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Black Eagle Child: The Facepaint Narratives



Synopsis

A classic of Native American literature, *Black Eagle Child* uses a rich mix of verse, prose narrative, and letters to tell Edgar Bearchild's journey to adulthood. Although the backdrop of much of Young Bear's novel may be familiar—the conflicts over race, drugs, Vietnam and others that gripped America in the fifties, sixties, and seventies—Bearchild recounts his coming-of-age story from a distinct vantage point, as a member of the Mesquakie nation. From his childhood delight in Jell-O to his induction into the faith of his elders, Bearchild's journey is a uniquely American one.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a great read! Ray A. Young Bear's book is not as difficult to penetrate as some of Gerald Vizenor's stuff, but is just as smart. It isn't quite the way Louise Erdrich weaves her stories together, but his use of language and his ability to tell a story is just as good. He's poetic, magical, honest, and can paint pictures with words you won't forget. What is it about? Well, it's about life. It is about the lives of a group of people from the heartland of America. If you like Native American literature, get it. If you like poetry, get it. If you enjoy staying up and night and laughing with the characters in the books you read, and feeling their pain, I think you won't be disappointed.

This was assigned reading in a Native American Literature class I was enrolled in a few years ago. I have come back to the book twice since then, finding great enjoyment. The character Edgar Bearchild is an enchanting protagonist with the best of intentions and a terribly misguided soul. The

opening of the book reveals this--during his first experience with tribal psychedelics intended for serious use, but approached by Ted and Edgar with less-than-pure interest. The book gives its readers a good idea of what reservation life has been like throughout the middle of the 20th century, how institutions have failed the dwindling and seemingly suicidal societies they are meant to serve. While this book is technically autobiographical (or so a few libraries I've visited have said), there's obviously something to be learned. However, you will not be left hungry for entertainment. "Black Eagle Child" is a journey wrought with comical run-ins and slip-ups, heavy alcohol consumption, drug consumption and rock-and-roll. Since the characters are teenagers, these elements should be expected. And while they come up often, they do not surface without the rightful ponderings that should result from contact with such items in a teenager's life. Lessons are learned, laughs are had, and ultimately there are truths revealed in this book. I am stunned that this is only the 2nd review posted here on for this wonderful book. It's truly an enjoyable read.

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