text and vibrantly coloured illustrations. I love how the gender non-conformity of the boy wanting his mom's bindi is totally not made into a big deal. Very affirming for brown and/or gender non-conforming kids!

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See my full review on my blog.

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### **Emily Newcomer says**

My love for this book is mostly inspired by my love for India. It's a beautiful country rich in culture and tradition. I think it's good that there is children's literature out there representing Indian culture. Especially in a country (USA) where Christianity is the dominant (but not official) religion that is depicted in most media, it's important that children see other religions in their text to keep them open to people's differences.

The boy's curiosity is true to that of a child and even the uncomfortable questions and stares he got after he started wearing his bindi is true to what someone might experience. This book is authentic. The only thing I didn't like about it were some of the rhymes...they just didn't flow.

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