

Title: *Apple in the Middle*
Author: Dawn Quigley
Category: Race & Ethnicity

Respondent Name and Grade: Yaseen V., 10th Grade

Date Response Submitted: July 5, 2021

1. What is the main plot of this book?

The main plot of this book focuses on Apple, a middle schooler with a caucasian father and Native American mother. The plot navigates inability to fully understand her background and how she comes to terms with her identity and Native American heritage after being called an offensive slur. The main plot takes place in North Dakota when Apple is sent to her Native American relatives for the summer.

2. Which character did you most identify with and why?

The character that I think I identify most with is Apple because I am a person of color who has seen racism against my community. Overall, I think Apple's story is relatable to many people across America and reading her story was incredibly interesting because of how relatable it is.

3. What do you believe is the main message of this book?

After reading this book, I think the main message the author was trying to project was that it is okay to be your true self. In fact, Apple's story shows readers how it is encouraged to find your identity as a person and be confident in who you are.

4. Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?

Overall, I think the author did a phenomenal job introducing this topic because the plot was interesting and educational. As Apple learns more about her Native American heritage, we see her grow as a person and fully accept her late mother's side and how this heritage plays such a large role in her life. I did not find it to be too preachy, but rather thought the author weaved in the message seamlessly into the storyline.

5. If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?

Throughout the book, we see Apple struggling with her Native American heritage. One perspective was to ignore that part of her, while the other was coming to terms with it and understanding its importance. I would agree with the latter perspective because knowing her mother's heritage and how it has been integrated into her life is very valuable. At the end of the book, Apple understands that although her mother is dead, her character and rich culture still lives on inside Apple.

6. In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?

While reading this book, my thoughts on living in your truest form were reaffirmed because I was shown how important your heritage plays in who you are and how you should accept it and be proud, rather than push it aside.

7. What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?

I think the book did an amazing job at portraying Apple's struggles as a mixed child in America. However, one perspective I wish we had a little more insight on is how others viewed Apple's

Native American mother marrying a white man because this topic was briefly introduced in the book but not heavily explored.

8. *Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?*

Yes, This book encouraged me to learn more about my own heritage and how important that identity is to me as a person of color in America. This book reaffirmed my beliefs and taught me to be proud of who I am.

9. *What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?*

Based on the plot of this book, I would recommend this to a reader who is interested in learning more about the experiences of people of color, especially those who are mixed because it shows their experience navigating both sides of their identity.

10. *What other book(s) have you read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?*

One other book I would recommend to readers that I believe is a good addition is Hearts Unbroken, which tells the story of another Native American middle schooler who goes through the unsettling changes of love and dating, as well as not always fitting in, due to her race. This book is already in this category of the Perspectives Bibliography and is a good read because it delves into other experiences people of color deal with such as finding love.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Jason B., 11th Grade

Date Reviewed: March 10, 2023

1. *What is the main plot of this book?*

The plot in this book revolves around the main character, Apple, who is a teenage girl that is half Native-American. Her mother was a Native-American from a reservation in North Dakota, who died giving birth to her. Apple denounces her Native-American heritage after a boy on the playground calls her a racial slur, and this causes her to lose pride in her heritage. Her father, who is white, decides one summer that Apple should meet her Native American relatives, and so she spends the summer on their reservation in North Dakota, where a man keeps harassing her, tossing dirt in her window several times. It is later discovered that the man does this out of spite for her mother, who he had feelings for in high school and was angry at for marrying a white man.

2. *Which character did you most identify with and why?*

I didn't really identify with any characters in this novel. This is because I am not of Native-American descent, and am not a minority in any way. I also do not have any minorities in my family, so I can't relate to Apple's father or brother in that regard. However, one connection I can make to Apple is that because my father is adopted, I have never met my bloodline relatives on his side, just like Apple has not, until the summer this novel takes place, met her mother's bloodline.

3. *What do you believe is the main message of this book?*

I believe the main message of this book is that people should be proud of their heritage, no matter what others may think. This is because Apple is ashamed of her Native-American heritage after being called a racial slur, and later learns to be more proud of it and to denounce stereotypes or racist people after meeting her Native-American relatives.

4. *Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?*

I think the message of this book was effectively integrated and wasn't preachy. This is because the message is slowly integrated in the character development we see in Apple, as she slowly begins to learn more and more about her Native-American relatives, while staying with them for the summer. The message is something that develops over time in the book, and isn't just thrown in the reader's face, thus I think it was effectively integrated into the story.

5. *If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one do you agree with more and why?*

Two perspectives that were presented in this book were that of Apple, who is not proud of her Native-American heritage, and her Native relatives, who are proud of who they are and what their culture is from the start. I agree more with Apple's relatives on this topic, as they show a stronger character, which isn't broken by the words and actions of others. This perspective is later adapted by Apple, so in that way this book can be categorized as a bildungsroman sort of novel, as it shows personal growth and maturity in its main character.

6. *In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?*

My beliefs on racism were changed after reading this book. This is because I never knew how racial slurs can really internalize in minorities, and cause them to be ashamed of their ethnicity, the way Apple is after being called a racial slur on the playground. This demonstrated the serious effects racism can have, even when it's just one incident.

7. *What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?*

I think the perspective of Apple's mother would have been very useful in this novel, as her mother is dead during the book. However, I think her mother being dead also serves a purpose in the book. If Apple's mother was alive, Apple would never have denounced her Native-American heritage, which would have ruined the plot of the story. I still think Apple's mother's perspective would be effective in really helping Apple to learn the lesson she learned much sooner.

8. *Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, etc., and if so, how?*

This book didn't encourage me to pursue any topics further. This is because I think the message was something that doesn't really apply to me. I also think the message was integrated thoroughly enough to leave me satisfied with what I got from this book alone.

9. *What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?*

I would suggest this book to anyone who is in a similar situation as Apple, where they are ashamed of their heritage. This is because I think they would really learn an important lesson from reading this novel about why they should be proud of who they are.

10. *What other book(s) you have read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?*

I haven't read any other books that I think would make a good addition to this category. This is because I don't usually read books that have strong messages like this, rather I usually just read books that I find fun to read. I do think this book does have a common theme though, one which could be applied to many other books or movies, and even is present throughout history.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Alexandra P., Grade 9

Date of Response: 03/25/2023

1. *What is the main plot of this book?*

Apple in the Middle by Dawn Quigley is such an amazing book! It's about a young Native American girl named Apple who's on a journey of self-discovery. I was so captivated by the story and I couldn't put the book down. Apple's struggles and experiences really resonated with me.

2. *Which character did you most identify with and why?*

I found *Apple in the Middle* by Dawn Quigley to be a relatable and insightful read. While I cannot say that I identified with any one character in particular, I appreciated the way the book explored themes of identity and belonging. I think many young people, myself included, can relate to the challenges of trying to fit in while also embracing our unique backgrounds and cultural heritage.

3. *What do you believe is the main message of this book?*

I believe that the main message of this book is about the importance of embracing your identity and cultural heritage. The book emphasizes the importance of self-acceptance and learning to love yourself for who you are, rather than trying to conform to society's expectations. I think this is a powerful message that many young people can benefit from hearing, and it makes *Apple in the Middle* a compelling and thought-provoking read.

4. *Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?*

I believe that the main message of *Apple in the Middle* was effectively integrated into the story. While the book certainly addresses important themes around identity and belonging, I did not find it to be overly preachy or heavy-handed in its approach. Instead, the book uses Apple's experiences to explore these issues in a nuanced and relatable way, making it a compelling and engaging read. In general, I think this book strikes a good balance between addressing important social issues and telling a captivating coming-of-age story.

5. *If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?*

I believe *Apple in the Middle* by Dawn Quigley presented multiple perspectives on important topics related to identity and culture. One perspective that I found particularly compelling was the idea that embracing your cultural heritage can be a source of strength and resilience, even in the face of adversity. Through Apple's experiences, the book highlights the challenges that come with navigating a complex cultural identity, but also emphasizes the value of celebrating and honoring one's roots.

6. *In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?*

This book reaffirmed my belief in the importance of celebrating diversity and embracing one's cultural heritage. The book highlights the challenges that many young people face in trying to navigate their complex identities, but also emphasizes the value of honoring one's roots and celebrating diversity.

7. *What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?*

I do not think any perspective was missing from this book.

8. *Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?*

Yes, this book inspired me to learn more about Native American culture and the challenges faced by mixed-race individuals.

9. *What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?*

I would suggest this book to teens of all ages who are interested in exploring the difficulties associated with navigating identity and establishing a sense of belonging.

10. *What other book(s) you have read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?*

I've read some powerful books on the topic of race and ethnicity that I believe would be great additions to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography. "How to Be an Antiracist" by Ibram X. Kendi provides a practical guide for individuals who want to actively dismantle racism in their own lives and in society as a whole.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Tatjana T., 11th Grade

Date Reviewed: April 10, 2023

1. The main plot of "Apple in the Middle" follows Apple Starkington, a young Native American girl of Ojibwe and white descent, as she navigates her identity and struggles with feeling caught between two cultures. She deals with issues such as bullying, cultural appropriation, and family dynamics, while trying to find her place in the world.
2. I identified the most with Miss Severs, the teacher in the book who tries to create an inclusive and culturally responsive classroom environment. She encourages her students to explore their cultural backgrounds, respects their identities, and promotes understanding and empathy among her students.
3. The main message of this book is the importance of embracing one's cultural heritage and identity, and the challenges that individuals from mixed cultural backgrounds may face. It also addresses the issue of cultural appropriation and the need for respect and understanding towards different cultures.
4. I believe that the main message of the book was effectively integrated into the story. The author portrays Apple's struggles and experiences in a genuine and relatable way, without coming off as preachy. The story provides insight into the complexities of navigating cultural identity and the challenges faced by individuals of mixed heritage.
5. One perspective explored in the book is the importance of respecting and embracing one's cultural heritage. The book also addresses the issue of bullying and discrimination based on cultural background, which I do not agree with and believe should be addressed and addressed in an inclusive and supportive school environment.
6. My beliefs about the importance of cultural inclusivity and respect for diverse backgrounds were reaffirmed through reading this book. It highlighted the challenges faced by

individuals from mixed cultural backgrounds and the importance of creating a culturally responsive classroom environment where all students feel valued and respected.

7. While the book does explore the perspective of Apple, a young Native American girl of mixed heritage, it would have been interesting to see more perspectives from other characters of diverse cultural backgrounds in the story. This could have provided a more nuanced and inclusive portrayal of the challenges faced by individuals from various cultural backgrounds.

8. Yes, this book encouraged me to further research and learn about Native American culture and the challenges faced by individuals of mixed heritage. It also motivated me to continue promoting cultural inclusivity and understanding in my classroom and school community.

9. I would suggest this book to readers in middle-grade or young adult age range who are interested in stories about identity, culture, and family dynamics. It may also resonate with readers from diverse cultural backgrounds or those who are interested in learning about the experiences of individuals with mixed heritage.

10. "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian" by Sherman Alexie - This young adult novel follows the story of Junior, a Native American boy who struggles with his identity and culture while attending a predominantly white school. It addresses themes of cultural assimilation, discrimination, and resilience.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Kylee K., 11th Grade

Date Reviewed: 5/3/2023

1. What is the main plot of this book?

- "Apple in the Middle" is a poignant coming-of-age story that follows the journey of Apple Starkington, a biracial teenager grappling with her identity in a predominantly white community. As she navigates the complexities of her heritage, Apple confronts prejudice, stereotypes, and the pressures to conform. Through her struggles, she learns to embrace her Native American roots and finds strength in her unique identity. The novel explores themes of cultural identity, belonging, and self-acceptance, offering a heartfelt portrayal of the challenges faced by individuals straddling multiple cultural worlds. With its rich character development and powerful message, "Apple in the Middle" is a compelling read that resonates with readers of all backgrounds.

2. Which character did you most identify with and why?

- Though not as intense, I most identified with Apple Starkington because her struggles with identity resonated deeply with me. As she navigates the challenges of being biracial and feeling like she doesn't fully belong in either world, I empathize with her search for acceptance and understanding. Her journey of self-discovery mirrored my own experiences as I also grew up in a family with mixed customs and beliefs.

3. What do you believe is the main message of this book?

- The main message of "Apple in the Middle" revolves around the importance of embracing one's cultural heritage and finding strength in one's identity, despite societal pressures to

conform. As the author writes, "Our roots, no matter how deeply buried, shape us. And it's up to us to find the beauty in that."

4. *Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?*

- The main message of the book was effectively integrated into the story, seamlessly woven into Apple's personal journey and experiences. Rather than feeling preachy, the narrative unfolds organically, allowing readers to empathize with Apple's struggles and triumphs without feeling like they are being lectured.

5. *If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?*

- The book presents multiple perspectives on the topic of cultural identity, but I found myself agreeing most with Apple's perspective. Her journey of self-discovery and reconciliation with her Native American heritage resonated with me, emphasizing the importance of embracing one's roots and finding strength in one's identity.

6. *In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?*

- Reading "Apple in the Middle" reaffirmed my belief in the importance of cultural identity and the value of embracing one's heritage. It deepened my understanding of the challenges faced by individuals like Apple who straddle multiple cultural worlds, prompting me to reflect on my own identity and cultural background.

7. *What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?*

- While the book offers valuable insights into Apple's perspective, I believe it could have benefited from exploring the viewpoints of other biracial individuals or members of the Native American community. Including a broader range of perspectives would have enriched the narrative and provided a more comprehensive exploration of the complexities of cultural identity.

8. *Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?*

- "Apple in the Middle" sparked my interest in learning more about Native American culture and history, prompting me to delve deeper into topics such as indigenous rights and contemporary issues facing Native communities. It inspired me to seek out diverse voices and perspectives to broaden my understanding of cultural identity and heritage.

9. *What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?*

- I would recommend "Apple in the Middle" to readers of all ages who are interested in exploring themes of cultural identity, diversity, and acceptance. It particularly resonates with young adult readers who may be grappling with questions of identity and belonging, but its universal themes make it relevant to readers of all backgrounds.

10. *What other book(s) you have read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?*

- Another book that would complement "Apple in the Middle" is "The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian" by Sherman Alexie. Like "Apple in the Middle," it addresses themes of cultural identity and the challenges faced by Native American youth navigating between different cultural worlds. Both books offer powerful narratives that shed light on the complexities of cultural identity and the importance of self-acceptance.

Reviewer Name and Grade: Zahra V., Grade 9

Date Reviewed: July 24th, 2023

1. *What is the main plot of this book?*

Taking place in Minnetonka, Minnesota, Apple is a high school girl who's background comes from both white and Native Indian heritage. Her mother died at childbirth and named her Apple, which correlates to the Apple of her eye, but also the term used when describing someone who is Red on the outside, but white on the inside.

2. *Which character did you most identify with and why?*

I definitely identified most with Apple for various reasons. This was mainly because we are both minorities in our predominantly white areas. It was also nice to be able to share the struggles we both face as prejudice of not fitting into the white or cultured communities, as a result of being different based on our skin tones.

3. *What do you believe is the main message of this book?*

I believe the main message this book is extremely powerful. I believe it portrays that no matter what you look like, everyone deserves to fit in. I recognized how this was incorporated throughout the book with characters of different ages as well.

4. *Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?*

I believe the main message was portrayed effectively throughout the story. To explain, I think the reader is able to understand the true message of the whole race division while still being able to understand the characters and their struggles.

5. *If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?*

I agreed more with the perspective of Apple, compared to the view of the others around her. To add on, we are able to see both the main characters and outsiders' view of the situation concerning race and fitting in. Although I believe that her Native tribe are good people, I think they have bad prejudice towards white ethnicity. Therefore, I believe Apple is more open as she can see the good in people regardless of their skin tone.

6. *In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?*

Some of my beliefs were definitely reaffirmed throughout reading this book. To add on, this book proved that although the world claims to be changing, millions of people who are not white, feel as if they don't fit in and are treated unfairly.

7. *What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?*

I believe that the perspective of Apple's mom is missing from the book. Although she has passed away, I think it would have added so many layers if her reasoning for why she named her daughter an offensive slang was revealed. I also wonder what she thought of her Native tribe, as to her new lifestyle as a "typical whitewashed ethnic American".

8. *Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?*

This book definitely sparked my interest to learn more about the Native American community that takes on regular life's now. I am currently reading different articles and watching videos from people who originated in Tribes.

9. *What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?*

I would suggest this book to a reader who is interested in learning about fighting racial injustice. I also believe that ages 12+ would be able to fully understand and grasp the concepts that are being exported, as they are a bit mature and complicated.

10. *What other book(s) have you read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why? If I were to think of another book to fit into his category, I would recommend *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* by Sherman Alexie. This book similarly follows an Indian boy's life who struggles with finding his true identity, while trying to not let it get washed out in the white society*

Reviewer Name and Grade: Kate G., 10th Grade

Date Reviewed: March 15, 2024

1. *What is the main plot of this book?*

Apple Starkington is of white and Indian descent; her deceased mother was a Native American and her father is white. Apple struggles with her identity after being called a racial slur and she develops habits to help her gain acceptance. One summer, she decides to visit the Native American reservation where her mother's relatives live. Initially, she struggles with the language and the cultural norms. She also meets a man, a former boyfriend of her mother, who despises her because her mother married a white man. While on the reservation, Apple begins to learn what it means to be a Native American and finds her place in a world that is defined by stereotypes.

2. *Which character did you most identify with and why?*

The most relatable character in *Apple in the Middle* is the main character, Apple Starkington. I think that she is the most relatable character for all young readers because Apple struggles with her mixed heritage, feeling like she doesn't fully belong in either the white world or her Native American family's world. This feeling of not quite fitting in is something many young teens can relate to, especially during middle school.

3. *What do you believe is the main message of this book?*

I think the main message of this book is the necessity to find your place in the world where you can be accepted for who you truly are. Apple feels like she doesn't belong anywhere, but through her time on the Native American reservation, she starts to build connections with her family and Native American culture. The story recognizes the importance of finding a place where you feel you belong, even if it's not where you thought it might be or among the people you thought it might be.

4. *Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?*

I thought that the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story. Apple learns valuable lessons through her shared experiences, which helps her come to terms with her heritage and who she is.

5. *If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?*

Both the perspectives of the Native Americans and the white people were explored in this book. While the Native Americans hold dear their ancestral knowledge and practices, I did not agree with the resentment that Apple's mother's former boyfriend held for Apple simply because she was not 100% Native American and had a white father. This reinforced that the discrimination exists in both directions.

6. *In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?*

Apple in the Middle reaffirmed the complexity of the relationships Native American families and communities continue to have with the outside world and the stereotypes that exist. The importance of the Native Americans' commitment to their culture, heritage, and traditions despite the opinions of others is demonstrated through their resilience to preserve what is sacred to them.

7. *What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?*

While the story is written from Apple's perspective, I think that certain aspects of Native American culture and experiences could have been more completely represented. Many readers, who are not familiar with Native American culture, might not fully understand some of the rationale behind their feelings and attitudes towards Apple and her family.

8. *Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?*

This book offered a lot of insight into the cultural norms of the Native Americans. There were many things that I did not know about their beliefs and customs. It made me curious about the Shinnecock Indian Reservation right here on the east end of Long Island, especially since they have had their share of controversy over the years. I was able to find several news articles relating to some of the issues they have faced regarding choices they have made.

9. *What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?*

I think that any young adult, regardless of race, who has found themselves in the middle of anything would enjoy this realistic fiction story.

10. *What other book(s) have you read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?*

I think the book *We Still Belong* by Christine Day would make a good addition to the Race & Ethnicity category of the Perspectives Bibliography because it is also a book about a young girl who is Native American and with the help of her indigenous family and an intertribal pow wow she is able to turn all the things that have gone wrong for her around.

Reviewer's Name and Grade: Nitya M., 9th Grade.

Date Reviewed: March 20, 2024

1. *What is the main plot of this book?*

The plot of the book is about a student in high school named Apple Starkington, he is half-native American and half-European. The plot explains that her mother has died shortly after Apple is born. The name "Apple" is a slur used for native Americans. In the story she learns what it means to be native American and learns about her history. The story is told from her perspective and develops further after the plot.

2. *Which character did you most identify with and why?*

I identified most with Apple as she develops throughout the story and learns about her past. She goes through growth and self-discovery. Which is relatable for a lot of people.

3. What do you believe is the main message of this book?

I think the main message of this book is to learn about yourself and your heritage, it is to embrace who you are for whatever your ethnic background is.

4. Do you think the main message of this book was effectively integrated into the story, or did it come across as too "preachy"?

I think the main message of this book is effectively integrated as the book slowly develops through the story and I don't think it is preachy.

5. If two or more perspectives on an important topic were explored/presented in this book, which one did you agree with and why?

I don't think there was more than 1 important topic explored in this book but if you included identity as an important topic, I would pick culture and heritage as the more important topic as it plays a big role in this book.

6. In what ways (if any) were your beliefs about a topic changed or reaffirmed through reading this book?

My beliefs in any topic did not change after reading this book.

7. What perspective, if any, do you think was missing from this book?

I don't think any perspective was missing from this book.

8. Did this book encourage you to pursue any topics further through more reading, research, action, etc., and if so, how?

I was interested in the topic of Native American heritage which I briefly researched on google.

9. What type of reader (based on age, interests, perspectives, etc.) would you suggest this book to?

I would suggest this book to a reader who is interested in this type of topic because the book is not that interesting if you are not interested in this topic.

10. What other book(s) you have read that you think would make a good addition to this category of the Perspectives Bibliography, and why?

I read "*All My Rage*" by Sabaa Tahir which is like this book because they both explore about learning about the past of individuals.