



# The Round House

*Louise Erdrich*

Download now

Read Online ➞

# The Round House

*Louise Erdrich*

## **The Round House** Louise Erdrich

Winner of the 2012 National Book Award, Louise Erdrich's masterful novel is now available in a limited Olive Edition.

One Sunday in the spring of 1988, a woman living on a reservation in North Dakota is attacked. The details of the crime are slow to surface because Geraldine Coutts is traumatized and reluctant to relive or reveal what happened, either to the police or to her husband, Bazil, and thirteen-year-old son, Joe. In one day, Joe's life is irrevocably transformed. He tries to heal his mother, but she will not leave her bed and slips into an abyss of solitude. Increasingly alone, Joe finds himself thrust prematurely into an adult world for which he is ill prepared.

While his father, a tribal judge, endeavors to wrest justice from a situation that defies his efforts, Joe becomes frustrated with the official investigation and sets out with his trusted friends, Cappy, Zack, and Angus, to get some answers of his own. Their quest takes them first to the Round House, a sacred space and place of worship for the Ojibwe. And this is only the beginning.

**“The novel showcases her extraordinary ability to delineate the ties of love, resentment, need, duty and sympathy that bind families together...a powerful novel.”**

*--New York Times*

## **The Round House Details**

Date : Published October 10th 2017 by Harper Perennial (first published October 2nd 2012)

ISBN : 9780062357274

Author : Louise Erdrich

Format : Paperback 416 pages

Genre : Fiction, Mystery, Historical, Historical Fiction, Young Adult, Coming Of Age

 [Download The Round House ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online The Round House ...pdf](#)

**Download and Read Free Online The Round House Louise Erdrich**



# From Reader Review The Round House for online ebook

**Kelly (and the Book Boar) says**

Find all of my reviews at: <http://52bookminimum.blogspot.com/>

First things first, yes I am going to use gifs even whilst reviewing a real modern day classic. Don't like it? Suck it.

Okay. Now that that is out of the way let me ask you all a question: Are you a lunatic like me and sometimes actively seek out something in hopes that it will make you feel bad? If not, let me 'splain things. I was born with a bit of a deficiency . . .

It takes **a lot** to make me have any emotion aside from happiness or anger. The combo of a new position at work, Spring springing which equals a busier kid schedule and also snotty-faced allergy head for me, the time change effing with me for several days, and then ~~OH NO MY PERIOD!~~ other stuff that made me all . . .

Had me looking for an excuse (in the form of paper) to mope around about. The only problem was the combo of all of the above made it take **forever** for me to get through this book. There's a real good chance this could have been 4 Stars (or on the flip side 2) if I would have been able to power right through it. But since I could not, a 3 is what it shall receive.

*The Round House* started off great for me. There was the storyline I knew about that had drawn me to the book originally – that of a Native American mother who was brutally raped. (Since I'm me that was the extent of my knowledge about this story before beginning.) I appreciated that there wasn't much mystery surrounding the identity of the bad guy and I **really** appreciated the mother's realistic reaction to the life-altering attack . . .

*Can't you get up? Can't you . . . come back to life?*

*No, she said immediately, as if she'd thought about this too. I can't do it. I don't know why. I just cannot do it.*

(That's probably the part where normal people cry, but alas I am a robot and had zero feelings.)

I also loooooooooooooove a good coming of age story and Joe's narration most definitely brought that to the table. I didn't even mind the lack of punctuation (since I suck at punctuation it makes me feel better about myself when authors eliminate it altogether). But then the story went from simply adding in some additional plot points or twists and ended up getting a bit **too** far off the rails for me. Obviously the whodunit it had to be explained, along with the why – but I really didn't need to get sidetracked with Native American folklore or a million and one ancillary characters and their personal histories. I wanted Joe and his friends' story. Period. Once I started hearing about Linda and the priest and Mooshum and on and on I was like . . .

I'm sure I read it wrong. After all it won the National Book Award and errrrryone knows awards are **never** handed out to anything other than books which should be 5 Starred by the entire universe. I'll stick to Sherman Alexie stories from now on if I'm looking for Native America coming of age.

**EDIT:** To give credit where credit is due. I grabbed this from the library after reading Erica's review a few days ago. Just note that she usually does an even worse job than me at reading things right (if you can imagine), so take her 5 Stars with a grain of salt : )

---

## **Jack says**

Told from the perspective of a 13 year old Indian boy in 1988, it is the story of how the brutal rape of his mother effects his life, the life of his family and his community. A New York Times best seller, many must find this book compelling, however I found the writing tedious and had a hard time finishing.

---

## **Emilia says**

Louise Erdrich now has me as a fan, even though I've previously resisted reading her adult novels. There are two reasons for this: 1) As part of my Native American studies curriculum, I tried reading her children's book *The Birchbark House* to a class of second graders. It bored them to tears so I stopped reading the book aloud to them and abandoned it altogether. 2) Louise Erdrich was married to Michael Dorris, a professor/writer whose claim to Native American heritage was called into question. I'm still unsure if it's ever been proven whether or not he was authentically Native American. Dorris committed suicide after he and Erdrich divorced. Even though the latter is no wrongdoing of Erdrich's, I never really shook off the negative connection to Dorris.

I picked up *The Round House* before it was crowned the National Book Award winner because it received rave reviews on goodreads and because my local independent bookstore was selling signed copies. Here's one instance in which my book buying addiction has served me well! Everything about *The Round House* was just right. Erdrich captures how an Ojibwe family carefully deals with the mother's violent rape. Even though thirteen-year-old Joe and his dad Basil are angry and want to know who did this heinous crime, there's a calm thoughtfulness that is carried throughout the story. I attribute this quiet to the self-possessed nature that seems inherent in the Native culture.

One of the most interesting characters for me is Linda Wishkob, a white woman who was adopted by an Ojibwe hospital janitor after the doctor said she had a congenital deformity. Linda's birth parents decided to abandon her, taking only Linda's healthier twin brother Linden. The reader finds out that later as an adult, Linda is contacted by her birth mother because her twin needs a new kidney and that Linda is his only hope of being a good match. Linda's decision has a huge impact on how the story plays out and I love how Erdrich has given this control to a minor character.

*The Round House* is not only about tragedy and justice. It also focuses on the strong friendship bonds of horny and goofy teenage boys who are also dealing with very grownup themes of religion, spirituality, culture, and sense of belonging. I highly recommend this novel and yes, I will be reading more books by Louise Erdrich!

---

## Katie says

The Round House is narrated by Joe, a thirteen year old Indian boy (I hate the term “Native American”: it sounds patronising to my ears unless you’re going to call all white Americans “ex Europeans” or some such nonsense: “Indians” might be daft but at least like “cowboys” it summons up the exotic wonder and affection of childhood) living on a reservation when the events depicted in the novel take place. When his mother is raped and becomes a shell of her former self Joe is catapulted into a premature spiritual crisis. He wants justice but sees no signs of it arriving. He becomes disillusioned with his father as he learns how ineffective he is in his role as a local judge. The cases he tries all of a somewhat petty nature. Neither does he have any religious faith to provide guidance since the tribe’s spiritual life is on the decline as a result of the long term banning of all their traditional ceremonies. Only a few elders are still connected to the old ways. The depiction of a powwow was interesting as all its former significance seemed to have tapered to little more than an excuse to show off for the opposite sex, a mating dance. Joe will seek guidance from his father, one of his elders and from a Catholic priest, none of whom quite provides answers. When the perpetrator of the rape is identified and arrested but then released because white men can’t be prosecuted as a result of absurd disputes of sovereignty and jurisdiction related to Indian territory he will have to take the law into his own hands.

I thought the ideas behind this book deserved a slightly better execution. It begins really well and ends really well but is prone to flabbiness in the middle section. I’d have liked it to be tightened up, perhaps fifty or so pages edited out. It also deserved a more complex baddie. The rapist isn’t very convincing except as a prototype of malevolence. On the whole though this was a novel I enjoyed and it raises important issues concerning the rights of minority groups. In fact it made me sad that difference is becoming almost outlawed in our modern world as if the ideal is to homogenise the entire human race. Of course the insistence on difference, personified at its worst by ISIS, sometimes leads to violence so on one level it’s understandable we want everyone to be one happy family but there’s also the risk of losing so much culture and spirituality in the process. Erdrich did a great job of showing me what a rich cultural heritage the Ojibwe tribe have.

---

## Brian says

"Just an observation of the truth."

I initially gave “The Round House” 3 stars. It is a good read, with some excellent characterization and I read it at a decent pace and enjoyed it while doing so. However, when I was done with it, I was like “well, that was good, what’s next?” I was hoping for it to induce more than that in me. After discussing it with my book club, I moved up my opinion of it. I am content to give it 4 stars in the end.

The good thing about this novel is that the suspense builds nicely, the story is an interesting one, and Louise Erdrich is a smart enough writer not to harangue the reader with “issues”. She could easily have made this a novel about legal jurisdiction on Indian reservations, the effects of colonization on Native Americans hundreds of years after the fact, the impact of Catholicism on native populations, etc. However, to do so would have been to write a boring and pedantic novel. Instead, she has written a really interesting story that touches on (without whining or preaching) those topics in the context of a much more interesting human story that I doubt would isolate any reader. Kudos to her for that.

One of the joys of this text is the unexpected humor (it is quite funny at times) and the author’s wonderful

grasp of teenage boys. The characterization of the protagonist, 13-year-old Joe, and his three friends is well done. The book is set in 1988. I was a teenage boy in the 80s once, I recognized myself in many of the elements and characteristics she imbues the characters with in this text. The book is filled with real people, and there were times I was unexpectedly moved by some subtle element Erdrich created within a character. This happens in real life, and when novels capture that it pleases me to no end.

I have some small quibbles with the conclusion of the novel, but overall it is an enjoyable read. Don't read the critical blurbs printed in the book They overpraise "The Round House" to a ridiculous degree. It is a very good novel; it tells a poignant tale and will give you something to reflect on. Take it at that and enjoy.

---

## Will Byrnes says

The Round House is a knockout of a book.

Louise Erdrich is one of the true deities in America's literary Olympus. With *The Round House* she has used her mythic creative powers to give us a book that can be read as a page-turner about a terrible crime, the attempt to identify the criminal and take action, or as a rich, layered look at a culture in a place and time, and a lad coming of age within it, the tale imbued with telling details, a colorful palette of imagery and cultural significance. Or best of all, both.

The story opens with a father and son trying to remove invasive tree roots from the foundation of their home. This being Erdrich, you can figure that roots of one sort and another will figure in the story. Antone Bazil Coutts, known as Joe, is thirteen years old. His father, also Antone Bazil, is a judge with great reverence for the law. When Joe's mother, Geraldine Coutts, is brutally beaten and raped she retreats into the security of solitude, not only to allow herself time to heal, but to try to protect her family, and others as well. The thrust of the story is the puzzle of who and why. Erdrich drops clues along the way like a seasoned writer of detective fiction.

How we understand the world is informed by the stories we are told, the culture in which we are raised. Christians are raised on stories of magical abundance from a few loaves and fishes, reincarnation, angels, a sometimes communicative if often cranky, creator. A colorful local priest offers Christian teaching. Many of the Ojibwe we meet here have friends or relations who are believers.

The Ojibwe have their legends too. Erdrich shows this by imbuing her tale with magical realism. Native lore is both told in stories and shown as living reality. This is a world in which the shadow of a passing crane becomes an angel on a bedroom wall, a world in which a twin feels the presence of a doppelganger, of her separated other, and in which the evil spirit, a *wendiigo*, in a dark man seeks to devour the spirits of others. Ghosts figure in the story. Joe sees one. His father reports having seen ghosts as well. Mooshum, Joe's beloved grandfather, explains something about ghosts to Joe. Other characters as well report seeing ghosts or having their own other-worldly experiences. We see the Ojibwe affiliating with and being protected by various animals. Joe seeks guidance by visiting his clan totem, herons. Another tale is told of an Ojibwe being saved by a turtle. And an old bison communicates with one young brave in a legend. In addition family names include Larks and Coutts, and a town physician is Doctor Egge. I won't ask which came first.

We see the events in Hoopdance, North Dakota, through Joe's eyes. Joe has a group of pals, most importantly his studly bff, Cappy. They see things through a more contemporary lens, *Star Trek: The New Generation* (TNG), the series having begun less than a year prior. The boys' use of TNG stories, lore in this context, offers them meaningful language with which to define elements of their world. Of particular interest is the

episode called *Skin of Evil*. Don't check it out until you are reading the book. The relevance will be immediately obvious. The boys' banter and relationships give the feel of a Stephen King story, one of those in which he particularly shines at portraying young people. Together with Native beliefs and Christian teaching, we have an unusual trinity of primary interpretive influences.

What is the Round House? We learn its history and generation from Mooshum. It is a meeting place and is supposed to be a safe haven, a building the Ojibwe, one in particular, were told to construct by a spirit. Religious ceremonies, among other events, take place there. And yet it has been violated, just as tree roots attempted to insert themselves in the foundation of Joe's house. We learn the story of the building's genesis, see it in benign contemporary use, and see it again, under less than benign circumstances. It is also situated in a location near where sundry jurisdictions intersect, Ojibwe, state, federal, the perplexity of which figures in the tale.

There is a cornucopia of riches in Erdrich's construction. Joe's father's respect for the law is almost religious, and is mirrored by the knowledge of and contempt for the law expressed by the baddie. Native lore is compared to that of classic Greece. There are plentiful references made here that inform the story. Classics like the *Iliad*, Shakespeare, Plato and more recently, *Dune*, which resonates, with a young man taking on adult responsibilities. Basil refers to his *Handbook of Federal Indian Law* as his bible. This compares with the priest and his actual Bible and Mooshum, Joe's grandfather, with his oral history and tribal spiritual beliefs. Is Basil's belief in the law any more magical than Father Travis's belief in an eternal creator? Is Father Travis's belief in a resurrected savior any more out there than believing that one can communicate with an elderly bison?

Clothing is used to great effect as well. When one key character is in the hospital, two relations don his clothing as a way of feeling close to him. A woman with a dicey past is shown to full effect by the costume she dons. After an infection of the spirit, a woman says that some Ojibwe women "dressed me in a new ribbon dress they made. I started healing and felt even better." And the counterpart, nakedness, is also revelatory.

Hiding away permeates, from Geraldine hiding in her home and inside herself, to Nanabush, a character in a story, hiding inside the carcass of a dead bison, to the genesis of the Round House as a physical manifestation of the bison's carcass, a safe place, a hideaway.

Erdrich's work is imbued, not only with Native American characters, but with a look at Native reality on the ground, the buildings, the legal challenges, the extended family relations, in addition her use of magical realism. We are told of Native encounters with bison, turtles and cranes. We are also shown how Native people have been treated by the American legal system. That Joe's father has such long-term faith in the merits of the law is impressive, maybe inspirational and possibly sad.

Her compelling story carries us along at a nice pace. We get to enjoy interesting travel companions on this journey, people we want to spend time with, particularly Joe, and while we are getting from here to there, (maybe on a shuttle craft?) we are treated to a fascinating look at things we might not have seen before, ideas we might not have encountered, history we might not have known.

If you have read Erdrich before you know how good she is. If you have not read her before you are in for a treat. So if you get the urge to dash out and pick up a copy of *The Round House* all I can advise is *make it so*. You will definitely *engage*.

PS – In case, for some reason, you do not want to jump to the provided link, here is a **very** spoilerish bit on



the TNG episode noted above. (view spoiler)

=====EXTRA STUFF

Washington Post book review by Ron Charles, October 2, 2012

NPR interview with Erdrich re Round House

10/10/12 - TRH is nominated for a National Book Award

11/15/12 - And the Winner is...

1/16/13 - Cathy Dupont's review offers not only her insightful take on the book but several excellent links that enhance our appreciation for some of the core issues raised by Erdrich. Check it out.

---

## Michael says

A perfect novel to me, with Erdrich at the top of her game. Through several of her past books, she has a great track record in bringing to life a memorable line of characters in the Ojibwe tribe in North Dakota over different epochs of history. Here we get the vibrant portrait of a family on the reservation trying to recover from a brutal rape of the mother in 1988. The story is from the perspective of a 13 year old boy, Joe, with occasional overviews that reveal the fictional narrator is making sense of events from a point decades later.

Joe is an only child of Bazil, a tribal judge, and Geraldine, who works as a clerk in the tribal office, which includes processing documentation of tribal membership. His parents try to spare him from clear knowledge of what happened to his mother. Their devastation undermines his supports from them, so he seeks more from the company of his three close friends and from his extended family of uncles and aunts and his grandfather. He slowly learns what rape means and about the location of the crime near the old and unused tribal council meeting place, the Roundhouse. His idolized father feels impotent because felony crimes by whites on the reservation fall into county and state jurisdiction, while if the crime was on neighboring federal land it falls to the FBI to investigate.

Thus Joe is challenged to grow up fast. He begins to feel he must find the perpetrator and help bring him to justice. Past childish pursuits become transformed. Eavesdropping on adults as a form of fun becomes a compulsion to glean clues. His recourse in childish fantasies with his friends over roles of various characters from Star Trek The Next Generation fuels his quest to become a hero. The burgeoning of his own sexuality, sparked by fantasies about an aunt who once was an exotic dancer and the lusty joking and reminiscences of his grandfather and great aunt, is shadowed due to the rape. And his experimentation with alcohol with his buddies is not much fun given his sensitivity to its role in facilitating violence in so many families on the reservation.

Another form of guidance for Joe derives from spirituality. The myths and ghosts that imbue the consciousness of most Ojibwe come alive in this story, and they provide a framework for the significance of Joe's quest and of the Roundhouse itself. Joe also seeks some guidance by asking the new priest, Father Travis, about what to do about evil in the world. It is unclear whether he sees platitudes or wisdom from his answer:

*The only thing God can do, and does all of the time, is to draw good from any evil situation. ... Every time there is an evil, much good comes from it—people in these circumstances choose to do an extra amount of good, become stronger in their devotion to Jesus, or to their favorite saint or attain an unusual communion of some sort in their families.*

Through the story, Erdrich is able to paint a wonderful portrait of the tribal community, of the strengths it gains from family and cultural traditions, and the resilience of its members in the face of poverty and the lingering burden of historical disenfranchisement and genocide. There is much joy and humor throughout the tale despite the dark theme of the impacts of an unprosecuted rape. Erdrich's ability to make you both laugh and cry is my signature of excellence in reading. In my view, she deserved the National Book Award for this effort.

---

### **Julie Christine says**

On two successive nights this week I woke suddenly, yelling out in fright. In my dreams I was moments away from becoming the victim of a horrific assault. Shaken, I turned on the light, shifting uncomfortably in sheets soaked in my sweat, and I reached for *The Round House*. Louise Erdrich's profound novel haunted my dreams and moved me to tears and laughter in my waking hours.

Geraldine Coutts, an Ojibwe living on a reservation in North Dakota, doesn't escape from her nightmare. On a gentle spring Sunday in 1988 her thirteen year old son Joe and her husband Bazil, a tribal judge, peel her fingers from the steering wheel of her car and speed her unyielding body to the hospital. The front of her shirt is covered in vomit and she reeks of gasoline. Raped and nearly burned alive, Geraldine escaped when her captor went in search of matches.

Geraldine's physical wounds heal in time, but the spirit of this proud, vibrant woman is crushed. She tumbles into depression, refusing to leave her bedroom, barely eating, escaping her terror through the false protection of sleep. *The Round House* opens with this crime and it becomes the incident which ushers Joe, the novel's narrator, out of the smooth waters of his childhood into the murky depths of maturity.

*The Round House* is more than a coming-of-age story. The novel has many layers, each beautifully rendered in language that is so pure it belies the complex themes. The search for Geraldine's attacker propels the narrative and in this, it is a tense literary thriller. It is an exploration of tribal law and the protracted effort by the federal government to chip away at Native American sovereignty. Tribal political and judicial limbo is a chord that resonates throughout Erdrich's works, yet when told through the perspective of a child it becomes the character's discovery of his legacy and not the political agenda of the author. It is a novel rich with history, mythology and adventure.

But more than these themes, this is a novel of family. The tight union of Bazil, Geraldine and Joe forms the familial core. Erdrich's portrait of a strong woman collapsing dug so deeply under my skin – this cold reality was the source of my nightmares. But the ways a husband and a son respond to the woman they love as she falls apart, how hard they work to lift her up and save her, are heartfelt and poignant. Erdrich captures each character's emotions and reactions in vivid and graceful detail.

The theme of family extends through the tribal community. Erdrich reveals daily life on a reservation. She shows us what we think we know: the poverty and alcoholism on the inside, the marginalization and racism

from the outside. But she also conveys a sense of community that few of us will ever experience, no matter how idyllic our childhood. Within the tribe everyone belongs to everyone else – the definition of family is not limited to blood relations. The communal responsibility demonstrates a solid foundation built on shared history and beliefs.

Despite the violent crime that churns the plot, there are many moments of levity and sweetness in *The Round House*. The novel's comic foil is Mooshom, Joe's ancestor and tribal elder. And I do mean elder. He's entering his second century as salty as a sailor and with libido to spare. The many scenes Joe shares with his besties Cappy, Angus and Zack are ripe with thirteen year old boy hormones, antics and tenderness.

I can't sing loudly enough my praises for *The Round House*. I also can't believe this is the first Louise Erdrich novel I've read. It has been a year of celebrated-American author discoveries for me: Terry Tempest Williams, Cormac McCarthy, Louise Erdrich, not to mention the astonishing debut of Amanda Coplin (*The Orchardist*). That they are each deeply connected to the American West is significant to me as a reader. Through their words I have developed a deeper understanding, love and compassion for my enormous and complex backyard.

---

### **Elaine says**

There is obviously a lot of erudition about Native American lore, folkways and post-colonization history that went into this book. There is also clearly a lot of love put into the detailed recreation of life on a reservation in the 1980s. And there are also the bones of a classic coming of age story here, along with some memorable characters -- the randy foul-mouthed octagenarian grandparents, the quirky postmistress who was abandoned by her white family and is a rare "adopted in" Native American, the fierce athletic priest etc.

The problem is that the book feels flabby and bloated. There are a lot of detours, a few more characters than you can realistically keep track of (or care about), and one too many well meaning but ultimately dragging lectures on the Native American legal system and its relationship to white American law. Although nominally structured as a thriller, the novel has a notably leisurely pace. Thus, while I enjoyed almost all of it in an anecdotal pleasant kind of way, it never gripped me and forced me to turn pages. A solid 3.

---

### **Jenny (Reading Envy) says**

I was in a rush to finish this tonight before the National Book Award winner was announced, and I got to the last page right as the ceremony was starting. It ended up winning this year's award, so I'm glad I chose this novel to read over the other two I didn't get to.

In an Ojibwe community, a mother is brutally raped. The novel is told from her son's perspective as their family tries to heal and they attempt to catch who did this horrible thing. Most of it is told in the time of the story, but occasionally the son steps back and sprinkles in details of things that happen in his adult life, such as his marriage and his career. You know his friend doesn't last into his adulthood before you know how or why he dies.

Overall, I feel this novel suffers a bit in its storytelling techniques. The story goes along rapidly, very action focused, until around page 115 where you take a side trip to one person's background story. This happens a

few more times, but not often enough for it to flow easily in and out the narrative. They serve a specific purpose to give the son details he needs, but I felt they were a little forced. The novel also reads so easily that it is almost to its detriment. I fear I may not remember it for very long.

There are a lot of surrounding issues - Native American vs. American law, jurisdiction issues, poverty, inequality, etc. The author knows them well. I would like to read more of her books, and plan to next year when I do the Around the USA in 52 Books challenge.

---

### **Annet says**

This is a wonderful, moving book, I'm sure it will be one of my reading highlights this year. Picked it up at Newark airport last January. Great, interesting and fascinating story, variety of great and weird characters, a bit of surreal supernatural woven in, insights into the culture, traditions and life on an Indian reservation, the love of family and friends, a coming of age story which made me think a bit of Stand By Me. It's the story of Joe, 13 years old, living on an Indian reservation in North Dakota, whose mother is brutally attacked. The family situation changes overnight and is desperate. The mother in shock only stays in her bedroom, the father, a tribal judge, does not know what to do, and Joe wants to find the attacker. He sets off with his friends Cappy, Zack and Angus to investigate. I stayed up late last night to finish the book, just could not stop. Highly recommended.

---

### **Debbie says**

I hate cilantro; even a tiny bit can ruin an otherwise wonderful dish. I mostly hate ghosts, mythology, dreams, religion, and political messages, and these topics all ruined an otherwise fine novel. I realize it's a long list of dislikes, but really, a novel should be all about character and plot development.

The characters were sort of boring or too stereotypical, and the plot, though interesting, was too broken up for me to appreciate it. Okay, the main character, Joe, did struggle with the big issues of shame and morality, and he was well-drawn, but I didn't really feel a whole lot for him (I might have been too annoyed at the author to have room to enjoy him much).

I don't understand why a good writer feels the need to add ghosts (the novel loses its veracity immediately). Or why she forces me to listen to an unrelated little precious myth, or preaches about oppression, or adds a bunch of church scenes—when all I really want is for her to finish telling me the story already! Pace is everything, and I resent the intrusions. Luckily I wasn't asked to edit this book or it would have ended up a very short novella.

It feels lonely when everyone else seems to be gushing over this National Book Award winner, and I'm fairly outraged that I got cheated out of a good read. I read Erdrich novels twenty years ago and liked them; this one didn't cut it. Either she has lost her touch or I've become a way harsher critic. I can't believe I'm giving Erdrich 2 stars, but I really didn't like the book.

---

## **Cathy DuPont says**

With many thanks to my friend, Will Byrnes, I read *The Round House* and while stingy with five stars, this book was without question, five stars. If I could give it more, I would.

I had prior knowledge of the problem of crimes against women on U. S. Indian Reservations specifically the inability of determining jurisdiction of areas, adding to the fact (due to a U.S. Supreme Court ruling) that on the reservation, non-Indians cannot be charged with crimes committed on Indian reservations, so I wasn't surprised with the storyline, actually two intertwining storylines, both of which were exceptional.

Some facts on crimes against women on U. S. Indian reservations:

- Native women suffer violent crime at the highest rates in the country.
- On many reservations, Native women are murdered at a rate more than 10 times the national average.
- Violent crime rates in Indian Country are more than 2.5 times the national rate; some reservations face a rate 20 times higher.\*

### **August 23, 2012**

"Early this week, two U.S. House Representatives members and the Tacoma News Tribune took clear stands against protecting women from sexual assault. Representatives Todd Akin, R-Missouri, and Steve King, R-Iowa, did so by promoting the concept of "legitimate rape." The News Tribune did so by attacking the only real hope for combating the national pandemic of violence against Native women." (Later in the story, then VP candidate Paul Ryan voted to omit the tribal protections.)\*

\*<http://crosscut.com/2012/08/23/gender...>

### **As a nation, what is wrong with us, this continued injustice?**

#### **My brief review**

Louise Erdrich successfully blended dialog, scenery and storylines into two related and life changing events; the rape of a wife and mother and the 'coming of age' for her son, Joe. The Ojibwe reservation is where the mother, Geraldine helps women on the reservation, the father, Bazil, a tribal judge and the story as told by their 13 year old, Joe.

Geraldine, the woman, is brutally raped and afterward without telling anything about the assault, goes into self-imposed seclusion leaving Joe and his father, rudderless.

Joe and his two devoted friends support him in his efforts to try to determine who was responsible for changing his life so quickly and dramatically. They want to make it right again.

For an in depth and superb review, my friend Will Byrnes *The Round House* offers the best. After reading Will's review you will surely call or go to your library or bookstore get the book, put down what you're reading and begin an unforgettable journey delivered by Louise Erdrich and enhanced only by Will's review.

Further links to the subject of crimes against women on U. S. Indian reservations:

From Indian Law Resource Center

<http://www.indianlaw.org/safewomen/vi...>

Futures without Violence - Violence Against Women \*\*

\*\* “The confusing division of authority among tribal, federal and state governments results in a jurisdictional maze that is complicated by the lack of tribal courts’ criminal jurisdiction over non-Indians, the practical impact of Public Law 280, and other limitations on tribal criminal jurisdiction.”

While Aljazeera is certainly a controversial news organization, curiously enough this was the very most comprehensive fact, figures and videos about violence against women on United States Indian Reservations.  
Justice Denied

#####

NT Times Native Americans Struggle With Reservation Rape article, May 22 , 2012

---

### **Terry Everett says**

What a powerful book.

---

### **Melki says**

I still haven't forgiven Louise Erdrich for *The Crown of Columbus*, that turd of a book she wrote with her then-husband, Michael Dorris. National Book Award winner, or not, quite honestly, I only read this one because I needed a book set in North Dakota for my *Reading the 50 States* challenge.

I was actually fine with the main storyline of how a mother's brutal rape affects the entire family, UNTIL Erdrich began introducing minor characters with stories to tell that were far richer and more compelling than the "big" plot. Then, I realized I'd much rather be reading about THESE people. I wanted the book to be about Mooshum, the ancient man who relates magical fables in his sleep, Grandma Ignatia with her raunchy tales of her sexual past, or Linda Wishkob, the unattractive, adopted twin who donates a kidney to her undeserving brother. They were all more interesting than Joe and his parents, and I was annoyed I had to spend time with them when there were all these other, more colorful characters around.

On a side note, this title will forever have the rather dubious distinction of being the book that convinced me that I need to watch *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. If that show is now going to be the source of literary references, then dammit, I've got to watch it.

Look out, Worf. Here I come.

---