

I Heard the Owl Call My Name by Margaret Craven (Published in 1973)

Approved for use in English II

Summary of the Work:

When the Bishop discovers that Mark Brian, a young ordinand, is dying, he sends him to a remote Kwakiutl village “to learn enough about life to die.” As Mark learns about the priorities, myths, and culture of the tribe, he also learns about human nature, and more importantly, about himself.

Rationale:

I Heard the Owl Call My Name is a novel that contains many layers. Told in limited third person point of view through Mark, the protagonist, the plot deals with his introduction to a culture he knows nothing about, yet it also deals with the Indians’ reactions to Mark and to the outside world which is increasingly encroaching on their traditional way of life. The myths of the village, besides relating to Mark’s personal situation, have universal relevance and a strong tie to nature. Respect for and understanding of cultural differences are strong themes throughout this novel.

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

- *Library Journal*, March 15, 1974, p. 908
- *Publishers Weekly*, December 3, 1973, p. 35
- *Library Journal*, May 15, 1974, p. 1452
- *Booklist*, February 1, 1974, p. 569.

* Print resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any library media specialist to view the scholarly sources.

* Scholarly reviews are also available online through Books in Print and Gale. Contact the library media specialist to obtain username and password information to access the subscription database of full-text reviews.

Noted Distinction:

- Wilson’s Senior High School 11/01/97
- Wilson’s Fiction 01/01/96
- Wilson’s Junior High School 09/01/01
- Booklist
- Notable Best Books (A.L.A.)

Readability:

- Lexile Score: 1080
- Readability Level: 8.9

Learning Resources Guidelines:

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Standard Alignment: ([link](#))

Approval: 1985

Submitted to Committee:

Approved for Adoption:

Notes on the Text:

(The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

Margaret Craven, the novel’s author, was born in Helena, Montana and educated in the Pacific Northwest, making her share a unique connection to Montana high school students.

Although the novel does deal briefly with an out-of-wedlock pregnancy, the matter of Keetah’s pregnancy and the young priest’s reaction to it are written to show the difference between cultural mores, and it is handled tastefully.

Connection to the Curriculum:

This novel is an excellent example of dramatic irony, as Mark, the ordinand, is unaware that he is dying, while others around him know.

This novel offers an enhanced cultural awareness to students, in that it explores a Native American culture with which they are not familiar, plus it shows how outsiders react to and choose to learn or not learn about that culture.

Additional Connections:

(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)

Although this novel was well researched and respectfully characterizes the Kwakiutl culture without stereotyping them, it was not written by a Native American author, and does not fulfill the requirements delineated by OPI standards.

Mark, the young priest, has been newly ordained in the Anglican church, which gives the opportunity to discuss and review the historical significance and hierarchy of the Church of England.