



A Boy Called Slow

Joseph Bruchac , Rocco Baviera (Illustrator)

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Anxious to be given a name as strong and brave as that of his father, a proud Lakota Sioux grows into manhood, acting with careful deliberation, determination, and bravery, which eventually earned him his proud new name: Sitting Bull. Being named Slow and growing up in the shadow of a great warrior hardly dwarfed the prospects of this protagonist

A Boy Called Slow Details

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From Reader Review A Boy Called Slow for online ebook

Debbi says

Love this author

Alex Johnson says

Extremely beautiful illustrations -- extremely.

MK King says

Bruchac (Abenaki) does not disappoint in his retelling of the biography of Sitting Bull. A coming of age story of how success through effort defines a young person's journey.

Amanda L says

Much educational value in terms of exposure to the traditions of the Lakota tribe, and specifically Sitting Bull's humble beginnings and [generically addressed] significance in history. Though I wasn't really "sucked in." Perhaps an inherent consequence of it being written for third graders? Note: I have no children and don't otherwise find third graders particularly relatable, so take any remarks on its inability to engage me with a grain of [delectable pink Himalayan] sea salt.

I also wish it would have gone into detail about his later life and leading his tribe in resistance to policies leveraged by the US government.

April Helms says

The story of the man who would become known as Sitting Bull, told from when he was a child. A good book to sit down with an individual child or small group of children to read aloud to. May not be good for large groups; the illustrations are extremely dark. A shame, because they were otherwise nicely done. This gives children a look at a famous person as a child, and can serve as a nice springboard book.

Marisol Herrera says

Plot Summary:

This book recounts the true story of how the well-known Lakota Sioux Indian, Sitting Bull, acquired his

name. Having been named Slow (Slon-he) as a child, Slow's determination to earn a praiseworthy name like his father, Returns Again, motivates him to become a great warrior. He learns to become an excellent horse rider and hunter with bows and arrows. As a result of his persistence, Slow leads a successful raid against the Crow warriors thus meriting him the name Sitting Bull (Tatan'ka Iyota'ke).

Critical Analysis:

From the beginning, it is apparent that this story is a tale treasured by the Lakota Sioux Indians. Told in third person narration, Slow is not a complicated character. The plot of the story is also simple as Slow only wants to acquire a praiseworthy name as well as honor his people. However, Slow must perform a heroic deed that proves himself worthy of a significant name. Slow's journey of earning a new name is full of action and the conflict reaches a satisfying resolution when Slow leads a successful raid and is given the name Sitting Bull. Although time passes quickly from Slow being born in 1831 to him reaching adulthood, the setting gives readers an understanding of the protagonist. In addition, the author stresses the theme quite well so that readers can realize that determination and effort pays off in the end. In regards to the style used in the story, Bruchac maintains the integrity and authenticity of the Lakota Sioux culture by including culturally specific words, phrases, and customs in the story. As a result of this, readers gain a better understanding of the Lakota Sioux culture and their legendary hero, Sitting Bull.

As for the illustrations in the book, they complement the story well and reflect the cultural heritage authentically. The artist uses a beautiful blend of colors to portray sunrise, sunset, and night. Teepees, feathered war bonnets, bow and arrows, horses, and other regalia and clothing characteristic of the Lakota Sioux Indians are also illustrated and are appropriate because they create the setting in the story. In addition to these illustrations, some words and phrases used by the Lakota Sioux Indians are incorporated in the story to help readers gain a better insight of the culture and customs. The last illustration in the book, which is a realistic painting of Sitting Bull, is skillfully done in a manner that evokes reverence. All in all, I recommend this book because it superbly represents the Lakota Sioux culture and honors the legendary Sitting Bull.

Bernadette says

This children's book tells the coming-of-age story of Sitting Bull, a Hunkpapa Sioux leader who inspired his people to resist confinement to reservations.

I do not know enough about Sitting Bull or the Sioux to comment on the book's accuracy. But one thing this story taught me is the many nuances of some Native persons' names. The same word or phrase can take on various meanings as one's personal history unfolds. Sitting Bull was first called "Slow" because he did not eat his food quickly. Nor did he run to his mother when she called him (pg. 4). However, by the time Sitting Bull was a teenager, this name apparently came to mean that he was "careful and deliberate in everything he did." It also indicated a steadfastness -- that it "might take him a while to decide, but once he put his head down and went forward, he would not turn back" (pg. 16-17). Interestingly, the name "Slow" was discarded after the young man charged ahead of the other warriors and counted coup against a Crow enemy during a battle. Similarly, it was interesting to read Bruchac's articulation of Lakota manhood. A "true Lakota," Slow's mother says, is brave, "always help[s] and protect[s] your people," and "shares everything with the people" (pg. 11).

Because Sitting Bull actively fought the United States, it may be challenging for teachers in some parts of the country to teach positive aspects of American Indian history. I tend to prefer Bruchac's work for older

students for their greater complexity and more critical stance, but this serviceable picture book is valuable as a safe way to introduce the youngest children to the story.

Nikole says

Fountas-Pinnel Guided Reading:

Characters: Slow (Sitting Bull), Sioux members

Setting: The setting takes place in the region of where the Sioux Indian tribe lived.

POV: The point of view is told by the narrator's perspective.

A Boy Called Slow is about the Sioux chief leader Sitting Bull and his childhood. When young members of the tribe are young, they receive names that fit with who they are and their personalities. Sitting Bull received his name, Slow, from his parents because everything he did, he did slow. Slow wants to have a strong and brave name like his father, so he is eager to do so. One day, Slow killed a warrior that belonged to the Crow tribe and because Slow had a dream about the buffalo speaking to him, his name became Sitting Bull. Sitting Bull is a much more powerful and strong name compared to Slow.

I would use this book in a fourth grade classroom. Some topics I would discuss are how personalities make us who we are and talk about identity. I can have students describe themselves with certain adjectives and have the students research how they received their names. The themes of the book are Native American history, westward expansion, historic figures, leadership, responsibility, and self-esteem.

Brittany says

This book was very nice, but the pacing was not quite fast enough for my daughter. She kept asking when this book would be done. We got through it and hopefully she retained at least some of it. Reading books about indigenous people written by the people themselves is much better than the whitewashed versions so we will stick with it.

Maggie says

Genre: Historical Realistic Fiction

Reading Level: Primary (2-3)

I like the different point of view this book gave. It was encouraging how the boy adjusted to his name and it became a good thing for him and then he got his name changed when he lead the warriors.

Amy says

I didn't know what to think of this book just by looking at the title, but that is what captured my interest. This story is about a little boy in a Lakota tribe. Each child gets a name for how they act. Since this boy did everything slow, that is what his name was. The only way to change the name is by having a "dream" when

he gets older. He admires his dad, who has several names because of his wisdom, and his bravery. When Slow turns 14 he is able to go on a war party with his dad and fellow tribe members. He shows bravery by attacking the Cherokee tribe, and catching them off guard. The Cherokee tribe retreats and Slow and his Lakota tribe were able to get horses and other things to benefit their tribe. He goes back to the tribe and they change his name. This story is based off of an actual person named Sitting Bull.

This book has beautiful illustrations. I would say that this book should be for K-12. All age groups could get a lot of information on this book, and it would be something interesting to add to a history class when discussing Native Americans and Sitting Bull. I would definitely recommend this book for any child.

Sandy says

"A Boy Called Slow" by Joseph Bruchac and illustrated by Rocco Baviera is one of those amazing books that you will remember. It is the biography of Sitting Bull, from the time he was born until he was 14 years old when he earned his new name of Sitting Bull.

In the Hunkpapa band of the Lakota Sioux, a child was named from the way they acted, so the child who would grow up to be Sitting Bull was first named Slow because his actions were always slow and thoughtful. As Slow was growing up, he patiently waited for a powerful vision of bravery or his chance to do some brave act or special deed so that his name could be changed from Slow, as was the custom of his people. When he was age 14, he finally had a chance to prove himself in an act of bravery when he led an attack on a rival tribe who were coming to attack his people. None of the members of his tribe were killed in the battle and they were able to bring back many of the enemies' horses and weapons to give to their people. Slow finally earned a new name and from then on he was known as Sitting Bull, one of the most famous Native Americans that ever lived.

I Heart Corgis says

Grade/interest level: K-4th

Lexile level: 690L

Genre: Informational, Biography

Characters: Slow, his father, and the people of his village

Setting: the village of the Hunkpapa of the Lakota Sioux

POV: omniscient

A Hunkpapa family is excited to welcome in their first son, who is expected to follow in the footsteps of his great hunter father. The young boy was given the name Slow because he moved so slowly. He resented his name and longed for a chance to earn a new and much cooler name. He got the chance one night when he followed his father off to battle tribal enemies. They came out victorious, due greatly to Slow's valiant efforts and bravery. Afterwards, the boy was given a new name: Sitting Bull. It was a surprise ending to find out that this was the life story of one of the most well-known Native Americans who ever lived. Throughout the book, Lakota vocabulary is introduced to the readers.

Because of the ending, this book would be good to use in a classroom unit about Native American history and resistance to U.S. government policies. It would also be a good book to use in a unit about war in general and how it looks per various different cultures.

Rachel Collins says

Genre: Biography

Grade Level: 3

This is a picture book, but it is long! This is why I think it would be best for older grades. The story itself is very informational because it talks a lot about the culture of Slow's tribe. I thought the illustrations were good. I also thought the story was a little slow (no pun intended), but overall it was a good, educational book.

Kathy Roderer says

This beautifully illustrated picture book by the Native American storyteller, Joseph Bruhac, is the story of the famous warrior hero of the Lakota Sioux tribe, Sitting Bull. As a child, "Slow" was slow at everything he did. He wished he could have a stronger name. His mother and father told him that he must earn a better name by brave and wise actions. "Slow" gradually proves his bravery, but it takes an encounter with the enemies from the Crow tribe before "Slow" is able to earn his new name. The illustrations are captivating and depict both the setting and the action that takes place throughout the story. This is an authentic story of perseverance and fortitude that will encourage and inspire children who yearn to become something more than they presently are.
