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Jet Black And The Ninja Wind



Synopsis

****Winner of the 2013-2014 Asian/Pacific American Award for Young Adult Literature****2015 Sakura Medal Nominee****Shortlisted for the 2014 SCBWI Crystal Kite Award****Nominated for the Cybils Young Adult Bloggers Literary Award****Seventeen-year-old Jet Black is a ninja. There's only one problem—she doesn't know it. Jet has never lived a so-called normal life. Raised by her single Japanese mother on a Navajo reservation in the Southwest, Jet's life was a constant litany of mysterious physical and mental training. For as long as Jet can remember, every Saturday night she and her mother played "the game" on the local mountain. But this time, Jet is fighting for her life. And at the end of the night, her mother dies and Jet finds herself an orphan—and in mortal danger. Fulfilling her mother's dying wish, Jet flies to Japan to live with her grandfather, where she discovers she is the only one who can protect a family treasure hidden in her ancestral land. She's terrified, but if Jet won't fight to protect her world, who will? Stalked by bounty hunters and desperately attracted with the man who's been sent to kill her, Jet must be strong enough to protect the treasure, preserve an ancient culture and save a sacred mountain from destruction. In *Jet Black and the Ninja Wind*, multiple award-winning author, poet and translator team Leza Lowitz and Shogo Oketani make their first foray into young adult fiction with a compulsively readable tale whose teenage heroine must discover if she can put the blade above the heart—or die trying.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Jet is a wonderful heroine. She manages to be both strong and vulnerable. Lowitz and Oketani weave great storytelling, history, and some very fine writing to create a compelling novel. The multicultural and historical aspects of the book create a sense of global interconnectedness that make excellent fodder for classroom discussion. The two settings, Japan and New Mexico, are vividly described. The reader learns about Zen Buddhism, the Emishi and Navajo Code Talkers. These are all subjects that lend themselves to cross-curricular activities. I think the book opens an important dialogue about cultures in a way that appeals to teenagers. As a teacher, I struggle to find books that are compelling for my students. This novel has many components that will appeal to them. Jet straddles two cultures and struggles with each one, trying to find where she fits. This is a familiar question to most adolescents. The authors do a masterful job of guiding Jet along. At the end of the book, I found myself wanting to know what happens next. This is not only an excellent YA book, but also for adult readers as well.

This story pulled me in for the duration. For one, it takes place in the Navajo reservation of New Mexico and Japan. Both places were well described in details I could follow in real time. For another, I always felt there could be a connection with the Navajo way of life and that of the ancient Japanese connection to nature and seasonal lifestyle. For a coming to age story of a young adult, this story pulled me along as it did Jet, who had to follow her lead to find out about her past, as well as her future. And in the end, decide on her own path to follow.

What more could a reader want? Intrigue, a multicultural teenage heroine with incredible spiritual and physical strength, history and cultural spanning generations, visual imagery that holds your attention throughout and a hidden treasure! Lowitz and Oketani know their subject matter. In their exciting young adult first novel that anyone can appreciate and enjoy they move from New Mexico to Japan and back. In the process they vividly portray martial arts, theories about Judaism and ancient Japanese connections, punk rockers in Tokyo, Navajo code talkers and the magical dog Aska. Each chapter begins with Japanese kanji headings and the Glossary at the end of the book

was extremely valuable in defining the various terms and concepts sprinkled throughout the book. Once you start it is hard to put down. This book just calls for a sequel. Five stars! ,

I chose this book based on other reviews and the hopes that it would be a modern-day well integrated novel bridging multiple cultures with a strong female lead. It was good to see the character, "Jet," fulfill that role in a way that is not stereotypically "strong" (based solely on brute strength/ability) but in a subtle strength worthy of any heroic character. Ultimately, though, this story fell flat not because of the creative characterization or intriguing settings but because of the writing. It was blocky at times, but I believe the worst offense was the exposition and narrative used to explain "ninja", Japanese or DinãfÂ© terminology. Often times it appeared the author was simply dropping those words in to give the book and character a particular flavor, but instead of simply using the terminology and letting it flow into the story, the author would stop to explain the terminology in a near dictionary-descriptive format. There are much better ways to approach using unfamiliar terminology and 'explaining' what it means within the storyline itself, rather than bumping up against the reader's suspension of disbelief by stopping the story to explain. Moreover, a lot of said terminology wasn't key to the plot, story or characterization but was dropped in like 'name-dropping' to give the appearance or flavor of ninja-ness. It simply did not fit. Some of the Navajo (DinãfÂ©) terminology was incorrectly defined, and some of the ontology and origin story was outright incorrect and could easily have been corrected by referencing readily available sources, or checking the storyline with a DinãfÂ© representative/editor. It's a mildly entertaining read that I would recommend for young adults who haven't quite built up discerning taste yet. The binding of the book itself is of excellent quality -- exactly what you'd expect from the publisher. I only wish they would continue their line of excellent choice in what to publish.

Begins slow but once you get through half the book, gets more interesting as the pace quickens. A bit too girlish with plenty of emotion swings but it was a book about a girl so I guess I should have expected that.

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