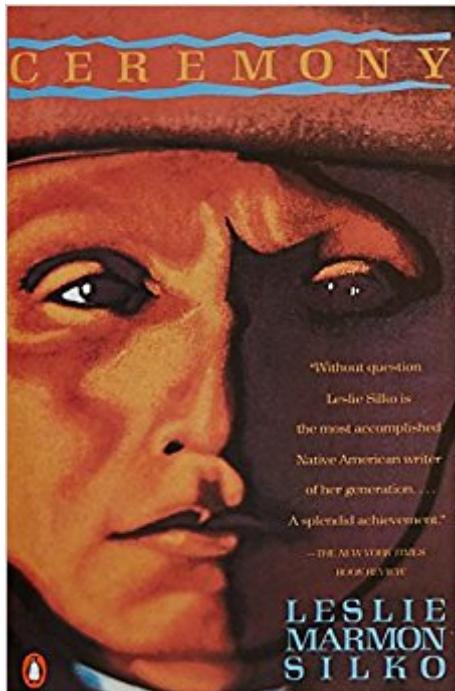


The book was found

Ceremony (Contemporary American Fiction Series)



Synopsis

Tayo, a young Native American, has been a prisoner of the Japanese during World War II, and the horrors of captivity have almost eroded his will to survive. His return to the Laguna Pueblo reservation only increases his feeling of estrangement and alienation. While other returning soldiers find easy refuge in alcohol and senseless violence, Tayo searches for another kind of comfort and resolution. Tayo's quest leads him back to the Indian past and its traditions, to beliefs about witchcraft and evil, and to the ancient stories of his people. The search itself becomes a ritual, a curative ceremony that defeats the most virulent of afflictions—“despair.”

Book Information

Series: Contemporary American Fiction Series

Paperback: 260 pages

Publisher: Penguin Books; Reprint edition (March 4, 1986)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0140086838

ISBN-13: 978-0140086836

Product Dimensions: 5.1 x 0.4 x 7.7 inches

Shipping Weight: 8 ounces

Average Customer Review: 3.8 out of 5 stars—See all reviews (263 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #228,815 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #364 in Books > Literature & Fiction > United States > Native American #476 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Native American Studies #16272 in Books > Literature & Fiction > Literary

Customer Reviews

I'd read some of Leslie Marmon Silko's short stories before starting on this novel. They were like gems, polished, smooth, and echoing with a gentle quiet not commonly found in English literature. CEREMONY is a far more ambitious undertaking; the building of a literary castle. Set in New Mexico, in and around Laguna Pueblo, immediately after WW II, the plot concerns a young Indian war veteran who has been traumatized by his experiences as a prisoner of the Japanese. When we meet him, he's barely conscious, being released from a mental hospital. He lost his half-brother on the Bataan death march, his favorite uncle had died at home, a herd of special cattle---adapted to life in the desert---has disappeared, and his old friends are drinking themselves away in bars. To top it all off, Tayo, the central character, is illegitimate and half-white, raised by relatives, not accepted

fully by everyone in the family. He seems destined for the asylum, jail, an early death from alcohol, or suicide; not exactly unknown fates for young Indians then or now. Elders arrange a healing ceremony for him, but the healer is a maverick, not tied to traditional methods. Tayo's whole life and consciousness merge into the healing process and that process begins to look like a prescription for the Indian peoples in North America to heal nearly-fatal wounds dealt their cultures over the last five centuries. Silko sees the materialism and violence of Western civilization as a curse threatening the continued existence of everyone on the planet, a curse stemming from evil itself rather than from a particular group of people. In tones that ring most uncannily today, she wrote in 1977 [p.]

Richard Alvarez Gonzalez 802-90-0261 Expository Writing Review of Ceremony

War is one of the most terrible evils man has known, yet it has been going on for ages. Since the beginning of known history man has been at war with his fellow man, himself and the world. In Leslie Marmon's novel Ceremony the point of view towards war is different from that of most people. A sense of loss takes central stage in the novel; loss of loved ones, loss of land, of heritage, and loss of self. Tayo and his cousin, Rocky, joined the army looking for a way out and adventure, they would go and fight a Great War. While fighting in the jungles of Asia, Rocky gets killed. Now Tayo is back, the war is over, but not for him. Tayo feels responsible for his cousin's death. He was supposed to protect him and he failed, and now his memory haunts Tayo's every second of existence. In the beginning of the novel we take a look into Tayo's disturbed and tormented mind, as he takes us along the story of his life, of death, war, and rejection. Tayo is a man desperately trying to hold on to his sanity while he wastes it away on a bottle of alcohol which sends him into constant sickness spells and confines him to a bed from which he is terrified to move. As his sickness progresses, Tayo is taken to see a medicine man that sends him on a journey to retrieve his uncle's dreams, thus putting his own fears and doubts to rest. It is during this journey that Tayo completes his healing process with the aid of a woman with whom he will fall deeply in love, Ts'eh, a mystical character that appears and disappears various time in the novel, seeming as if a dream or a creation of Tayo's mind.

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