



Caleb's Cab

Books Reviewed:

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[Stuart Dyer](#) [3]

[New to the Choice](#):

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

This illustrated novel for children marks the start of a new adventure series by Sally and Sylvain Chomet, and features the same irresistible visuals and whimsical storytelling that won them acclaim, and awards, with animated films in the past.

Caleb lives in Featherham, in a slightly alternative reality where old people are feared and the only children allowed to play on the streets are the disgustingly wealthy SODs (spoilt, over-educated delinquents) who decorate the neighbourhood with angry, Latin graffiti. After his father disappears, Caleb is forced to disguise himself as a grown up and earn money driving his dad's old taxi. Despite these efforts, his worryingly lazy mum drops further and further into debt, and this draws the attention of the sinister team from C.A.S.H (Children Acquired to Settle Home Loans). Just as a life of quasi-slavery in the C.A.S.H house seems inevitable, Caleb is thrown a bizarre lifeline, as his cab is sent spinning off the road and into an uncanny, parallel universe.

The town of Featherham that Caleb knows is replaced by 'Fezerham' in the country of 'Franzlingland', and, though much looks the same, the presence of curious, Gallic details (such as the Guillotine!) is a great cause of confusion for Caleb. He slowly realises that this bizarre place has everything to do with the disappearance of his father, and that he must resist the clutches of C.A.S.H and its grim, grinning governor, Measles, if there is to be any chance of a rescue.

As Caleb dances between these two unique locations, they are brought to life for the reader in seductive illustrations. Sepia tones and vivid details are combined with a brilliant use of light that make every picture at once nostalgic yet strikingly present. This effect is a perfect accompaniment to the modern themes that are explored and confronted by the narrative of the book. Greedy banks threatening children's futures, a Big Brother surveillance culture, and an antagonistic relationship between people of different nationalities all feature in the book and feel especially poignant and deliberately timed.

Caleb's Cab is a triumph on many levels. It is a visually arresting picture book and an exciting adventure story for children, but it is also a stimulating social commentary for older readers. Despite its obvious depth, **Caleb's Cab** is extremely accessible and very funny in places; a perfect book for sharing and for re-reading.

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