



Raven: A Trickster Tale from the Pacific Northwest

Gerald McDermott

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Raven, the trickster, wants to give people the gift of light. But can he find out where Sky Chief keeps it? And if he does, will he be able to escape without being discovered? His dream seems impossible, but if anyone can find a way to bring light to the world, wise and clever Raven can!

Raven: A Trickster Tale from the Pacific Northwest Details

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Author : Gerald McDermott

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From Reader Review Raven: A Trickster Tale from the Pacific Northwest for online ebook

Manybooks says

I had purchased a paperback copy of Scott McDermott's Caldecott Honour winning Raven from Amazon a couple of years ago, mostly because I happened to find the cover image so visually appealing and stunning (and have always enjoyed folktale adaptations). However, as soon as I opened the book, I realised with much frustration that McDermott had once again (and like with his previous Caldecott Medal winning Arrow to the Sun) NOT really fully acknowledged either his sources or paid (at least to and for me) in any way even remotely sufficient homage and respect to the Native American tribes from whom and from whose culture, lore and traditions he had gleaned his material. And thus, my original happy anticipation quickly turned to major annoyance and yes, frustration, which was then rather massively and angrily increased further by the fact that at the back of my copy of Raven, there are instructions on how to make a totem pole out of toilet paper tubes (a fun and engaging, diverting activity for children perhaps, but considering that totem poles are generally regarded as sacred and cherished family and clan symbols, the mere idea of making totem poles out of bathroom tissue tubes is really not all that politically correct, even much bordering on the potentially inappropriate, and in my opinion, an almost unforgivable sign of disrespect).

Now I do very well realise and understand that for Raven, Scott McDermott has, indeed, at least included a very basic and vague introduction to trickster tales in general. But be that as it may, McDermott's presented introduction is (at least in my opinion) in absolutely no way even remotely sufficient, as while it does feature the general concepts of trickster tales and what they are supposed to represent and demonstrate, it does not EVER show the specific Native American sources, the specific tales and traditions of the Raven legend, and which of these the author/illustrator has then utilised for this, or rather for his adaptation.

Now the basic storyline of Scott McDermott's Raven really only consists of the bare bones of the legend, and since most Native American myths are based on real existent (or at least in the distant past existent) places and specific tribal cultures (in other words, while the Raven legend is a common myth of the Pacific Northwestern Coast of both the United States and Canada, each Native American/Canadian tribe would have had similar, but always variable renditions thereof), this here general and vague adaptation, with no specific cultural and tribal affiliations, well it reads like a rather uninspiring and imprecise miscellany (one that basically offers a vague introduction, but not very much more for me, and is especially lacking as an example of and for Native American folklore, of and for Native American mythology and spirituality). In fact, Raven's narrative, its text, actually quite underscores rather stridently its lack of cultural authenticity and that the author/illustrator, that Scott McDermott, has obviously quite refused to learn or even consider previous, prior lessons (as even with his Caldecott Medal winning Arrow to the Sun, there were legitimate issues raised with regard to a lack of cultural legitimacy, a lack of knowledge of Native American traditions, and that he had neither acknowledged nor described any of his particular sources, both literary and oral, and I really do not even know if McDermott had even consulted any folklore books or been told any tales).

As to the accompanying illustrations, they are bright and visually appealing (and seem at least to my own untrained eyes as authentic seeming enough). And while if taken and if regarded by and for themselves, I can and do at least somewhat understand the Caldecott Honour designation awarded for Raven, McDermott's text, his adapted narrative is simply too generalising, too inauthentic and even potentially massively stereotyping for me. And thus, Raven is ONLY recommended for the illustrations, as the text leaves much (if not everything) to be desired (at least on a folkloric and cultural level). And while this might indeed seem more than a bit curmudgeonly (and even though I do find the illustrations visually appealing enough), I have

now decided to render my erstwhile two star rating into but one star, as I am increasingly angered at and sick and tired of individuals like Gerald McDermott blithely and with no sense of humility and respect continuously appropriating Native American culture and lore (with insufficient resources, lack of respect and no sense or even remote comprehension that this might, indeed, be a legitimate issue and bone of contention for many American Indian and Canadian First Nations individuals).

Beverly says

In spite of all the criticisms of this book, I love the story and the illustrations. Gerald McDermott is one of the few author/illustrator's whose stories are short enough to share with preschool children. Most picture book folk tale books are too wordy for preschoolers.

Rll52013_andrea says

This book was another disappointment. Some of the illustrations, those without people, were beautiful. However, the people in the tale were shown cartoony and the story was not told with a voice that was believable as a Native American folktale narrator. The baby is said to have cried, "Ga!" multiple times, for example, as he toddles across the floor with a baby's body and a beak nose. Skip this one for sure.

Dolly says

This is a fascinating folktale that talks about how humans got light in the world. It has interesting illustrations and a simple enough narrative that most children can understand and enjoy.

This book was selected as one of the books for the November 2016- Caldecott Honor discussion at the Picture-Book Club in the Children's Books Group here at Goodreads.

Cody says

Good-ish? I think....Has it really been over 10 yrs since I thought about this book?

MaryJane says

I read this to some kindergardeners today. It is a useful introduction to the story of Raven bringing light to the People. Strongly colored artwork makes this a good book to share in a group.

***~Lan Lan~* says**

Loved this book as a child.

Katie Fitzgerald says

When the raven becomes a child, he looks like the main character in Tony Baloney to me. I thought the fact that he came into the world because a girl drank a pine needle was weird, but I guess that's not any stranger than the idea of a stork, and it's definitely more kid-friendly than a lot of the alternatives. I definitely think the illustrations outshine the story in this case, however. The story didn't feel logical to me.

Mariah says

I read this book to my students because I want them to learn about different traditions and cultures than their own. This book lead to some great discussions.

"Raven, the trickster, wants to give people the gift of light. But can he find out where Sky Chief keeps it? And if he does, will he be able to escape without being discovered? His dream seems impossible, but if anyone can find a way to bring light to the world, wise and clever Raven can!"

Kara says

A tale of a trickster god who pulls quite the long con in order to bring light to humans. Very cool artwork done in the style of the Pacific Northwest native wood carvings.

Judy says

Alternative title: How the Sun came to be in the sky

This is a colorful intro to the native peoples of the NW. We often see ravens (as well as crows) when we're in the mountains, so the kids will be able to connect with this familiar bird.

Tatiana says

Raven, the Native American trickster, feels sorry for those who must live in darkness, and he decides to help. Raven flies over mountains, valleys, and lakes to discover that light is being kept hidden inside the house of the Sky Chief. Using his cleverness, Raven is reborn as the Sky Chief's grandchild and uses his access to bring light to the world. The people fed Raven fish to thank him for giving them light.

I remember reading this book as a young child. During that time, I lived in the Pacific Northwest and was enamored with the art and culture of the Native Americans based in that area. I was thrilled to share it with

my second grade small group today as part of a guided reading lesson. The lesson was observed by one of my professors. All went well, but I was most happy when two students told me afterwards that they plan to check the book out of their school library to read it again! Encouraging more reading is always my goal!

N_amandascholz says

In a note at the beginning of this book, Gerald McDermott explains that the Raven is a trickster figure who appears in many Native American stories from the Pacific Northwest. Raven can both be a terrible mischief-maker and a benevolent guardian of humankind. His prominence in Native American culture also is reflected in how often his image appears in visual art like totem poles and jewelry. Both sides of Raven are included in this retelling of how Raven brings humankind light; he steals it from the Sky Chief. Raven uses his special shape-shifting ability so that he can be born as the Sky Chief's grandson, sneaking into his household to find the source of light that Sky Chief has not shared with humans. As a comic and mischievous boy, Raven delights his mother, grandfather, and elders. He charms them all into giving him access to the sun. When he has the golden ball as his plaything, he turns back into a raven and flies away to share it with his human friends.

Throughout the story, McDermott draws Raven in bold black, red, green, and blue in a style similar to that of totem pole carvings. Even as a young, human boy, McDermott maintains this color scheme, signaling to young readers that this toddler is really Raven. McDermott includes other visual cues that connect the boy to the Raven. Contrasting to the Raven's vibrancy, the soft, pastel landscapes of the Sky Chief's house emphasize tranquility and security. The plank house glows with muted yellows, oranges, and browns. Even my 18 month-old daughter commented that each page seemed to get "lighter". The interactions between the boy-Raven and his mother are delightful, creating intimacy and warmth. The last image of the Sky Chief's daughter as she watches her "son" fly away with the sun suggests love and amazement instead of disappointment. I think younger readers will enjoy this tale especially because the "toddler" tricks the adults into giving him what he wants. Older readers will appreciate the message about helping others.

My one concern, though, about this text is the lack of recommendation from Native American sources. I could not find a review from that perspective. Because I lack deep cultural understanding, I don't know if McDermott's retelling and illustrations of this tale are accurate and respectful renditions. To give it a higher rating, I would like that confirmation. OYATE -- a website authored by the Native American community and dedicated to highlighting such cultural sensitive representations of Native Americans in children's books is under reconstruction.

SamZ says

1994 Caldecott Honor - Favorite Illustration: when Raven is sitting on the pine tree, watching the Sky Chief's daughter by the river.

I feel like if McDermott *hadn't* included his note that 'Raven is the central character in most Native American myths and tales [in the Pacific Northwest], and just told this story that it would have been much better received. The fact that McDermott tries to set himself up as an expert on Native American stories, but does no research (or at least doesn't seem to rely on research or share sources) is what makes him so frustrating. However, if this story is just taken as a children's story of how Raven brought light to the earth, I rather enjoy it. The illustrations, especially are amazing. I love the way everything is depicted in such soft and

beautiful illustrations while Raven himself is so graphic and stylized. It really makes him stand out. So, while the illustrations are worthy of the honor, I almost wish the Caldecott committee would just disqualify McDermott's controversial work outright.

Traci says

A spry tale from the Pacific Northwest Territory about the sun came to be in the sky and how Raven put it there.

Clever and mischievous. Written and illustrated by Gerald McDermott, published by Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

#PB #NativeAmericanTale #raven
