



My Heart is on the Ground: the Diary of Nannie Little Rose, a Sioux Girl, Carlisle Indian School, Pennsylvania, 1880

By Ann Rinaldi

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Acclaimed historical novelist Ann Rinaldi makes her Dear America debut with the diary of a Sioux girl who is sent to a government-run boarding school to learn the white man's customs and language.

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- Sales Rank: #237827 in Books
- Brand: Scholastic Inc.
- Published on: 1999-04-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: .82" h x 5.56" w x 7.96" l,
- Binding: Hardcover
- 206 pages

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Editorial Review

From School Library Journal

Grade 4-7-As a potential translator and bridge between two cultures, Nannie Little Rose is assigned by her teacher at the Carlisle Indian School to keep a diary in order to practice and improve her English skills. Beginning in broken English, Nannie tells of her incredibly difficult first year at the school, including entries detailing her previous life as her ability to communicate in English grows. From December, 1879, to October, 1880, readers follow a remarkably resilient girl, uprooted from her home and culture, trying to find a place for herself in a rapidly changing world. Loyal, caring, and creative, she is able to see a spirit helper in a kitchen mouse and willing to defy regulations in mourning the death of her dearest friend. Rinaldi depicts widely divergent cultures with clarity and compassion. Captain Pratt, founder of a school that forcibly strips children of their native culture, also provides vocational training and field trips, and responds to his students as true individuals. The body of the text is followed by an epilogue telling of Nannie's later life, an extensive historical note, and black-and-white photos. The period, the setting, and Nannie herself all come to life. An excellent addition to a popular series.

Faith Brautigam, Gail Borden Public Library, Elgin, IL

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From Booklist

Gr. 4^-6. In a "diar-ee" form, written in broken English that realistically grows more polished as the story continues, 12-year-old Nannie Little Rose reflects on her life as a Sioux girl living at a Pennsylvania boarding school for Indian children. Rinaldi draws on material she unearthed about Richard Henry Pratt's Indian School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania (including stories that appeared in the school's newspaper), to give face to Nannie, whose journal begins on December 1, 1897, and ends the following year in October, when she decides to become a teacher to help her people. The entries are a poignant mix of past and present--Nannie's life with her family, encounters with other students, the horrific death of a friend, the efforts of both well-meaning and misguided adults. They burst with details about culture and custom, adding wonderful texture to this thought-provoking book, which raises numerous questions as it depicts the frustration, the joy, and the confusion of one of yesterday's children growing up in two cultures. A solid addition to the Dear America series. For a similar story, try Shirley Sterling's *My Name Is Seepeetza* (1997). *Stephanie Zvirin*

From Kirkus Reviews

Beginning with slow, laboring words that lead first to ghastly realization, and then to mature understanding, Rinaldi (Cast Two Shadows, 1998, etc.) explores some of the tragic fates of Native American children during the late 1800s. This entry in the Dear America series explains how thousands of such children were sent away from their families and people to schools intended to purge them of traditional ways. As a student in Pennsylvania's Carlisle Indian School, Nannie, 12, struggles to cope with the mysterious "white" people. She protects her vulnerable best friend, Pretty Eagle, who often goes into spiritual trances. When the whites mistake Pretty Eagle's trance state for death, and bury her alive, Nannie knows she could have prevented the tragedy, and finds this knowledge all but unbearable. This is a strong addition to Rinaldi's ongoing historical explorations; it builds slowly to a terrifying climax that will linger long in readers' emotions, and offers genuine insight into the courage, weaknesses, and essential humanity of Native American children who made the painful transition from old ways to new ones. (b&w photos, maps) (Fiction. 12+) -- *Copyright ©1999, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

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