

FRUIT OF THE VINE

by [Ellen Weisberg](#)[Ken Yoffe](#)

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KIRKUS REVIEW

A troubled boy helps an outcast creature in this picture book.

Justin wonders why his classmates and his brother bully him. In a dream, he finds himself on a beach, where he spots a “pitiful,” odd-looking creature crying. Then Justin steps on a magical snake, who claims that anyone who steps on him will get three wishes. The serpent also explains that the crying creature is a “Werloobee” named Irvino who’s been banished by others of his kind; Irvino wants to gain weight to “look...like the other dudes.” Justin uses his wishes to help him, and Irvino soon grows and becomes popular with other Werloobees. When Irvino steps on the snake, Justin asks him to use one wish to send him back home. Justin awakens on a bus, where he’s bullied by classmates—but they stop when a boy named Irving steps in. The topics that Weisberg and Yoffe (*All Across Canada*, 2008) address are commendable, and Justin is a sympathetic protagonist. However, most of the book consists of Justin watching Irvino from afar; Irvino doesn’t speak, so the conversation is mediated by the snake. It would have been

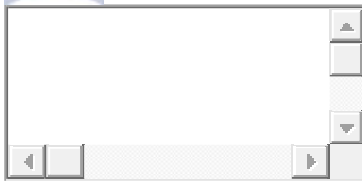
interesting to see more direct interaction between them, as Irvino is the main catalyst in Justin's journey. However, the vibrant illustrations complement the text nicely.

A well-intentioned, if peculiar, fantasy.

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The book has a wonderful theme to it, and is told in such a manner as to be an amazing fantasy to the young reader. Kids love it! Well done!

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