

The Mission Indians of California..

Bleeker, Sonia.

137p. William Morrow & Company. 1956.

This juvenile level story attempts to provide a “true” history of southern California’s mission Indians (Chumash, Diegueno, Serrano, Gabrielino, Juaneno, Luiseno, and Cahuilla) through the use of a fictionalized character named Little Singer. Little Singer is used as the token southern California Indian who seems to represent all of the tribes that are listed because his actual tribe is not revealed until the end of the book in which it is discovered that he is Juaneno. This is a significant error because it implies that every southern California Indian tribe is of one culture.

The story follows Little Singer through his daily life which includes several ceremonies which are discussed in detail. This information is conveyed in such a way that it leaves the impression that it comes straight from an ethnography. However, it is unknown where the author obtained her information because there are no citations available. So, in essence, it is improbable of the information in the book even being true, although she is presenting it as that.

Everything in this book is written in the past tense in which Bleeker attempts to leave the impression that southern California Indian cultures no longer exist. She even goes as far as to say, “None of the Chumash, the Gabrielino, the Luiseno, or the Juaneno Indians are left” (135).

Although Bleeker writes with a confidence that may lead one to believe that she knows what she is talking about, do not be fooled. This is just one of many stereotypical books that she has written about Indian communities of a particular region, and every one of them should be discarded from libraries everywhere.

by Denise Barragan

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