

Granny and the Indians
Book Review
Macmillan publishing 1969
40 pages
Grades 2-5
LCCN 69-11304

Rating: Harmful - 3
By Marlette Grant-Jackson

Overview:

Granny Guntry lives in the woods far from town. She is not afraid of living alone or of the Indians watching from the woods. She has her gun, even if it doesn't shoot. "The Indians don't know that." One evening Granny stokes up the fire and goes to sleep, a spark from the fire burns down her house, and instead of moving into town she decides she will live with the Indians. She moves tells the Indians of her decision even over their objections she moves in. The Indians rebuild her house and promise to bring her food, if she will not come any further into the woods.

Before you start

Who is an Indian?

What do Indians look like?

Where are Indians?

There are over 500 Federally recognized Indian Tribes in the United States. Do they all stalk little old ladies? Sneaking behind trees peering through the dark woods?

As a child what images of people are you given in movies and books? Do you see all people as people or do you see them as sub-humans, animals or monsters that are scary? How would this book make you see Indian people as sub-human?

Passages to think about

Page 7.

"... Telling me the Indians are going to get me."

The tone is set on the first page of the story that "Indians" are scary or mean.

Page 8. "I have my gun. Of course, it doesn't shoot. But the Indians don't know that."

Page 9. "Eyes, Indian eyes, watched Granny."

Now the "Indians" are not only scary but sneaky but inferior.

Page 13. "Granny didn't see those eyes, those angry Indian eyes, watching her."

Why would the Indian be angry if a fish jumped into her basket? Are all Indians Angry? According to pages 13, and 17 all the Indian only secretly watch from a distance and are

always angry. Did they have a reason to be angry? That Granny was emptying their traps, and taking their food that they had caught or killed?

The drawings through out the book are stereotypical caricatures of native peoples. Big noses, Mohawks, feathers, and wrapped in blankets. Of course the Indian men are very stoic and mean looking and the women are fat and ugly.

Page 18. “We could shoot her,” said one Indian

Page 24 & 25. “The Indians danced and clapped with joy.” “Never was there such a pow-wow.”

So now they dance and sing with joy at pow-wows for the old woman's house burned down? How could a child see these people as friendly or cultured if the only reason they pow-wow is to celebrate someone else's hardships?

Page 29. Granny decides she will live with the Indians regardless of their objections.

Being portrayed as sub-human, they now are not given a voice or choice.

Page 30. “This place is a mess!” she said. “I'll have to fix that.” And she did.

Okay so now the scary, angry Indians are messy too?

Page 36. “I do like this house. You deserve a reward. I'm coming over every day to cook for you.” “Then I won't have to worry about meat for my stew pot.”

Isn't this a self serving reward? She will cook for them everyday, but they will be the ones that are hunting/fishing/gathering the food, and she will eat with them too. She is too self absorbed to notice that they do not want her in their homes, or lives?

Page 40. “I could do a lot for those Indians. I'll tell them so when I see them.”

What could she do for them that they weren't already doing for themselves? Give them smallpox, scare away the game with the noise from her gun, burn down their homes as she had done hers?

Discussion Ideas.

- 1) Where do you think this story took place?
- 2) What tribe do you think the Indians are?
- 3) What if an old lady said she was going to come live in your house/room?
- 4) How would you feel if every time you sat down to eat, someone had already taken your plate & food?
- 5) Do you think Granny was respectful?
- 6) Did the Indians have any reason to look with “angry eyes” at Granny?
- 7) What does an Indian Woman look like?
- 8) What did the Indians do for Granny?

Credentials:

As a Yurok & Karuk and mother of three children I have gotten an education to increase the success of our Native Students. I have a degree in Native American Studies with an emphasis on Education, and a minor in American Indian Education. I am also the Curriculum Resource Coordinator of the Indian Teacher & Educational Personnel Program at Humboldt State University.