



Whispers of the Wolf

Pauline Ts'o

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Ahroooooo" went the cry. It was the call of the wolf pack. A young boy named Two Birds heard it, and so did his wolf. Two Birds had found the abandoned wolf pup, and they had grown up together. Now, the wild was calling, and Two Birds had a choice to make. Struggling with a mix of emotions, he must decide whether his love for the wolf is greater than his need to be near it. Will Two Birds learn to let go not just of the wolf, but also of his own fears? Whispers of the Wolf is a beautiful picture book set around 500 years ago among the Pueblo Indians of the desert Southwest. A heartwarming piece of historical fiction, it weaves together themes of community, tradition, self-esteem, and respect for all life, creating a realistic portrait of a culture that continues to exert a vibrant, living influence today.

Whispers of the Wolf Details

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Author : Pauline Ts'o

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From Reader Review Whispers of the Wolf for online ebook

Tibby (she/her) says

I do appreciate that this is intended as a historical story as opposed to some made up Pueblo folktale. However, T'so never names what pueblo the boy is part of. Debbie Reese has talked a lot about the importance of identifying a specific group when sharing stories of Native Nations because it fights the stereotype of the pan-Indian (it's also for accuracy's sake). Even in the notes at the back of the book there is little specificity.

It's a good story about making friends and how that can be hard. The illustrations are nice with lots of textural lines and alternating warm and cool color palettes. The beginning of the story is a little disjointed, but comes together nicely. The conclusion is a bittersweet goodbye to the wolf pup Two Birds has raised.

I worry that the relationship between the boy and his wolf leans a little close to the Magical Indian trope. He hears the wolf whispering thoughts and stories to him throughout the story. The stories he shares with the other boys in his pueblo. I think it was meant as more of device for Two Birds to make friends and emphasize his special relationship with the wolf, but I still think you could argue it veers off into trope territory.

Finally I wonder about their clothing. It's just a loin cloth seen on the boys. I have no idea if that is accurate or not. So many stereotyped images of Native Americans inaccurately show them wearing very little clothing (often despite cool climates). It gets to the idea of the savage Indian that is so uncivilized they don't even wear clothing. When I see images, like those of Two Birds, I worry they are unintentionally (or intentionally) tapping into that idea.

There is a forward from a woman who is from Santa Clara Pueblo. She enjoyed the story and its depiction of the Pueblo boy. There are some fairly good notes at the back with some suggested further reading. In looking more at those books, I'm not overly impressed. I know there isn't a lot out there that is good, but these all look like standard fair when it comes to children's nonfiction and I am still really leery of children's nonfiction. One of the books is about running and I believe the author's first name is incorrect- it should be Peter not Frank. There are two folktale books that are written by cultural insiders. I'm not sure I would send children to these resources, though.

I don't know about this one. We really need quality books about Native Nations on our shelves and I'm just not convinced this one fits the bill. It might if there was going to be some instruction and critical reading of it in the classroom. Might. I think I'll keep this in mind, but not purchase just yet.

Kristi Bernard says

Around the mid 1500's a community of Southwestern Pueblo, Native Americans, thrived in this country. The Pueblos had large close-knit families. Children were taught how to contribute to their communities and how they could live in harmony.

Also during this time, wolves were highly respected by the Pueblo people. Wolves were animals that had serious social rules. When a young wolf turned two years old it wasn't unusual for him to challenge the pack

leader. Wolves would eat 2.5 pounds of meat daily to survive and closer to 5-7 pounds to be able to have pups.

Author Pauline Ts'o didn't want to just share a fictitious story of a young boy who found an abandoned wolf cub. The boy took care of the wolf and eventually had to release him to run in the wild. Ts'o wanted to share a story of a people who lived long ago and the wolves that thrived during that time as well.

Reader, parents and teachers will enjoy the wonderfully soothing and colorful illustrations that depict the life of a boy and his wolf. The back of the book has references to the history of the Pueblos and wolves. The illustrations are labeled individually and share important facts. This book would be a lovely addition to any library.

Diane says

I received this book through the Goodreads Giveaway Program.
Thank you so much!

This is a beautifully written and illustrated book telling the story of a young Pueblo boys' love for a wolf pup he saves and raises. As the pup ages, the boy is forced to make a tough decision, does he keep him or set him free. And as the pup grows up, so does the boy.

I can't wait to share it with my three grandchildren, ages 3, 5 and 8. Since they all love books (and dogs) I'm sure they'll be able to relate to young Two Birds and his wolf pup.

Children's Book Academy says

Whispers of the Wolf is a beautiful, heartfelt and entirely unique coming of age story. Two Birds is a very relatable character, to both children and adults, in his insecurities, sense of self, and the decisions he has to make. Pauline Ts'o is also a wonderfully talented artist, and every page evokes powerful emotion in her lines, color choices, and how she portrays movement. This book is special simply for her artwork alone, but the way the illustrations support and then add to the story makes Whispers of the Wolf a stunning read. For a more in-depth review of Whispers of the Wolf and other great children's books, visit our blog Mondays with Mandy or Mira at Children's Book Academy.

Ksenia says

Ever since I did my grad school thesis on medieval werewolves, I am all about the wolves! This was a great picture book about finding and trusting yourself, but also learning to let go, and the relationship between man and nature. Great backmatter included in there as well. I know I would have loved this if I was younger too!

Christy says

Ahroooooo" went the cry. It was the call of the wolf pack. A young boy named Two Birds heard it, and so did his wolf. Two Birds had found the abandoned wolf pup, and they had grown up together. Now, the wild was calling, and Two Birds had a choice to make. Struggling with a mix of emotions, he must decide whether his love for the wolf is greater than his need to be near it. Will Two Birds learn to let go not just of the wolf, but also of his own fears? Whispers of the Wolf is a beautiful picture book set around 500 years ago among the Pueblo Indians of the desert Southwest. A heartwarming piece of historical fiction, it weaves together themes of community, tradition, self-esteem, and respect for all life, creating a realistic portrait of a culture that continues to exert a vibrant, living influence today.

Sheila says

Whispers of the Wolf is a deceptively simple story with surprising depth. A small lonely boy doesn't like to run with his tribe because he's always last. A small lonely wolf will surely die if nobody saves it. And a boy with a wolf learns to see through different eyes (and ears and paws), to tell stories, to make friends, and finally to run.

But Whispers of the Wolf isn't just about friendship. It's about finding yourself, learning to trust, and even letting go. Two Birds lets go of his isolation, lets go of his fears, and finally even lets go of his beloved wolf.

Whispers tells of an unchanging world, for all that it's set in a well-researched and convincing Pueblo village of the 1500s. Paws still pad today on the same ground. Winds still blow from distant lands. And if we stop talking long enough, we might still hear and see.

Add wonderful illustrations, beautifully described in fact-filled notes at the back of the book, and this becomes a volume to treasure, for parents and children, for growing and learning together. Meet the pueblo Indians, run like a prayer, and look into the eyes of story. Enjoy.

Disclosure: I was given a free copy by the publisher and I offer my honest review. It's wonderful!

Barbara says

Two-Birds is intimidated by how loud and fast the other boys in his Pueblo village are. When he rescues and nurtures a wolf cub, he finds the courage to protect it from others while it is weak, and then once it is stronger, he shares it and some of his stories with Gray Bear. Eventually, others from the village are drawn to his stories and his wolf. When it's finally time to release the animal back into the wild, he does so but worries that now he will have no friends. Gray Bear reassures him that his storytelling will insure that he does so. I liked this story about how one boy gains self-confidence through his relationship with his animal companion, and I also liked the softly-colored illustrations. I can't vouch for its cultural authenticity, but the author seems to have done her homework.

Robin Friedman says

"Whispers of the Wolf" is an illustrated story for children ages four and older that tells of a young man coming to know himself through his love and understanding for a wild thing. The story is set among the Pueblo Indians of the desert southwest before their contact with Europeans. Although it has a remarkably authentic feel, the story is new and not based on a Pueblo folk source. Pauline Ts'o, a highly-talented Academy-award winning author, illustrator, and photographer wrote and illustrated the story. Ts'o has been a student of Pueblo culture for many years, and her book features a Foreword and Preface by two Pueblo educators.

The story tells of a young Pueblo boy, Two Birds, who finds and adopts an abandoned wolf pup and raises him to maturity. Two Birds had been something of a loner, and in the process of raising the pup, he learns to get along better with his peers. Through projecting himself into the wolf, Two Birds also discovers his own gifts as a storyteller. When the wolf matures and wants to join his fellows in the wild, Two Birds finds the wisdom to let him go. The story is simply and well told with lovely pastel illustrations, particularly of the wolf and his glowing eyes. Following the story, Ts'o offers annotations on each illustration which teach the young reader a great deal about Pueblo culture. To avoid distraction, it is better to read through and discuss the story on its own before turning to the discussions of the pictures.

This book is offered by Wisdom Tales, a publisher of children's books with spiritual themes from cultures around the world. Many of Wisdom Tales' books tell American Indian stories, as does "Whispers of the Wolf". The book encourages children and adults to see universal themes through a particular and probably unfamiliar culture. It can take years or a lifetime to learn to love and to let go. This is a lovely book which will delight children, parents, and teachers. Wisdom Tales kindly sent me a review copy.

Robin Friedman

Vera Godley says

This is a story about a young Pueblo Indian boy in the mid 1500s prior to any contact with the Spanish explorers. The young boy, Two Birds, is not included in many activities other Indian boys pursue and he can not run fast. But one day he finds a deserted, sick wolf pup. He takes it back to his home and cares for it.

Soon another Indian boy notices and wants to hold the pup, play with it, etc. This gives Two Birds an opportunity to have companionship and excel at something.

There are several story lines in Whispers of the Wolf.

- >>Compassion and care for orphaned animals
- >>The joy of caring for the animal
- >>Allowing others to join in the fun of something you are doing (in this case, caring for the wolf pup)
- >>Breaking through barriers - in the case of Two Birds he became a real good story teller
- >>Releasing a wild animal back into the wild to pursue his own life amongst his kind
- >>Insight into what life might have been back for the Pueblo in the 1500s.

This is an enjoyable book and will surely be of interest to many boys and girls.

DISCLOSURE: I received a complimentary copy from Wisdom Tales to facilitate a review. Opinions are my own and freely given.

Cheryl says

Letting go of things you love, and facing your fears...

I am a big fan of Wisdom Tales books. They always publish quality children's books that are unique.

WHISPERS OF THE WOLF tells the story of Pueblo Indian boy Two Birds that rescues a baby wolf and nurses it back to health.

It is a story of unlikely friendships, letting go of things you love, and facing your fears.

Pauline Ts'o wrote and illustrated the story and it would be a wonderful one for story time in the classroom because there are a lot of discussion points that arise during the telling of the tale.

NOTE: I received this book in exchange for my honest review.

Dione Basseri says

I'm a bit torn by this book. On the one hand, it put me to sleep, despite my love of wolves. On the other...man, isn't that the POINT of picture books?

Like, it wasn't boring. More soothing. Which, again, is quite surprising, when this is about a young boy raising a wolf; a concept that really should be invigorating. It was more at the end, going through the page descriptions, where I dozed off, to be fair. And when I did wake up and finished those descriptions, I was very pleased, as they serve to educate readers about the lives of both wolves and the Pueblo people. Ts'o wrote a book which is both interesting and highly educational.

And the artwork is...wow. A lovely style. Rather than using smooth shading and a realistic approach, Ts'o fills the backgrounds with consistent lines in complimenting colors. It creates a far more natural look, as when she creates a sky of gently curving blue lines, to describe wind, or when the heat of the day is shown in tightly spiraling orange, which just FEELS humid, just looking at it.

A great pick for wolf-loving kids.

Jo says

Liked the story and its message. In a community of Pueblo Indians, 500 years ago, a young boy who's not as fast or well-liked comes into his own with the help of a wolf pup. Both the boy and pup grow and change throughout the course of the story. Enjoyed the prominence of storytelling.

Patricia Tilton says

This is a heartwarming story about a shy boy trying to find his voice and place among his Pueblo community. When Two Birds finds the wolf pup, his unlikely relationship with the wolf helps him gain self-confidence and develop reverence and respect for the natural world. The characters are memorable and the storytelling will appeal to children and adults of all ages. Ts'o has written a beautiful tale about Native Americans tribes of the southwest. She captures the warmth and beauty of the Pueblo culture in her rich and lively illustrations.

Victoria Brinius says

This story will resonate with anyone that has ever fostered an animal before. Or even bottle fed an animal before. Like anything in life you have to let go in order to grow. You can not smother it. Especially if it is an animal. This story was so tender that I actually felt for Two Birds when he let his wolf go, but I also knew that he would always have a defender in the wild. I am giving this book a 5/5. I was given a copy to review, however all opinions are my own.
