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# Apache

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Editor's Choice:

off

Media type:

Book

BfK Rating:

5

I think this novel is a masterpiece. It stands head and shoulders above most current writing for children, and merits all the prizes for which it may be eligible. Dedicated to the heroes of the Apache nation who inspired it, it is a story of their calamitous destruction in the 19th century by the Mexicans and invasive whites who stole their land and ruined their culture. The genocide committed against the Native American by colonizing Europeans equals the Holocaust in the record of human shame, and this book is an act of remarkable empathy with the Apache mind as it happened. This is what it must have felt like.

Inevitably it is a somber and tragic story, but it is also a continuously exciting one: a tale of action, violence, bloodshed, revenge and heroism that moves with terrific pace and energy. It is told by Siki, a 14-year-old girl at the start, a young pregnant widow at the end, who becomes a full Apache warrior in her own right. Siki is an unforgettable character. Her life is one long fight. She must contend with the mysterious disgrace of her father, with total family loss, with the forces that make it hard for a girl to become a full warrior, with conflicts between private and tribal loyalties, with both personal and racial enemies, and with the pains of a love which is spoken and fulfilled only in the shadow of death. She is a girl of great but believable strength, embodying within herself the values of the Apache nation. But part of the book's achievement is that all its many characters, even minor ones, stand sharp and clear, so that a whole society and way of life is made vivid. Apache life may not have been like this, but few readers will doubt that it probably was.

To write a compelling adventure story which is also a moving portrait of a doomed civilization and its values, and of man's inhumanity to man, is no mean achievement. Overall and in detail the story is often tragic but never depressing, not least because of its marvellous heroine's brave and dignified voice. The book is quite extraordinary. It deserves to become a modern children's classic.

Running Order:

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