

Title: Hearts Unbroken
Author: Cynthia Leitich Smith
Perspectives Category: Race & Ethnicity

Reviewer Name and Grade: Zahra V., Grade 9

Date Reviewed: July 29, 2023

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

The plot of this book follows Louise Wolfe, a Native American girl going into her senior year of high school. After her boyfriend mocks and disrespects Native people in front of her, she breaks up with him immediately and decides to put all her energy into enjoying her senior year and working on the school newspaper. She's then paired up with Joey Kairouz, the ambitious new photojournalist as they find themselves covering the backlash over inclusive casting in the high school's theater production of "The Wizard of Oz." Throughout this journey, Louise is exposed to long-held prejudices against Native people in white, middle-class suburbia while also experiencing a blossoming romance with Joey.

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

Although my experiences are different from Louise, I identified most with her because I understand the feeling of not always fitting in as a person of color. Reading about her experiences and the prejudices she unfairly felt was gut wrenching and made me delve deeper into the injustices within our country.

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

I believe the overarching message of this book is that Native Americans should not be prejudiced against. Oftentimes, the struggles of indigenous communities in America are pushed under the rug and people are allowed to continue their racist acts of injustice without any punishment. Reading about how such systemic racism can affect members of these communities opened my eyes even more to how such events affect families and people of color, and why it is so important to shed light on such stories.

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

No, I think this book did an incredible job at juggling important topics such as racism, and prejudice. Reading the story only inspired me to do more research and did not come off as "preachy" at all.

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 two perspectives seen in this book were those of the Native American community who suffered from racial injustice, and the racist white people who labeled them as "others." I agree with Louise's perspectives as Native Americans have just as much right as white people to play in certain roles.

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

This book reaffirmed my belief that Native Americans are just as American as white people. Reading about how shocked Louise was at the "Parents Against Revisionist Theater" group made me realize that this story is a true one for so many people in America and that change must occur to prevent such acts from happening.

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

I don't think any perspective is missing from the book. In fact, I like how this book describes a variety of perspectives. For example, throughout the story, we see so many instances of casual racism and microaggressions that, while not as brutal as the acts of overt racism, take a huge and cumulative emotional toll on the characters of the story.

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 pursue the topic of indigenous brutality in America further because of how much it has run rampant in America over the past few years. Reading this book gave me better insight on acts of racism and how it impacts families, communities, and nations.

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

I would suggest this book to teenagers of all backgrounds to show how much racism affects people in America. I would recommend this book to people who are in 8th grade and up as it discusses mature topics that should be understood and be taken seriously.

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?*

Another book that I think would make a good addition to this category is *Heartbeat Braves* by Pamela Sanderson. This book follows the staff of the Crooked Rock Urban Indian Center and is relevant because it reminds young, Native American people that they deserve love just like anyone else.

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

Date Reviewed: March 25, 2024

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

Louise Wolfe, a Native American teenager in her senior year, breaks up with her boyfriend after he makes insensitive remarks about her heritage.

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

I don't really associate myself with any of the characters in this book.

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

The importance of cultural identity, self-respect, and finding strength in one's heritage.

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 don't think it was too preachy, but the book also didn't really effectively integrate into the story, you have to search for it in my opinion.

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 explores cultural identity and the importance of respecting diverse backgrounds. I agree more with identity because I feel that it is more important in my opinion.

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

The book may make you reflect on your own understanding of cultural identity and respect for others. But none of my opinions have changed.

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

I wish for more perspectives from other characters, such as Louise's boyfriend or other Native American characters.

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

The book may encourage you to learn more about Native American culture or about self-identity in general.

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

I would recommend this to a reader who wants to learn more about cultural diversity.

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 have not read a story like this one.