

Title: *The Barren Grounds*
Author: David A. Robertson
Genre: Fantasy

Reviewer Name and Grade: Ethan D., 9th Grade

Date Reviewed: May 31, 2022

The book I will be reviewing is *The Barren Grounds*. The book is written by David A. Robertson. The *Barren Grounds* genre is fantasy fiction.

Morgan, a 13-year-old First Nations child who has spent her short life in a number of white foster families in Manitoba, tells the story in the limited first person. She gets a younger foster brother, a quiet and talented 12-year-old Cree boy named Eli, two months into her new placement. Morgan and Eli are estranged from one another at home, don't fit in at school, and barely get along. It's not strange, however, that when they uncover a gateway that leads to a mythical world beyond, a la Narnia, they have quite different views about what to do. Morgan, seeing only potential perils in the unknown, prefers to stay put in the actual world, whereas Eli recognizes an affinity for what lies ahead and is anxious to explore. Morgan speaks nasty things to Eli during their argument. Later, he vanishes through the portal, and Morgan must track him down in Misewa's bleak lands to apologize and persuade him to return home. Morgan discovers that the Misewa community, which is trapped in the White Time, is on the verge of hunger and will not be able to exist much longer. She reunites with Eli and the two join forces with Ochek (Fisher), Misewa's final hunter, and Arik, a squirrel with outstanding comedic timing, in order to aid. Their odd crew sets out on a perilous mission to alleviate Misewa's winter agony and bring summer back to the city. In Misewa, Morgan and Eli learn "the good tongue," or Cree, and connect with Indigenous cultures and ideologies. "Kiskisitotaso...I know that word," he said. "In English, it means something like, 'Don't forget about who you are.'"

Did the plot (for fiction) or presentation of information (for nonfiction) keep you interested?

The plot of this book is very good and it kept me interested.

Was the pace of the book too fast, too slow, or just right?

The pace of this book was just right.

What grade level(s) is this book appropriate for?

This book is appropriate for grade level nine.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book to a reader who likes fantasy books.

Rating:

I would rate this book *4 stars*. I went into this book with great expectations, and *The Barren Grounds* did not disappoint. Morgan is one of my favorite types of female protagonists: angry but with a sense of humor, good-hearted but not a goody-goody, strong, intelligent, and most importantly, intriguing.