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# Ragga to Riches; The Big Diss

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News to Choice:

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Media type:

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BfK Rating:

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These two titles from a part of a series based on five characters, three boys and two girls, who all attend the fictional Drummond Hill comprehensive school in inner-city London. It was devised, according to the author, a teacher in a London school, to give his young pupils 'something they would relate to, something they would enjoy ... something to think about'.

The stories are written with aplomb and unflagging good humour and should make easy enjoyable reading for the difficult 10-13 age range who may otherwise be lost to reading fiction. One word of caution though: the titles, **Ragga to Riches** and **The Big Diss** (fairly typical of the others in the series), promise some window or insight into black youth culture which is curiously lacking from the stories themselves which are in many respects culturally neutral. Apart from the names like Tenisha, Remi, Tunde and the occasional slang word (a glossary appears at the back of the book) grafted on to fairly standard English dialogue, there is little in the setting or the language to identify the characters as belonging to any specific ethnic group. This of course is not an essential ingredient of stories as one cannot be prescriptive in these matters (freedom from social realism can sometimes allow an author greater scope for the expression of teenage fantasies) but simply a comment on the appropriateness of the titles.

In **Ragga to Riches** the crew find themselves, in the course of a seaside summer holiday (arriving by old camper and red sports convertible respectively), involved in an adventure with the staple ingredients of smuggler's coves, buried treasure, old pirate maps, cryptic clues, a magic quill, a professor of archaeology and a couple of mean villains. Coincidences abound to assemble disparate London residents in this seaside resort, but the author nonetheless does well to marshal a big cast of characters. In **The Big Diss** (though not appearing in the glossary 'Diss' is current slang for 'disrespect') the local Drummond Crew have to face their arch-rivals, the posh Bluecoat school, in a sports tournament with some hilarious consequences. The clichéd public school snootiness of Bluecoat School is drawn with assurance, and the clash, and the events leading up to it, between the two sides of a social divide which both schools represent occupies the bulk of the novel and is of greater interest than the subsidiary love story which the cover would have us believe to be the main thrust of the novel, a picture of a young couple with the subtitle, 'First love is always the hardest

... A canny marketing ploy perhaps.

Running Order:

50

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