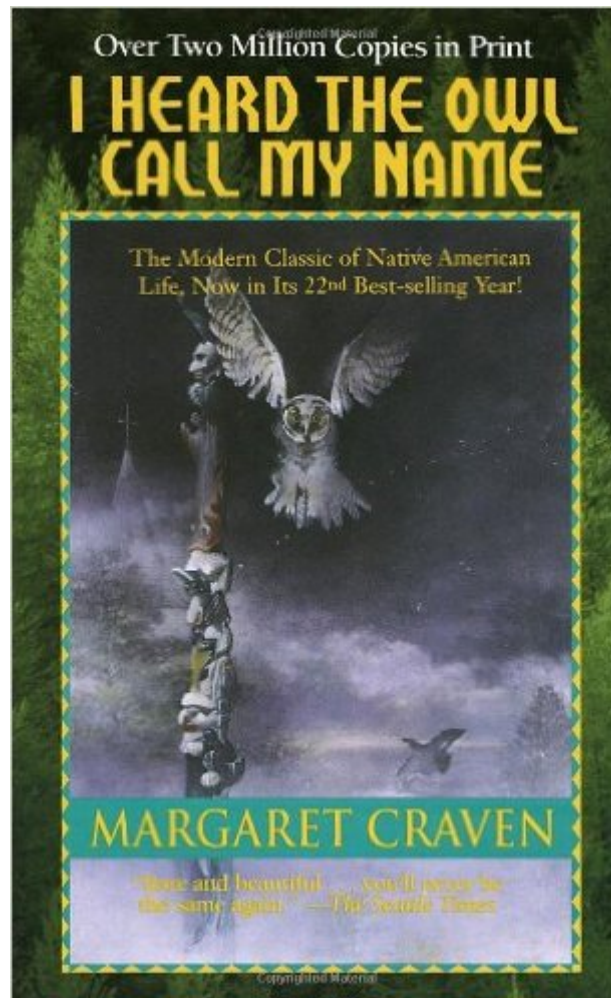


The book was found

I Heard The Owl Call My Name



Synopsis

Amid the grandeur of the remote Pacific Northwest stands Kingcome, a village so ancient that, according to Kwakiutl myth, it was founded by the two brothers left on earth after the great flood. The Native Americans who still live there call it Quee, a place of such incredible natural richness that hunting and fishing remain primary food sources. But the old culture of totems and potlatch is being replaced by a new culture of prefab housing and alcoholism. Kingcome's younger generation is disenchanted and alienated from its heritage. And now, coming upriver is a young vicar, Mark Brian, on a journey of discovery that can teach him "and us" about life, death, and the transforming power of love.

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Customer Reviews

When I first received this book, I thought that it would be one of those tedious books that you have to write reviews on while in school. While reading the first chapter, I confirmed that thought for myself, and left the book for a week or so. The first chapter, to me, was this quite confusing chapter which had no real beginning or end, and no real meaning. When I finally had to read the book to start writing my review, I struggled through the first chapter again. And then I came to the second. What a breath of fresh air it was, and from then onwards, the book flowed as the rivers and streams that it describes. The story is one that is very true to the world today - it talks about a culture that is slowly being lost to technology. It is a very touching story, about love, loss, friendship, trust....in fact it is about every conceivable human emotion. It is told in a beautiful way, that is incredibly realistic, and transports you to its setting. The myths and stories that are described are very insightful of the

tribal culture. The stories were believed whole-heartedly, even though they may seem childish and unbelievable. But it is that childish innocence that allowed these tribes to thrive and live in a peaceful way. The dimension that the vicar from the outside world brings is interesting in the sense that although he symbolises the technology that is overshadowing the tribal culture, he is the one who is trying his best to maintain it. It shows how a simple life can silence the want for a more luxurious one. All in all, this book is extremely good, and I recommend it as a very interesting read. The author has managed to show a culture that is dying out, without distorting it or adding overly-fictitious elements. Simply beautiful.

Hi, everybody. Out of the twenty four books from the school's summer reading list that I have read during the holiday, I chose *I Heard the Owl Call My Name*, written by Margaret Craven, for my oral report. The book, which can be found under the Canadian Nature section, was Craven's first work and was first published in 1967. With stunning narrative, the plot revolves around a young dying vicar, Mark Brian, who went to an Indian village called Kingcome in the Pacific Northwest completing his last mission (though he did not know he only had three years to live). He had to overcome many great difficulties in order to help and convert these proud, Kwakiutl native people, for the old ones were unreligious while the young ones had little respects toward the old people and the old way of life. His first problem was trying to be accepted into this struggling primitive community, which was starting to be swallowed into white man's world. Then he had to help preserve the old culture of totems and salmons from being replaced by a new culture of alcoholism and residential schools. In the end he did succeed in earning respect and trust, maybe even love, of the people, but, most of all, he learnt a most valuable lesson - the acceptance of death, life and submission, as quoted by the author: Often in the avalanche of letters I received after *I Heard the Owl Call My Name* was published, people asked me what disease killed Mark Brian. I don't know. What matters is that he learned more of love and life in his three years with the Indians than most men learn in a long lifetime, and that it was he who thanked them. - from *Again Calls the Owl*, Craven's autobiography Margaret Craven, the author, actually went to an Indian village to do her research and learn the culture, the tales as well as the language. Some of the characters and events in the story are based on people she met at the village, and that makes her work much more realistic and believable. Some of the themes discussed in this book are cycles or changes of life, vanishing way of life of the natives, and, most of all, acceptance of death. The only main character is the vicar himself and the conflict of the novel of his being accepted. The book is fairly simple and straight forward, but the author describes the setting with vivid imagery, which makes me really

understand and learn a lot about the Kwakiutl culture and customs, for example, in one of the chapters, she talks about the cannibal dance. The mood remains quite consistent throughout the whole book. It is not really the sadness that urges me to read on - it is the calmness and the selflessness of the native people that are so enchanting, and the closeness with nature as well. I have to agree that the beginning of the book was quite dull to begin with, and the climax did not come until the second last chapter. However, if I really read the book carefully, I can also see that every few chapters is a short, descriptive story by itself, for example, there is one about a few Indian kids going to residential school in Vancouver, and how the elders disapprove the idea. There is also another one which tells about drunken Indians being cheated by a white man. The vocabulary is fairly simple, and the novel can easily be understood by grade nines, but the meaning, or the lessons of this memorable novel really takes someone much older and much more mature to understand and appreciate. Therefore, I would only recommend this book to those of you who enjoy books about nature. All in all, this is a marvelously compelling work of Canadian literature. To conclude my presentation, I am going to read you a short quote that will give you some idea about the author's style: Under a green spruce Marta stood by herself, her eyes on the young vicar. How thin and white he was! How long had it been there - that look on his face she had seen many times in her long life and knew well? It was not the hard winter that had placed it there. It was death gently reaching out his hand, touching the face gently, even before the owl had called the name. Thank you!

Having lived in Southeast Alaska for two years, in a village that could have served as the model for Kingcome, I find Margaret Craven's book to be magical in its ability to capture the tone of that area and its inhabitants. Her elegantly understated depiction of villagers and their social dynamics, as seen through the eyes of the terminally ill priest, are accurate and reflect what I myself observed in my time in the village of Metlakatla, Alaska. With beautiful descriptions and vivid depictions of the surroundings and lives of the village inhabitants, Ms. Craven draws us into a world few are privileged to experience.

...and at the end, you are sad to leave it. For me, when I read an absolutely excellent novel, I have a hard time getting into another one - you end up rejecting the new one because it's not as good as the last one. This is one of those novels for me. So, I guess I'll be cleansing the reading palate with a few magazines. I first read this novel when I was 14 or 15 years old. I haven't thought about it for years until I came across it at a book sale and picked it up on a whim. I approached re-reading it with some trepidation - I was afraid that it would not be as good as I remembered and I would be

disappointed. Well, it wasn't as good as I remembered - it's much better! Age and experience make you appreciate some things better, I suppose. I shot through this novel in less than 24 hours - a new record for this slow and steady reader. Granted, it's a short novel (my copy was 159 pages), but it pulls you in and you want to learn more about this native American village and the young vicar sent to minister to them. I teach high school and I have a small library of books in my classroom. From time to time, I am asked by students to recommend a book and this one will shoot up to the top of my list with 'Of Mice and Men.'

MY DAUGHTER READ THIS BOOK THIS SUMMER, CHOSEN FROM HER 9TH GRADE SUMMER READING LIST. MY MOTHER AND I ALSO READ IT AND WE WERE ABSOLUTELY DELIGHTED. I'VE READ IT 4 TIMES ALREADY, AND I ALWAYS FIND SOMETHING NEW TO APPRECIATE. IT HAS NOW BECOME ONE OF MY TOP TEN BOOKS OF ALL TIME. IT SHOWS THAT FAITH AND LOVE CAN MOVE MOUNTAINS, JANET

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