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~~Editor's Choice:~~

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

A few years ago E.H. Gombrich's **A Little History of the World** was republished in English by Yale University Press. Originally published in German in 1936, it is one of the classic children's information books. It is a triumph of synthesis, simplicity and clarity, conveying its astonishing erudition, imagination and humanity with a storytelling style that is never patronising but assumes in its reader an inexhaustible curiosity. I mention it now because John Agard's brilliant little book reminds me so much of Gombrich, even if about a much smaller subject. It begins, 'My name is book and this is the story of my life?'; and for the next 140 odd pages, Agard, in this eloquent disguise, holds us spellbound as he takes us from stories round the campfire and cave paintings to the e-book. Simple, direct and conversational, this is a tale nevertheless told with wit, passion and ingenuity: the art that conceals art. It is supported by some equally brilliant black and white illustrations by Neil Packer, and design and production from Walker that does justice to author, illustrator and subject. It's more than fifty years since an information book was even considered for awards like the **Carnegie** and **Greenaway**. Next year, I will be nominating this one for both.

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