



# The Great Big Body Book

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News & Choice:

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Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

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Like the other titles in **The Great Big Book** series, **The Great Big Body Book** explores an important subject with a light touch. Young readers and listeners from every heritage will see boys and girls just like themselves as they are taken through the growing and changing that happens at different stages from birth to death. The amazing development that takes place in babies' first year as they become able to smile, walk and talk is shown through amusing pictures - for example we see a baby eating in a delightfully messy manner. Children will be entertained, too, by the observation that if we kept up the rate of growing that babies do in their first year - we'd all be giants! - Kittens can walk at FIVE days old - boasts the little tabby cat whose witty speech bubble comments can be found on every spread. Hoffman and Asquith take on issues like the implications of an individual's gender - not everyone fits neatly into a 'boy' or 'girl' box?. The spreads showing middle childhood celebrate the many physical competencies achieved like swimming, cycling and climbing and remind us that minds are developing as well as bodies. The physical changes that come about in the teenage years as puberty takes hold are explained and the issues to do with spots, examinations and the search for an identity are addressed with humour and reassurance that most people cope well. Changes and challenges continue into adulthood and young readers are informed about the stages of pregnancy and of the demands and joys of family life.

Throughout the book a succinct but skilful written text and lively pictures show the ways in which human beings are similar at particular life stages, but also point out those ways in which they can be different. We see a picture of a little boy with one short and one long arm and, near the end of the book, a young artist paints from her wheelchair. Interspersed between the spreads tracing development through time are some with useful information about keeping bodies and minds fit through exercise and a balanced diet.

The physical limitations that an aging body is heir to are not avoided. However, a chart shows the fine achievements of some older people: Mary Wesley published her first adult novel at 71 and Teiichi Igarashi climbed Mount Fuji at age 100! The section on 'Dead Bodies' shows a family looking sad by the grave of a loved one. Some comfort is offered: the person who is gone 'lives on in our memories of them'. I like the upbeat ending to the book: lots of children and adults are pictured enjoying physical activities and young readers are invited to answer the question: 'What are YOU like?'

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