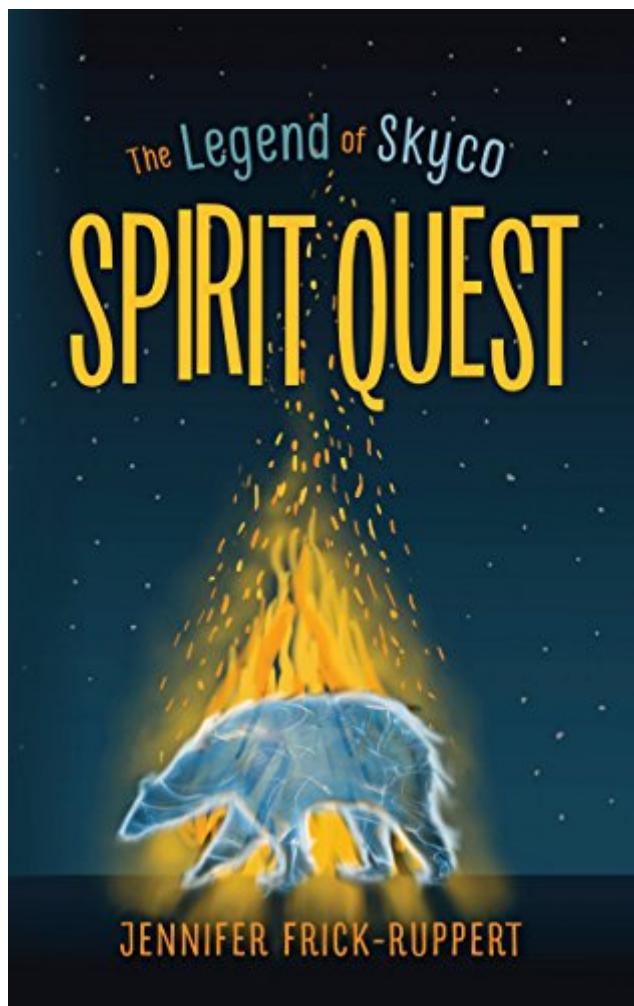


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Spirit Quest (The Legend Of Skyco)



Synopsis

Skyco, an Algonquin boy, is heir to the great chief Menatonon, but he has much to learn before he can take his place within the tribe. He studies with the shaman Roncommock, who teaches him how to enter the spirit world and communicate with spirits and other animals, while he also learns practical skills of hunting, fishing, and starting a fire from other men in his village. But learning to throw a spear with an atlatl and shoot arrows with a bow are just precursors to the ultimate test, the husquenaugh, when he is challenged to use his hard-earned skills to survive the harrowing life-or-death ritual.

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Customer Reviews

Spirit Quest is exactly the type of book I loved to read when I was in elementary school & junior high and for that, I'm giving it 4 stars. This book wasn't what I expected when I picked it up. I thought it was going to be a fast paced adventure and have the husquenaugh be the main focus of the story.

The husquenaugh is a ritual that boys go through to become men and full fledged members of the tribe. The ritual is a focus of the story, but its more a background focus. You follow Skyco's preparation for the husquenaugh and everything that leads up to it. This book is fascinating simply because of the amount of information wrapped up within the story. There is a lack of books featuring Native American culture, and I really appreciate the amount of research the author put into the subject matter. She didn't just write a book based on what she saw on TV and in movies. It is quite obvious while reading, that she not only researched the tribe, but also plants and animals of the region as well. This wasn't a book I sped through trying to get to the ending. In fact, I read it over the course of a month (while reading other books). This was a book I picked up here and there, read a chapter, and then mulled over the information. I savored the experience and enjoyed the journey. One last note is that Lorna Murphy did an exceptional job with the illustrations peppered throughout. Every single time I saw one, it added just a little bit of joy to the book. I received an advance reader copy of this book that I have chosen to review.

The Legend of Skyco is a charming and informative adventure of a Native American boy coming of age in coastal North Carolina immediately before the 1585 arrival of the first English colonists. Skyco is the designated successor of Menatonon, Chief of the Algonquin village of Chowanook, which is situated on a bluff above the Chowan River. The story unfolds in Chowanook, and at various nearby locales bordering Albemarle Sound, including the North Carolina Outer Banks. This much is strictly factual, because Skyco was a real boy, but with the exception of a brief recorded interaction with the first English colonists, Skyco's life is an historical blank slate. This biographical void is filled creatively by the author who draws together the scattered historical threads of the period and weaves them into a richly embroidered story of the joys and challenges of life, and the marvels of landscape, in the primeval forests and marshlands of eastern North Carolina. The responsibility of future leadership taxes young Skyco physically and emotionally as he progresses toward the rite of passage to manhood, the dreaded husquenaugh. But despite his adolescent insecurities, he nevertheless demonstrates a steadiness of mind and creative purposeful action while facing his challenges. With an inborn eagerness for knowledge, he learns the hunting, fishing, gardening, and healing skills of men and women in his village; he comes to appreciate the special talents of his peers and elders; he gains wisdom with the help of the shaman Roncommock, who guides him, shape-shifting, into the minds and bodies of animals--an ant, a fish, a falcon--whose unique perspectives teach him deeper truths. Later in the narrative, while gazing dreamily seaward from the crest of a mountainous, outer-banks, sand dune, Skyco foresees the coming of explorers

eager for resources--and shudders at the prospect for his people. Eventually, as he matures and becomes a man, his childhood insecurities give way, first to self confidence, and then to clear expressions of leadership. Stylistically, this story is noteworthy for its naturalism. While there are a few scenes in which tension reaches a high pitch, e.g., an encounter with a bear, a shark, and a hostile warrior, most of the story is an ecological excursion into the cultural and natural histories of people and place. Even Skyco's shape shifting may be described similarly as magical naturalism, for although his metamorphosis is magical, his animal-body sensations and experiences are in accord with actual biological facts. If you ever wanted to know about the historical landscapes and waterways of coastal North Carolina and their remarkable animals and plants, this book re-creates the unspoiled richness of that world. If you ever wondered how Native Americans in this area lived, hunted, fished, farmed, celebrated, interacted; how they made weapons, wigwams, garden tools, cookware, canoes, fishing weirs, clothing, and ornaments, this book provides a glimpse of that culture, so different from our own, one based on reciprocity and mutual respect. The naturalistic style of this book reflects the background of its author, who is a naturalist, avid outdoors-person, award-winning teacher, and celebrated public lecturer. Her previous two books, of non-fiction, are concerned with the seasonal natural history of the southern Appalachian region, and the salt-marshes and coastal areas of the American Southeast.

Yay for more indigenous voices in YA literature! Jennifer Frick-Ruppert transports readers back to pre-European contact America in what today would be the state of North Carolina. Skyco is a member of the Algonquin nation and is about to begin the all important transition from childhood to adulthood by making his spirit quest. Along with other young men of the tribe, Skyco is given a teacher and must complete a series of tasks that will lead him to his destiny. Will Skyco be the next chief of his tribe? Or will he become a medicine man? Heavily researched, imagine my surprise when I completed the book and discovered that Skyco was a real person. It certainly adds an extra dimension to the story. The author's note was quite fascinating and is accompanied with an appendix of Algonquin vocabulary. Due to the latter, I would suggest that readers find a bound copy rather than an ebook so that you can flip back and forth. "Spirit Quest" transported me to the right time and place and rang true about Native American life before interactions with the Europeans. The story affirms the customs and teachings of the people with a great deal of respect and the illustrations created by Lorna Murphy are carefully placed within the text. Although this book didn't have me on the edge of my seat, I really liked the story for its focus on the teachings of the Algonquin nation. This is the same review that I published on my Goodreads account on April 9th,

This book was so entertaining and interesting! Reading as an adult, I found myself so interested in the adventures that Skyco experiences as he learns more about his environment and discovers the life lessons found in understanding the biology and instincts of a variety of creatures. Jennifer Frick-Ruppert is an excellent and graceful writer who clearly draws on her expertise to bring the prehistory of North Carolina to life for young readers. This is definitely a book that I will read to my future children.

The author did her research, and it shows. Spirit Quest offers a glimpse into what Algonquin culture in the 1500's might have been like. This book has rich, descriptive prose that draws the reader directly into the scene. I found myself seeing, smelling, and feeling everything that Skyco experienced. A must read for children wanting to learn more about Native American history and culture.

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