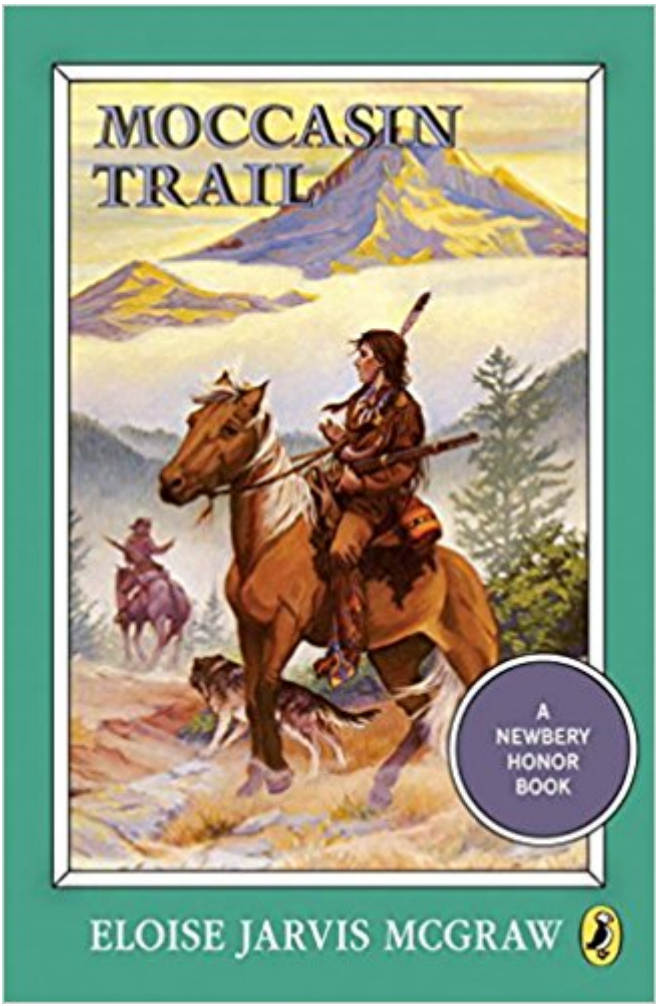
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Moccasin Trail (Puffin Newbery Library)



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Synopsis

A Newbery Honor Award-winning bookJim Keath has lived for six years as a Crow Indian when he learns that his two younger brothers and a sister are journeying west to take up land. Although Jim finds it difficult to fit in with the family he hasnÃ¢â ¬â„¢t seen since childhood, and though they are wary and distrustful of him, Jim feels his duty is at their side. But slowly, as they survive the dangerous trek west, the perils of frontier life, and the kidnapping of their younger brother, Jim and his family realize that the only way to survive is to accept each other and truly reunite the family. Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“A first-rate adventure story.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •The New York Times Ã Â Ã¢â ¬Å“The grueling hardships on the journey to Oregon and in making a home provide exciting reading. Characters are portrayed so fully and sympathetically they might be alive.Ã¢â ¬Â•Ã¢â ¬â •Library Journal

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Eloise Jarvis McGraw (1915 Ã¢â ¬â œ 2000) was an American author of children and young adult books. She was awarded the Newbery Honor for her novels Moccasin Trail, The Golden Goblet, and The Moorchild. She also won an Edgar Award for her novelÃ Â A Really Weird Summer. McGraw had a very strong interest in history, and among the many books she wrote for children are Greensleeves, The Seventeenth Swap, and Mara, Daughter of the Nile.

Eloise Jarvis McGraw’s Newbery Honor winning 1952 juvenile novel "Moccasin Trail" comes across

as a mixture of a kiddie version of A.B. Guthrie’s terrific mountain man saga, "The Big Sky," and Florence Laughlin’s children’s book on family acceptance and change "The Little Leftover Witch." In other words, it’s odd.In 1835, eleven year old Jim Keath ran away from an abusive father and the dull life of a farm boy to follow a maternal uncle turned mountain man into the Rockies. Separated from his uncle and seriously injured by a grizzly bear, Jim is found, nursed back to health, and adopted by Crow Indians. He lives among them for nearly eight years: learning their ways as a warrior and hunter, apparently adopting their religious beliefs, and accepting their world view that the land is to be enjoyed and treasured as untouched and untamed. Yet, he leaves his Crow home to become a trapper only to discover that the Rocky Mountain fur trade is practically finished with the beaver almost all trapped-out.At age 20, Jim is facing an uncertain future until word reaches him from his long forgotten white relatives. This leads to an awkward reunion with his siblings: 17 year old Jonnie, who has become the man of the family; 15 year old Sally, who is highly suspicious of this "heathen savage;" and 11 year old Dan’l, who almost instantly develops an idolization of the superbly skilled tracker and hunter Jim. The Keath family is heading to Oregon to start a farm and build a home. They ask Jim for his assistance to guide the way and his being of legal age to secure them a homestead.Not only have the long years apart made Jim a stranger to his siblings, but his Crow upbringing has created an almost unreachable gulf between them especially with Jonnie and Sally. He doesn’t understand their desire for cutting down trees, farming or living in a walled cabin. In turn, they disapprove of his long braided hair and his coup feather. They also don’t understand his enjoyment of just riding free, hunting for his food, the sheer excitement of counting coup by stealing horses and killing enemies, or his belief in "powerful medicine." However, Jonnie does what he can to breach the gulf and Dan’l’s unabashed worshipfulness slowly draws Jim into the family. Yet, can the loving embrace of a home and family truly draw Jim away from his beloved life of freedom in the mountains?Although fairly well-written with some exciting, but too dispersed, action scenes, "Moccasin Trail" was a bit of a disappointment. While it’s fairly sympathetic to the truly "wild" Indian tribes such as the proud Crows, it still adopts a patronizing attitude towards their belief systems. It isn’t the coup feather or long braids that disturb Jonnie and Sally the most, but their suspicion that Jim has truly adopted the Crows’ religious beliefs and moral code as his own. How the novel addresses that issue just struck me as false. Further, the characterizations are a bit dull. Jim is fairly interesting, but his siblings are a yawnfest: Jonnie is portrayed as Mr. Perfect, Sally is barely developed, and Dan’l struck-me as one of those ridiculous kid sidekicks who made regular appearances in B-Grade 1940’s kiddie matinee westerns. Finally, this a remarkably asexual story even for a 1950’s boys’ adventure novel. Twenty year old Jim and seventeen year old Jonnie don’t

seem to have any eyes for the ladies whatsoever.

It is 1844, and nineteen-year-old Jim Keath had grown up in Missouri, with his farmer father, mother, two brothers, Jonathan and little Daniel, and sister Sally. However, Jim didnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t want to be a farmer, so at age ten he ran away after his uncle Adam Russell who was a trapper. The next year, he was attacked by a bear and left for dead but was rescued by the Crow Indians of Absaroka and taken into the tribe. Later he learned that his uncle had been killed by Blackfoot Indians. Then at age sixteen, he left the Crows, though continuing to live and dress as an Indian, and joined another trapper, Tom Rivers. Now, he receives word that his father has died, and his mother decided to take the family west to Oregon, but she has died on the trail, and his brothers and sister need him to lead them to Oregon and help them stake their claim. Will they make it? Will his family and the other settlers accept Jim and his ways, or will he feel mistrusted and decide to leave? Eloise Jarvis McGraw was a great author. We have read two other really good books by her: Mara, Daughter of the Nile and The Golden Goblet, both set in ancient Egypt. Just for your information, there are references in Moccasin Trail to smoking tobacco, dancing, and gambling. As to language, a lot of euphemisms (blast it, gee, dratted, doggone, gosh, by gor, and especially golly) occur, and on one occasion, it is said that Johnny ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“exploded into profanity,ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• although no actual curse words are mentioned, but the terms ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“LordÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• and ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“AÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢mightyÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• are frequently used as exclamations, all of which I edited out in reading aloud. I didnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t remember this in McGrawÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s other books, but I guess that she figured that ancient Egyptians didnÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢t talk like this. The biggest complaint that others, mostly the politically correct crowd, have against the book is the claim that it is ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Å“racistÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã Â• towards Native Americans. One could argue that the book simply portrays the poor attitude toward the Native population in America that is a well documented, though certainly sad, historical fact, to give an authentic perspective on how much some white people hated the Native Americans. Yes, the book, which won a Newbery Honor Award in 1953, does contain some characters with prejudices, but it goes on to show how the characters realize that their attitudes are based in fear and ignorance as they learn to overcome their prejudices. All Indians are not pictured as worthless or bad. The author does a good job of providing a fairly balanced portrayal of life during the time period depicted, and many feel the portrayal of the Native Americans to be sympathetic without being patronizing or glorifying. From a positive standpoint, lessons on the importance of family, how our decisions impact others, learning to understand and appreciate people of different values, the

damaging effects of running away from problems, rising above individual differences, and unconditional love can be found. From a purely literary standpoint, the action sequences are extremely exciting, with nice bits of history from the Mountain Man era. One might conclude that the bookÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s purpose is to show young people how to recognize what prejudice is, why it might develop, and thus how to overcome or avoid it entirely in real life, in a fun story that does not talk down to them. We enjoyed it as a family read aloud.

Amazing story!

Read this book as a kid so much it fell apart. I love it!

Great read!

As a teacher, this book was a wonderful read aloud book to feel the influence of history on present day students. Many misunderstandings and assumptions from this period of history which had been passed from the older generation, were confronted. It is a must read for students in 4th, 5th and even 6th grade.

Good

This is an old book and somewhat dated but nicely written and with a moral. It is a good read. I recommend it.

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