

Title: *Mascot*
Authors: Charles Waters & Traci Sorell
Genre: Realistic Fiction

Reviewer Name and Grade: Arnav A., 9th Grade

Date Reviewed: 13 August 2024

Callie, Franklin, Priya, Tessa, and Luis are all eighth graders Honors English students at Rye Middle School. Callie, a Cherokee Nation citizen, is new to town. Franklin is a football loving student of African-American descent. Priya aspires to be a journalist, and has Indian ancestry. Sean's family, descended from Ireland, has been in the Rye School District for six generations - they often need assistance from food pantries to sustain their daily lives. Tessa, white, used to be homeschooled, and has grandparents who partook in Martin Luther King Jr.'s march in Washington. Luis is an immigrant from El Salvador, and hopes to become a math teacher and soccer (fútbol, in his case) coach.

In the Rye School District, high school football (and sports in general) are the most popular pastime, for a variety of reasons - the thrill of supporting your home team, the sense of togetherness that is felt, and the overall atmosphere of every game - all contributing to a common love. At the epicenter of the Rye Sports is their mascot, which has been in place for generations. The mascot, however, now has a new light being shined on it. Its "traditional" symbol appears, for some, to hold discrimination against Native Americans.

Ms. Williams, the English teacher of the six students, gives them a project, where they must work in partners, to more deeply assess the mascot issues. Callie is partnered with Franklin, to argue *for* the mascot. Tessa must argue the same with Luis. Priya and Sean are given the job of arguing *against* the mascot. Originally, all three girls are only able to see the bad side of the mascots, while the boys mainly understand its positive impacts. Eventually, after researching with Callie, as well as conversations with his parents, Franklin starts to understand where the offense may come from for Indigenous people, and eventually flips opinions.

Now, with Ms. Williams's hope satisfied of the students gaining a strong connection and passion for the topic, Callie, Priya, Tessa, and, now, Franklin, begin their movement to get the mascot changed. They organize walks, set up fundraisers, spread their message, and more. Eventually, the school board decides to hear about the mascot issue in one of their meetings, with all six of the students set to present their viewpoints. After deliberating between the pros and cons, they finally make their decision for change, acknowledging that "Discrimination is discrimination, even when people claim it's 'tradition.'"

Did the plot keep you interested?

Yes, the plot of the story did indeed keep me interested. The story was structured in a way that always made me want to know what would happen next, and what decisions would be made, by both the students and authorities.

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

The pace of the book was not too fast nor too slow. I never felt that the authors were rushing to get through all the details. However, I also never felt that the author spent too much time at any particular moment, resulting in the reader getting bored.

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

I think that this book is appropriate starting from Grade 6. The book does not include any mature content, and presents topics that should be made known at a young age. Sixth graders will most likely be at an age to understand the unique writing style of the book as well.

What type of reader would you recommend this book to?

I would recommend this book to people who like to learn about social-justice issues, and want to understand how some people still may face discrimination, even today.

What other information do you think would be helpful for teens to know about this book?

I think it would be helpful for teens to know that this book is not written in a normal format. Its structure is actually analogous to poetry, and has a few “lines” and “stanzas” per the viewpoint of each student (and occasionally Ms. Williams) per chapter.

Rating: *4 stars: I enjoyed this book and found it worthwhile reading.*

I thought that this book was very entertaining, and I enjoyed its portrait of different perspectives and thoughts towards a common issue. Also, I liked the overall progression of the book, and how it was structured. The format of the writing was also a unique and nice touch - it made the reading simpler, yet still gave immaculate detail. The book, however, did not provide full entertainment value - it lacked humor, or portions that were just meant for fun. For example, I feel that the authors could have gone more in depth on the relationships between the characters (such as Callie and Franklin) rather than just portraying them in the setting of the project. All in all, I would recommend the book to another teen to read.