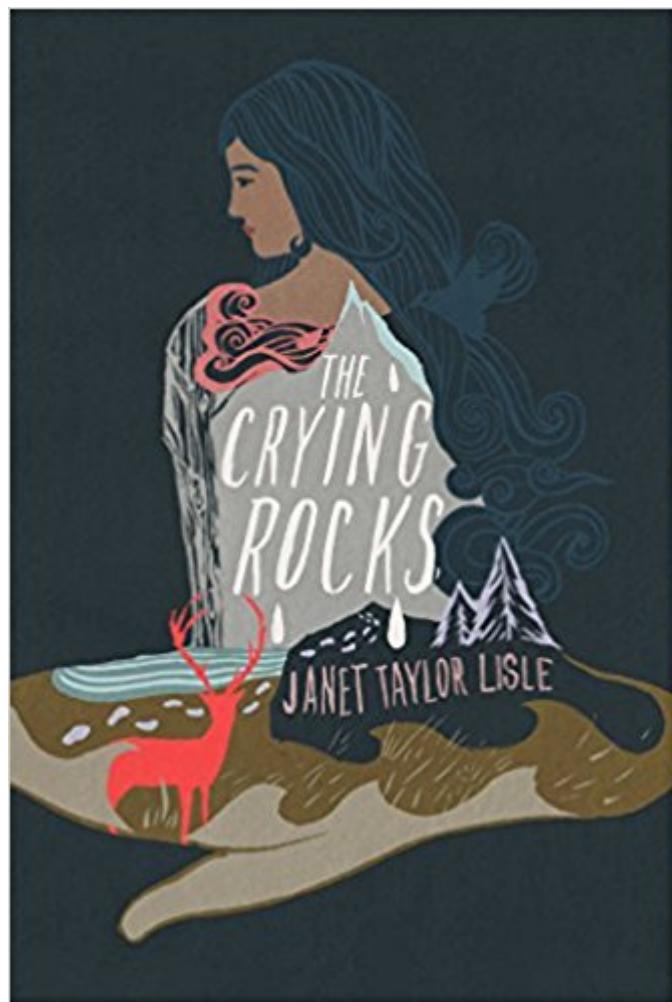


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# The Crying Rocks



## Synopsis

From Newbery Honor author Janet Taylor Lisle comes a lyrical story about one girl's discovery of her startling past and her search to understand her complicated present. Joelle's height and dark skin set her apart from everyone in Marshfield. It's no secret that she's adopted, but where is she from? Aunt Mary Louise says she came from Chicago on a freight train, but the story doesn't sit right with Joelle. There's something more. She feels it. Carlos, the quiet boy in Joelle's Spanish class, sees it. When he tells her that she looks like a girl in the town library's old mural of Narragansett Indians, Joelle can't help sneaking a look. She's surprised by a flicker of recognition. And when Carlos tells her about the Crying Rocks, where the ghosts of Narragansett children are said to cry for their lost mothers, Joelle knows she must visit them. When they finally set out through the forest, neither she nor Carlos anticipates the power of the ancient place, or the revelations to be found there—about the pasts they've both buried, and the discovery of a rare kind of courage that runs deep in Joelle's family.

## Book Information

Hardcover: 208 pages

Publisher: Atheneum/Richard Jackson Books; Reissue edition (May 16, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1481496972

ISBN-13: 978-1481496971

Product Dimensions: 5.5 x 0.9 x 8.2 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.7 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars 6 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #539,898 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #41 in Books > Teens > Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Adoption #223 in Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Adoption #347 in Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories > Native North & South Americans

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Grade 5-7-Lisle returns to Rhode Island in this beautifully crafted story of 13-year-old Joelle and her search for her origins. Aunt Mary Louise often tells the teen how she was found by the railroad

tracks when she was five years old and adopted by Mary Louise and her husband, Vernon. This account, which changes from time to time, seems to confuse rather than enlighten Joelle about her past. One day Carlos, a classmate, tells her that she looks like the local Narragansett Indians in an old painting in the public library. The sense of connection Joelle feels with one of the figures in it starts her on her quest in earnest. When she and Carlos visit the mysterious "crying rocks," they hear an eerie crying, and Carlos is reminded of his brother's death through a climbing accident. Lisle resolves the mystery surrounding Joelle's origins deftly and believably, and a series of events that seemed horrific and abusive comes into focus as something quite different. Carlos, too, resolves the mystery of his role in his brother's death. However, the "crying rocks" remain mysterious to the end, as they echo and provide counterpoint to the theme of love between parents and children, and the complexity of the bond between them. Joelle is a well-developed character, feisty and full of bravado, which belies her vulnerability. The use of the present tense gives the narrative a sense of immediacy. The issues of ethnic identity and heritage are dealt with in a multidimensional and complex way. This lovely portrait of a strong girl facing her past and present with dignity and courage will receive a wide and enthusiastic readership. Sue Giffard, Ethical Culture Fieldston School, New York City

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Gr. 6-9. Thirteen-year-old Joelle's background is a mosaic of half-truths, odd bits of information, and startling stories. Her mother threw her out a window in Chicago; she traveled by freight train to the East Coast, and at the age of five, she lived with a loony old woman. Then "Aunt" Mary Louise and her husband adopted her. Never comfortable with herself, Joelle isn't sure she wants to be friends with classmate Carlos; however, as they research an area Indian tribe, the Narragansett, they grow close, especially after Joelle begins to experience odd sensations. For one thing, she resembles the Indians, and when she and Carlos go into a forest, the cries she hears, supposedly Indian women and children, affect her deeply. After Mary Louise dies, Joelle's complicated birth story emerges. Lisle is quite ambitious, walking a tightrope between the supernatural and reality and teasing with myriad clues about Joelle's identity. Many readers will return to the book to see if everything "fits." It does, mostly--though a suspension of belief here and there may be required. A reread will still be a pleasure because Lisle's fluidly written story fascinates. Ilene Cooper

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for school

I am a sixth grade student and I read The Crying Rocks by Janet Taylor Lisle, its about a girl named Joelle, who was adopted when she was five years old by her adopted parents who she called Aunt Mary Louise and Vernon. In this book she loses a loved one though. She also makes friends with a boy named Carlos, who is in her Spanish class. They both spend most of their time together learning about these Indians who lived years before and were killed by a surprise attack by the English. Her and Carlos go into the woods to see an old Indian council place where she sees visions of what happened to the Indians in the land, and what they did for a living. She finds a painting in the library that she sees two girls on a hill watching the other Indians like they were out cast of the tribe but Joelle remembers them as if they met before. When she goes to the Crying Rocks with Carlos she learns something about him that he hides from her even though she doesn't mind but she also finds something in the swamp that scares them and then to make things worse they hear a loud moan. So now they are wondering what made that noise and where did it come from? I loved this book so much it kept me reading late into the night wondering what would come next. My favorite part was when she goes to the Crying Rocks and when Carlos tells his secret . I think this was Janet's best books and I will read more of them too. So I hope you like this book as much as I did .

" 'So tell me about these Indians who were supposedly around here,' she says, as if she's never heard of Indians before. Which is laughable. Half the names of places in Rhode Island are Native American. There are statues of Indians in the parks and plaques that tell where this treaty was signed or that attack happened. Everyone has heard of the Indians, they just don't think about them that much. Indians are ancient history here, like three hundred years ago or more." "One little, two little, three little IndiansFour little, five little, six little IndiansSeven little, eight little, nine little IndiansTen little Indian boys." "I was a little kid on Long Island back in an era when in circle time songs you'd as easily count ten little Indians as you would count six little ducks or ten green and speckled frogs. A few years further on, in the mid 1960s, I chose "The Indian Tribes of Paumanok" (a Native American name for Long Island) as the topic for a social studies report. And while this raised my 10 year-old state of consciousness a few notches, I still had a heck of a time envisioning the booming suburbs where I lived as having been a vast woodland sheltering those peoples. In contrast, thirteen year old Joelle, the main character in THE CRYING ROCKS, has such an ability and inclination. In fact, she can sometimes imagine someone from the distant past following her.

Joelle, who was adopted at five by "Aunt" Mary Louise and "Uncle" Vernon, has that hunger to know about her own roots. In sharp contrast to her "heavy and earthbound" adoptive parents, Joelle is such a tall and striking seventh grader that a group of little neighborhood girls worships her from a distance, imagines her to be royalty, and emulates her style. But it is clear to the reader that something awful must have happened to Joelle as a young child, since she cannot remember the mysterious and unspoken circumstances in which she came to be discovered at the railroad depot of the northwestern Rhode Island community where she has since lived." 'Back in the woods there's a place where they used to meet. A high council place. There are trails, too. You can tell they're old Indian paths because of how deep they're worn down. It would take hundreds of years of feet to wear down a path like that.'" 'Hundreds of years of feet?' she says. 'Give me a break.'" 'A thousand years, even. Some artifacts are that old and more. What's amazing is how their culture got wiped out when the white man came. Fifty years after the Pilgrims landed at Plymouth Rock, the Narragansetts were all gone, thirty or forty-thousand people who lived right around here.'" 'What happened?' Joelle asked in spite of herself." Carlos stares at her. 'Disease, first, then they were killed off. The last few were sold into slavery down in the West Indies. It's one of those histories people don't like to remember.'" 'But you do?'" 'I'm part Indian.'" 'Really?'"Carlos stands up straighter and looks at her defiantly, as if she might have a problem with this. She registers again his gray eyes, his brown hair, his long thin face. " 'You don't look--'" 'Just a small part,' Carlos says quickly. 'Like about one sixteenth or something.' "The innocent and tentative relationship that develops between Carlos and Joelle--that of close friends whom the reader imagines/hopes will later become boyfriend and girlfriend--is impeccably drawn. Sometimes as if a pair of bumper cars, sometimes utterly in tune, the connection between these two kids who are finding themselves winds its way through the tension of the story to an absolutely fun and joyous scene where the two are dueling each other with quotes from their research. THE CRYING ROCKS asks hard questions about the values and behavior of the Europeans who came to America as well as that of the Narragansetts who were there when the ships arrived. The author skillfully ties these questions to treatment of arguably "less fortunate" groups in twenty-first century society. Janet Taylor Lisle has an ability for crafting a story that is taut and powerful while maintaining the limits which allow for this story to be used in middle school classrooms. THE CRYING ROCKS will find a home in those classrooms and is a tale that will surely have readers thinking and asking about their own roots.

Fourteen-year-old Joelle, who is adopted and lives in Marshfield, Rhode Island, doesn't know much about her past. All she is aware of is that she was brought in from a train station when she was just

five years old. "I can't remember anything so don't ask me!" she yells irritably to anyone who snoops, including Carlos, an eccentric kid in her Spanish class. But when Carlos, a collector of arrowheads and Native American lore, tells her that she resembles an Indian girl in an old mural of Narragansett Indians in their school library, she can't resist taking a look. She is dumbfounded by a spark of recognition. When Joelle asks her adoptive parents, Uncle Vernon and Aunt Mary Louise, about her past, they tell her what happened but she doesn't believe them. Then, while on a hike, Carlos tells her about the Crying Rocks, where howls on windy days are thought to be the spirit voices of children who were flung from the boulders to an early death. Joelle doesn't believe that story either until one day, while at the Crying Rocks with Carlos, she hears crying and screaming. After her Aunt Mary Louise dies, she grows more and more curious about her past, not to mention the cries and screams. Will Joelle ever discover the truth behind the Crying Rocks and her past? Or will both stories be a secret forever? THE CRYING ROCKS had an incredible ending, and I agree wholeheartedly with Joelle's attempts to learn the details of her past. If you enjoy reading touching books about friends and family, read this one to find out what happens to Joelle and her family. ---

Reviewed by Ashley Hartlaub

Grades 7 and up will appreciate this warm story of Joelle, who discovers a likeness to Native Americans which will change her perceptions of who she is and Native history. Her new friend Carlos who has introduced her to this history has his own hard secret to reveal - one which involves a family loss and a hidden guilt. How they change each other's life makes for a moving saga.

This was a wonderful, historically accurate fiction novel. It is easy enough for children to read and interesting enough for adults to enjoy. It covers subjects regarding adoption, abandonment, native americans and the idea of not knowing where you belong as a child. Highly recommend!

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