

Dancing Teepees
By Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve
Book Review

Holiday House 1989
Isbn# 0-8234-0724-1
32 pages

Ages: k-12

Rating: 1 Fish Hooks

Overview:

Five original poems by Mrs. Sneve, one by Calvin O'John and thirteen excerpts taken from anthropological and ethnographical books, referring to ceremonies for children or young adults, from within such tribes as: Lakota Sioux, Omaha, Hopi, Paiute, Zuni, Makah, Crow, Ute-Navajo, Mescalero Apache, Navaho, Dakota, Osage, and Wintu. Basic yet interesting illustrations are used in a combination of colored pencil and pastel watercolors to depict tribal affiliations.

Review:

Virginia Sneve has tried to make a children's book out of anthropological recordings of ceremonial songs without giving any background into the actual ceremonies or giving the reader any information on the tribes themselves. The excerpts having been translated into English seemingly losing meaning and rhythm, and without any setting information on the tribes or ceremonies readers will be disadvantaged in the understandings or meanings of the writings. If this book is going to be used in the classroom, the original journals/reports/books should be available for reference purposes.

Passages to think about:

“Far to the west,
Far by the sky
Stands a blue elk.
That elk standing yonder
Watches over all the daughters
On the earth.”

Dakota Elk Song

It would help to know what the ceremony is celebrating, what the significance of the elk is, and why would they watch over the daughters? Would this be sung anytime of year, during a specific ceremony? Would everyone or just certain members of our communities sing the song? Would it be sung to a young girl or to a girl up on becoming a woman? Without being a part of the tribe a reader is missing so much information that unless read for just words, not inflections to meaning, I would not recommend this book.

