

Approved for use in

Summary of the Work:

When Louise Wolfe's first real boyfriend mocks and disrespects Native people in front of her, she breaks things off and dumps him over e-mail. It's her senior year, anyway, and she'd rather spend her time with her family and friends and working on the school newspaper. The editors pair her up with Joey Kairouz, the ambitious new photojournalist, and in no time the paper's staff find themselves with a major story to cover: the school musical director's inclusive approach to casting *The Wizard of Oz* has been provoking backlash in their mostly white, middle-class Kansas town. From the newly formed Parents Against Revisionist Theater to anonymous threats, long-held prejudices are being laid bare and hostilities are spreading against teachers, parents, and students — especially the cast members at the center of the controversy, including Lou's little brother, who's playing the Tin Man. As tensions mount at school, so does a romance between Lou and Joey — but as she's learned, "dating while Native" can be difficult. In trying to protect her own heart, will Lou break Joey's? — Candlewick Press

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

Horn Book Guide, 03/31/2019

Louise Wolfe—a high-school senior, budding journalist, and member of the Muscogee Nation—works on the school newspaper, where she meets half-Lebanese/half-Scottish Joey Kairouz, an ambitious photojournalist. Lou learns how to write about controversy with the school's "color-conscious" casting of its *Wizard of Oz* production. Lou and Joey's love story deepens over the course of the novel, and Smith effectively presents the continuous microaggressions Lou faces as a young Native woman. *Glos*.

School Library Connection, 11/30/2018

In an age when folks want their voices heard and their perspectives represented, this novel provides an important voice. The author shares the same cultural background as Louise, the book's main character, and so has first-hand experience with how such individuals are treated and perceived in society. However, Smith writes the story in such a way that anyone who identifies as a member of a minority group (be it by religious affiliation, sexual orientation, race, etc.) will be able to relate to Louise. Aside from its lessons on diversity, respect, and sticking up for what you believe in, the novel is essentially a checklist for readers who enjoy teen romance. In her decision to end one relationship and stay in another, Louise remains open and honest with the reader about her feelings and the thoughts going through her head. The chapters are short (ten pages or less), making this title feel like a light read. **RECOMMENDED**

Booklist, 09/14/2018

Grades 9-12 - In a time when #ownvoices stories are rising in popularity among YA readers, this brings an insightful story to the conversation. Louise is a citizen of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation whose family has recently moved to Kansas. She starts working on the school newspaper, and her little brother Hughie gets cast in the school's production of *The Wizard of Oz*. But a local group, Parents against Revisionist Theater (PART), does not agree with the casting of Hughie and two other students of color in the play, and this leads to some hard experiences and conversations for all involved. While the subject matter of the story is highly relevant, the writing feels disjointed, with short chapters coming across like vignettes as opposed to one cohesive story. This happens within the chapters as well, where scenes often shift abruptly without warning. A romantic subplot accompanies the more politically charged main narrative, as attraction flares between Louise and her newspaper partner—but culture clashes intrude even here. Despite its flaws, this is truly a thought-provoking and educational novel.

* 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.

Notes on the Text:

Lou, the main character, struggles with her Native identity and the realization that she needs to express that she is a Native American. Lou's struggles with her own identity will relate to students as she works through what is important to her and societal expectations.

Rationale:

The novel provides Native American perspective in a relatable age category, as the protagonist is a high school student. The novel promotes tolerance and understanding regarding Native American treatment. This novel provides a voice for Native American teens.

I wasn't marking my place. I was marking a page that has something I want come back to. Something that moved me—to a smile, a squeeze of my heart, a laugh, or an UGH—because it captured life for so many Native teens who most of America doesn't see, even though they are right there, in front of you. — 8/26/2018 Review: *American Indians in Children's Literature*

Noted Distinction:

American Indian Youth Literature Award, 12/31/2019
American Indians in Children's Literature, Highly Recommended, 10/25/2021

Readability

- Lexile Score: 760
- Readability Level: 5.5

Learning Resources Guidelines

- The novel meets the Learning Resources Guidelines.

Standard Alignment: ([link](#))

Approval:

Submitted to Committee:

Approved for Adoption:

Connection to the Curriculum:

The novel connects to the curriculum as students will recognize and understand conventions and devices used by the author to present ideas and themes. The writing style exemplifies character voice and perspective.

Additional Connections:

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

Other works of interest:

Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie

If I Ever Get out of Here by Eric Gansworth