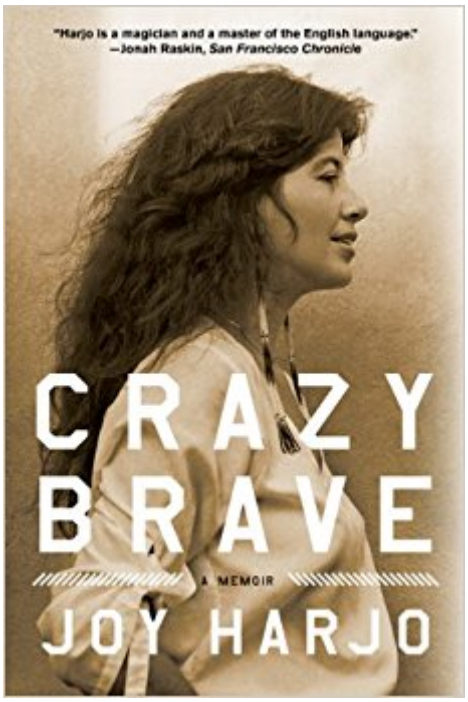
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Crazy Brave: A Memoir



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Synopsis

"CompressedÃ¢â ¬Â¦lyricalÃ¢â ¬Â¦unflinchingÃ¢â ¬Â¦rawÃ¢â ¬Â¦Harjo is a magician and a master of the English language." Ã¢â ¬â ¢Jonah Raskin, San Francisco ChronicleIn this transcendent memoir, grounded in tribal myth and ancestry, music and poetry, Joy Harjo, one of our leading Native American voices, details her journey to becoming a poet. Born in Oklahoma, the end place of the Trail of Tears, Harjo grew up learning to dodge an abusive stepfather by finding shelter in her imagination, a deep spiritual life, and connection with the natural world. She attended an Indian arts boarding school, where she nourished an appreciation for painting, music, and poetry; gave birth while still a teenager; and struggled on her own as a single mother, eventually finding her poetic voice. Narrating the complexities of betrayal and love, Crazy Brave is a memoir about family and the breaking apart necessary in finding a voice. HarjoÃ¢â ¬â„¢s tale of a hardscrabble youth, young adulthood, and transformation into an award-winning poet and musician is haunting, unique, and visionary. 12 photographs

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“StirringÃ¢â ¬Â¦In her harrowing and ultimately hopeful story, Harjo allows the reader to know her intimately, and we are enriched by her honesty.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Ms.Ã¢â ¬Å“A saga about the survival of spirituality and creativity in the face of generations of racism, dispossession, and familial dysfunction.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Rebecca Steinitz, Boston GlobeÃ¢â ¬Å“A must-read for her fans and a fascinating door into her world for those new to her work.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Elizabeth Wilkinson,

Minneapolis Star TribuneÃ¢â ¬Å“Harjo allows the reader to know her intimately, and we are enriched by her honesty.Ã¢â ¬Â• - Booklist

Joy Harjo is an internationally known performer and writer of the Mvskoke/Creek Nation, the author of ten books of poetry and a memoir, Crazy Brave. A critically acclaimed poet, her many honors include a Guggenheim Fellowship, the Josephine Miles Poetry Award, the William Carlos Williams Award, and the American Indian Distinguished Achievement in the Arts Award. She lives in Tulsa, Oklahoma.

This is a gorgeous, lyrical, gracefully flowing book about the triumph of the human spirit. It is written with the beautiful economy of words I have come to expect from a poet. I highly recommend "Crazy Brave" to everyone who longs to follow inner guidance. Joy's life is a shining example of successfully doing that, even through great hardship.On the personal side, I am so grateful to Joy Harjo for this book. While it is about her life, what she could not know is that her life resonated with my life as well, and explained so much to me of why I am how I am. I too had the knowing, and saw things that were not there. I grew up believing I was just white. My mother was just white. My deeply-adored yet alcoholic, darker-skinned father was largely gone by the time I was eight or nine, and only there on the weekends before then. He never once mentioned that we were part Cherokee. I only found out in a letter from his older sister, my Aunt Joy, when I was sixteen that we were. I went into a kind of shock that lasted a really long time. I was excited, but at the same time confused as to who I was!It was not until I read Joy Harjo's book that it all came together for me that my mystical strangeness was not only about all my past lives, but also deeply about my ancestral blood. Thank you, Joy Harjo, thank you.

Joy HarjoÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s Crazy Brave, is a poignant and artistic memoir that provides readers with both lyrical and poetic lines and also recollections of historical substance. She combines beauty and truth in an elegant and effective way. Instead of dry, historical text, Harjo touches on difficult subjects such as Native American oppression, alcoholism, domestic abuse, and the feminist movement through her poetry and a first person account in a gentle tone, making these broad and daunting subjects pliable and relatable. She handles the idea of feminism and the oppression she faced as a Native female with particular grace. It is in her soft words that readers are led to the conclusion that Native American women were left behind in the feminist movement. Harjo depicts the trials of being both female and Native American and how the combination of the two was set

aside and disregarded. Growing up with an Alcoholic father and step father, Harjo experienced alcoholism and domestic abuse at a young age. The two male figures in her young life would get drunk and abuse her mother, her and her siblings. Alcoholism, being prevalent in Native American communities, the living situation Harjo grew up in was more or less common and therefore, looked over. There was no help for women in these types of situations as Harjo explains, ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“There were no safe houses or domestic abuse shelters then, especially for native women. We werenÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t supposed to be talking about personal difficulties when our peoples were laying down their lives for the causeÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (158). The growing grimness of the lives of Native women was being looked over due to larger and ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“more importantÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• social movements such as Native rights, Civil Rights, and (White) WomenÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s rights. She speaks of the issues of domestic violence due to alcohol throughout the book, as it follows her into her own relationships. It is not until a self-realization made through creative outlets that she triumphs over this issue on her own. Though Harjo solved her own personal problem, many Native women were left to face the battle of domestic violence without the help of an empowering movement that so many other minority groups had. Another issue specific to females that Harjo touches on is forced sterilization. She recounts,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“During my last visit to the clinic at the Indian hospital I was given the option of being sterilized. It was explained to me that the moment of birth was the best time. I was handed the form but chose not to signÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â¦Many Indian women who werenÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t fluent in English signed, thinking it was a form giving consent for the doctor to deliver their baby. Others were sterilized without even the formality of signingÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (Harjo 121).This was a widespread issue at the time and unfortunately, happening to many Native women that could not speak English. Forced sterilization took place in the 1970ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s among other poor cultures as well, such as Puerto Ricans, Blacks, and Chicanos, but Native women were unique in their reliance on government aide explains Torpy, a writer for the American Indian Culture and Research Journal,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“[Native] women were especially accessible victims due to several unique cultural and societal realities setting them apart from other minorities. Tribal dependence on the federal government through the Indian Health Service (IHS), the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (HEW), and the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) robbed them of their children and jeopardized their future as sovereign nationsÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• (1).This huge and vile issue, like domestic violence, was overshadowed by larger movements at the time, even movements pertaining to Natives. Being both Native and a woman in the 1970ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s was being at the utmost disadvantage. These women did not fit in with the women fighting for gender equality

because they were Native American, not white. They did not fit in for the Native AmericanÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s fighting for rights because they were women, regarded as lesser. They were left behind in the two social movements that should have worked at empowering them, but instead, left them to fend for themselves. Surely not all Native American women at this time were able to gain strength and rebuild themselves as Harjo did. We are given an opportunity to read and see her creative talent. Her writing style is unique, dreamlike, and immensely expressive. Harjo used her artistic talents to make her own movement. It was through her poetry and art that she found her voice and was able to gain a self-assuredness that others were gaining through demonstrations and protest. HarjoÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s memoir brings voice to those who were left behind. She brings awareness to the many social wrongs that these women faced and though her memoir recounts a past, the resurfacing of the hurt and injustices pays respect to the many women that went unspoken for.Works CitedHarjo, Joy. Crazy Brave: A Memoir. New York: W. W. Norton, 2012. Print.Torpy, Sally J. "Native American Women And Coerced Sterilization: On The Trail Of Tears In The 1970S." American Indian Culture & Research Journal 24.2 (2000): 1. Academic Search Complete. Web. 24 Nov. 2013.

I love this book. Joy Harjo is obviously a gifted writer. I couldn't put this book down and I was amazed by all of the adversity this artist experienced and how she survived to be a loving human being. This book is written with a voice that is deeply rooted in a compassionate vision for this planet and the beings who populate it. I hear that same voice in her music and in her poetry. Obviously the ancestors sing through her and I am grateful that she has shared her prophetic and healing story.

I had to purchase this book for a college course, and I'm glad I did. I have never been much of a reader, but I was hooked on this book. It was a great, easy read, even though Harjo does kind of skip around through her story line. It helps to read the book a couple times to realize how many loose ends were tied up. Harjo uses an immense amount of detail in this short read and makes the reader feel as though he/she is part of the story.

A beautiful coming of age story by an American treasure. Ms. Harjo paints a story about resilience, fortitude, forgiveness, family and the gift of creativity. I gave away my copy to a young Zuni adolescent girl who is struggling with some of the same things: family dysfunction, alchohol and drugs, and a world that's mostly blind to her pain. Like Ms. Harjo she is gifted with a superb

intelligence and is an amazingly talented artist. I hope she reads this book, is inspired, and is able to surmount the many obstacles she faces including being placed in foster care. Bless her and all of our First Nation teens. Thank you Ms. Harjo.

Joy Harjo is an excellent writer! I felt that I was with her in all she endured. I shared the book with my sister who loved it also. Recommend it highly especially those who have endured various forms of abuse in their early years.

Written in a near stream of consciousness, this young Indian woman walks us through a childhood of neglect, abuse, and love; an adolescence of hope and despair while fighting the demons left by a destroyed homeland and a people of near extinction. This memoir is as painful as it is beautiful. Growing up Indian in a white man’s world finds poetry as its savior.

This is an amazing read! Very heart wrenching. Harjo is a poet with a beautiful voice. She sheds a little light on just a few of the hardships Natives have faced and continue to face.

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