

Pig-heart Boy

SECTION

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About the book

Pig-heart Boy was first published in 1997 at a time when research into the possibility of xenotransplantation of animal organs to human recipients, was at its height. Although such an operation has never happened, towards the end of the last century this procedure seemed to be distinctly plausible. The medical side of the story described by Malorie Blackman in *Pig-heart Boy* is well researched to ensure credibility.

Although medical research has moved on since the book was first published, there is still a shortage of donor organs and there remain ethical dilemmas over the means of helping seriously ill patients.

Plot summary

Thirteen-year-old Cameron Kelsey, desperately needs a new heart if he is to live longer than a few more months. His diseased heart has left him weak and unable to join in normal activities with his friends, and it seems unlikely that a suitable human donor heart will become available in time. Cam especially misses being able to swim with his friends and play their favourite home-spun diving game, Daredevil Dive.

Meanwhile, Cam's parents are always arguing – and it's always about him. He is watching his family fall apart and missing his Nan (who lives 200 miles away), when suddenly Dr Bryce comes along with a possible solution: a procedure where Cam's heart will be replaced with a pig's heart, from a genetically modified pig.

Although there are many risks involved, Cam and his parents decide to go ahead with the operation – but his life afterwards is far from straightforward. The reactions of his friends –

and the general public – when the news is leaked to the newspapers after the operation, force Cameron and his parents to face a number of difficult issues dealt with in the book. The ethics of xenotransplantation focus on one among many issues, including prejudice, friendship, loyalty, disloyalty, wealth, poverty, honesty, life values, bullying, extremism, animal experimentation.

The open ending of the book provides space for optimism, and will leave young readers with many thought-provoking issues and an increased awareness of the many dilemmas people can face in life.



About the author

Malorie Blackman, who has written over 50 books, has a reputation for writing powerful stories that never shy away from controversial and topical issues. Her first book was *Not So Stupid!*, published in 1990.

As well as her many books, she has written scripts for television (including episodes of *Byker Grove* and *Whizzwig*) plus a play, *The Amazing Birthday*, performed at the Polka Theatre in 2002. Other

books include the award-winning *Noughts and Crosses* series, *Jessica Strange*, *Hacker*, *A.N.T.I.D.O.T.E* and *Dangerous Reality*.

Malorie lives with her husband and daughter in Kent.

Facts and figures

First published by Doubleday in 1997. Among other awards it was shortlisted for the 1998 Carnegie Medal. It was adapted into a Bafta award-winning TV serial in 2000 (Best children's drama).

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