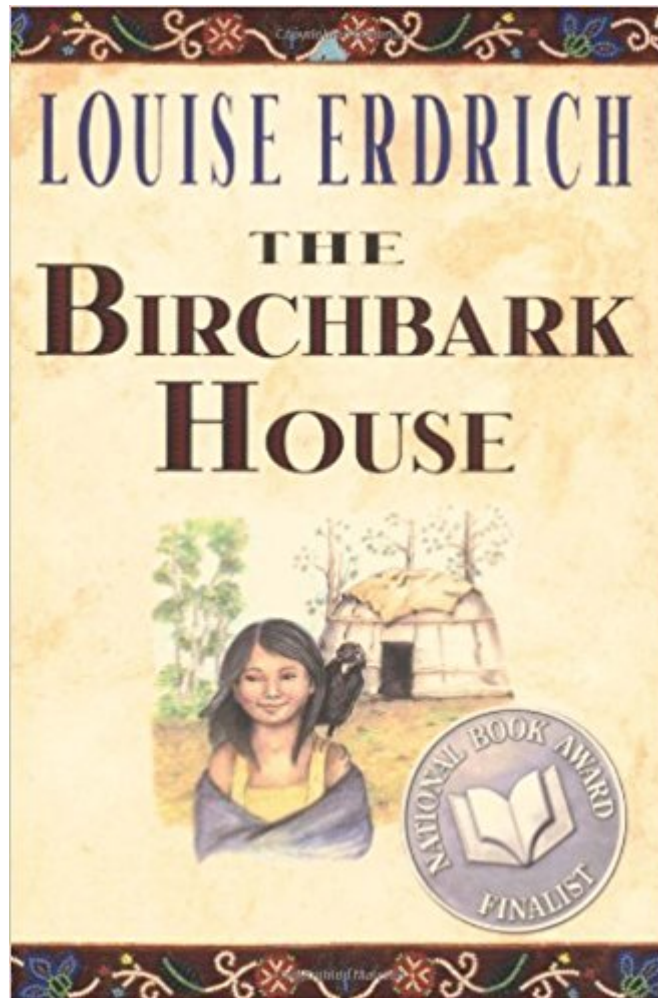




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The Birchbark House



Synopsis

"[In this] story of a young Ojibwa girl, Omakayas, living on an island in Lake Superior around 1847, Louise Erdrich is reversing the narrative perspective used in most children's stories about nineteenth-century Native Americans. Instead of looking out at 'them' as dangers or curiosities, Erdrich, drawing on her family's history, wants to tell about 'us', from the inside. The Birchbark House establishes its own ground, in the vicinity of Laura Ingalls Wilder's 'Little House' books."

--The New York Times Book Review

Book Information

Age Range: 9 - 12 years

Lexile Measure: 970 (What's this?)

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Disney-Hyperion; Reprint edition (May 13, 2002)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0786814543

ISBN-13: 978-0786814541

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.5 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.4 out of 5 stars 116 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #6,985 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #5 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories > Native North & South Americans](#) #19 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Chapter Books & Readers > Intermediate Readers](#) #45 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Values](#)

Customer Reviews

Nineteenth-century American pioneer life was introduced to thousands of young readers by Laura Ingalls Wilder's beloved Little House books. With The Birchbark House, award-winning author Louise Erdrich's first novel for young readers, this same slice of history is seen through the eyes of the spirited, 7-year-old Ojibwa girl Omakayas, or Little Frog, so named because her first step was a hop. The sole survivor of a smallpox epidemic on Spirit Island, Omakayas, then only a baby girl, was rescued by a fearless woman named Tallow and welcomed into an Ojibwa family on Lake Superior's Madeline Island, the Island of the Golden-Breasted Woodpecker. We follow Omakayas and her adopted family through a cycle of four seasons in 1847, including the winter, when a historically documented outbreak of smallpox overtook the island. Readers will be riveted by the

daily life of this Native American family, in which tanning moose hides, picking berries, and scaring crows from the cornfield are as commonplace as encounters with bear cubs and fireside ghost stories. Erdrich--a member of the Turtle Mountain Band of Ojibwa--spoke to Ojibwa elders about the spirit and significance of Madeline Island, read letters from travelers, and even spent time with her own children on the island, observing their reactions to woods, stones, crayfish, bear, and deer. The author's softly hewn pencil drawings infuse life and authenticity to her poetic, exquisitely wrought narrative. Omakayas is an intense, strong, likable character to whom young readers will fully relate--from her mixed emotions about her siblings, to her discovery of her unique talents, to her devotion to her pet crow Andeg, to her budding understanding of death, life, and her role in the natural world. We look forward to reading more about this brave, intuitive girl--and wholeheartedly welcome Erdrich's future series to the canon of children's classics. (Ages 9 and older) --Karin Snelson --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

The author's first novel for children centers on young Omakayas and her Ojibwa family who live on an island in Lake Superior in 1847; PW's Best Books citation called it "captivating." Ages 9-up. (Aug.) Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc.

This book was on the summer reading list for my daughter who's entering seventh grade. I try to read her assignment books, because she can be a reluctant reader of books the school requires her to read. And sure enough, it was like pulling teeth to make her keep up with her daily reading schedule. I, on the other hand, was drawn into the story from the prologue. The story is set around the Anishinabeg tribe through the voice of Omakayas, a young girl of seven winters. As the story begins, we are introduced to Omakayas and her family who during winter live in a cabin at the edge of LaPointe. LaPointe is an island in Lake Superior that her people call Moningwanaykaning, Island of the Golden-Breasted Woodpecker. Through the eyes of Omakayas, we are taken on a journey through a year in her family's life. The author makes a point to include many words from the Ojibwa native language, originally a spoken language, to bring the reader closer to the daily life of this family. The author paints a verbal picture of this part of Minnesota, from it's wildlife to it's people. It is not until later in the story, after the reader is well-acquainted with the family, that we learn the year is 1847. This is a time very significant in our Native-American and American history, and Ms. Erdrich cleverly draws the reader in. While it is clear that this is a time of transition for Native-Americans, and that they have their suspicions of the white settlers, the author tells the story without taking sides. Clearly, the focus is the family, their village, and how changing circumstances are beginning

to alter the way of life of the American natives. Ultimately, there are sad moments, as with any family. It is that the story is so engrossing, and heartfelt that my daughter claims as reason for her resistance with wanting to continue to read. But, not only does she continue to read, she notices details that even I miss. That is the beauty of sharing this book with my daughter. We had some great discussions about the family, and Omakayas' way of life in vast contrast to our own. My daughter insists on rating the book a solid 4 stars, because it made her feel too much. As for me, I give it 5 stars, so together that's a solid 4.5 in my book. Ain't reading grand!

bought for battle of the books. We live in Michigan and the story takes place in Michigan. Good story about the devastation of small pox and the trials of life living hundreds of years ago.

Generally, I don't like books that make me cry. This was one of those books. In spite of that, however, I loved it!! I bought this book for my 10 year old daughter who is an avid reader. One day she left it in the bathroom and I happened to pick it up. Once in hand, I could scarcely put it back down. I loved how true-to-life this story is. Unlike many children's books about Native American life, the author doesn't portray it as one long camping trip. She doesn't tiptoe around the hardships they encountered. As much as I don't want to ache and cry over the ordeals they suffered, the realism of this story is part of it's beauty. It is the perfect balance of history and fiction. It is a perfect glimpse into what life was like for them, seen through the eyes of a child's experiences and emotions.

EXCELLENT reading for kids! Erdrich is my favorite author. I love her books for adults. My husband bought me her young adult literature for Christmas. I read this book after I had read all of her adult literature and was still wanting more of her writing. I was so impressed with her books for youth that I bought the rest of her children's literature to read, and have since bought them for my nieces as well.

I helped to build a birchbark house, at one point. They are very efficient at use of materials, distribute heat well, and the only real problem is that they are flammable and have to be replaced after 20 years. I like what I see in this book, of course actually being able to touch one is better. Plymouth Village, and Waswagoning, at the Lac du Flambeau reservation, among others, have examples of these houses. They are similar to the domes of Buckminster Fuller. They are far, far warmer than square houses, and take far less material.

This sweet, tender, sometimes humorous book, chronicles a year in the life of Omakayas, a seven year old girl who lives with her tribe on an island near Lake Superior. The book is divided into four main sections, each relating to a season of the year, just as the Native American daily life is based. Through Omakayas, children learn as they read about how she helps build a birch bark house, how she does her chores, and many other important details of Native American life. This makes the book especially invaluable for the fifth grade Social Studies curriculum. Many Native American words are used throughout this book, but this is done in a manner which makes their meaning apparent. There is even a glossary for these words in the back of the book. Children will love this book as Omakayas makes friends with animals and deals with feelings about her family, loss, fear, happiness, and contentment, as well as other feelings familiar to the young reader.

I've passed this book to my adult friends and family, and all agree it is a 'wonderfilled' book. Very descriptive of Native Americans life. Interesting time frames, smallpox and French traders, but mostly the story of a Native family. It also captures the pain of loss, the helplessness of people facing their future. My so cool 28 year old nephew admits to 'crying his eyes out'. I wondered if it would be too sad for kids, but the reviews I read don't seem to mention it. Perhaps Erdrich's mastery is such that those experienced with loss, who sympathize with the Native American plight will weep, the innocent will be shielded by their youth. A great story.

An excellent story of how one group of American Indians lived. Erdrich tell the truth about life before the European settlers came to America. The small pox epidemic is included so it is not a happy go lucky tale. Since many children are not exposed to teachings about where food comes from and they didn't have "box stores" back in the day, the story provides much learning for all ages,

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