

# *Rain is not My Indian Name* by Cynthia Leitich Smith (Published in 2001)

Approved for use in 8<sup>th</sup> grade

## Summary of the Work:

The next day was my fourteenth birthday, and I'd never kissed a boy -- domestic style or French. Right then, I decided to get myself a teen life. Cassidy Rain Berghoff didn't know that the very night she decided to get a life would be the night that Galen would lose his. It's been six months since her best friend died, and up until now Rain has succeeded in shutting herself off from the world. But when controversy arises around her aunt Georgia's Indian Camp in their mostly white Midwestern community, Rain decides to face the outside world again -- at least through the lens of her camera. Hired by her town newspaper to photograph the campers, Rain soon finds that she has to decide how involved she wants to become in Indian Camp. Does she want to keep a professional distance from the intertribal community she belongs to? And just how willing is she to connect with the campers after her great loss? In a voice that resonates with insight and humor, Cynthia Leitich Smith tells of heartbreak, recovery, and reclaiming one's place in the world.

## Rationale:

This is a modern story that really connects with students. The characters are easy to relate with, and it tells the story of how to cope with death at a young age. Discuss on lost loved ones and coming face-to-face with your own mortality is a key theme of this book. Built within, is the story of finding out what it means to be an Indian in today's world and the racism that still goes with the culture. These issues are important at this level because students are coping with many of the same issues: death, who you are, and how to deal with those emotions and identities.

## Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

### School Library Journal

Grade 5-9-Rain and Galen have been friends forever, but for Rain's 14th birthday, the thrill of finding that her burgeoning romantic feelings are being reciprocated puts the evening into a special-memory category. The next morning, she learns that Galen was killed in an accident on the way home. Plunged into despair, Rain refuses to attend the funeral and cuts herself off from her friends. Skipping to six months later, the main portion of the story takes place as she thinks about Galen's upcoming birthday and summer plans are complicated by the girl's Aunt Georgia's Indian Camp and political efforts to cut its funding. Rain participates in nothing and her family members, loving though they are, seem preoccupied with their own needs and concerns. Gradually, Rain's love of photography resurfaces and lands her an assignment with the local newspaper. She becomes involved in examining her own heritage, the stereotypical reactions to it, and her own small-town limitations. There is a surprising amount of humor in this tender novel. It is one of the best portrayals around of kids whose heritage is mixed but still very important in their lives. As feelings about the public funding of Indian Camp heat up, the emotions and values of the characters remain crystal clear and completely in focus. It's Rain's story and she cannot be reduced to simple labels. A wonderful novel of a present-day teen and her "patchwork tribe."-Carol A. Edwards, Sonoma County Library, Santa Rosa, CA Copyright 2001 Reed Business Information, Inc.

\* 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:

- 2001 Writers of the Year in Children's Prose by Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers
- finalist for the Oklahoma Book Award
- featured at the [Second National Book Festival](#) the Texas Book Festival
- the St. Petersburg Times' "You Gotta Read This Book Club"
- included in GREAT BOOKS FOR GIRLS by Kathleen Odean

## Readability:

- Lexile Score: 860L
- Readability Level:

## Learning Resources Guidelines:

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

## Standard Alignment: ([link](#))

## Approval:

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.)

- Accidental death of a close friend
- What does it mean to be Indian?

## Connection to the Curriculum:

See rationale

## Additional Connections:

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

Film: *Where the Spirit Lives*