



## Apple In the Middle

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Apple Starkington turned her back on her Native American heritage the moment she was called a racial slur. Not that she really even knew HOW to be an Indian in the first place. Too bad the white world doesn't accept her either. So began her quirky habits to gain acceptance. Apple's name, chosen by her Indian mother on her deathbed, has a double meaning: treasured apple of my eye, but also the negative connotation: a person who is red, or Indian, on the outside, but white on the inside. After her wealthy [white] father gives her the boot one summer, Apple reluctantly agrees to visit her Native American relatives on the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation in northern North Dakota for the first time, which should be easy, but it's not. Apple shatters Indian stereotypes and learns what it means to find her place in a world divided by color.

## Apple In the Middle Details

Date :

ISBN :

Author : Dawn Quigley

Format :

Genre : Young Adult, Childrens, Middle Grade, Realistic Fiction, Fiction

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## From Reader Review Apple In the Middle for online ebook

### Charity Rau says

2.5?? I really wanted to like this book, especially since it had a Native American MC, but there were a few things that kept me from liking it as much as I wanted. First, I had a difficult time determining how old the narrator was supposed to be. At times she seemed like a teenager and other times she seemed like a middle schooler. Part of this may have been due to the odd narration style. The narrator jumped around, sometimes referring to things happening in the present, then referring to things from the past. Also, certain thoughts she had were in parentheses while others were not. I'm not sure why, and seeing the parentheses threw me. And the thing I really disliked that solidified my 2.5 rating was the unnecessary death near the end of the book. If you're going to kill off a likable character, there ought to be a really good reason.

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### Kelly says

This reads far more like middle grade than YA, and the writing itself is pretty elementary. But, it's a powerful story about a girl who has grown up without much investment in her Native heritage after the death of her mother after a car accident (Apple was born early, her life saved after the accident). She's since lived in the Minneapolis suburbs with her wealthy white father and stepmother, without much contact with her family in the North Dakota Turtle Mountains, who are Ojibwe. But when her dad and stepmother decide to go on a long summer vacation, Apple gets the chance to spend the summer with her grandparents in North Dakota, along with her big extended family.

The book follows as she learns more about her own cultural heritage and comes to understand her mother better. It's written with dialect and integrates Michif throughout where appropriate.

While the writing isn't spectacular, it's a story that's so rarely told. Besides Apple not having a connection to her background because of her mother's death, she'd also sworn it off because of a horrific slur she was called once. Being different in her town wasn't a good thing -- and this summer allows her to not only lean into her background and appreciate it, but she learns that one of her weirdest personal quirks is, in fact, one of her real spiritual gifts.

This is an ownvoices read, and it's a really fabulous addition to the tiny collection of contemporary Native American stories in YA. Again, I think this is more middle grade and will really work for those tween and younger teen readers, but any YA reader seeking out a story like this will be pleased.

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### Megan says

Excellent #ownvoices novel about a Native teen who goes to live with her family on the Turtle Mountain Reservation for the summer for the first time. This book is funny and heartwarming. You will fall in love with Apple's family ❤️?

This book is YA but could also be appropriate for older middle grade students.

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## Edi says

This is very much an insider's story. Quigley, a Turtle Mountain Chippewa woman, relates that the book is based in stories from her growing up and from people around her. While I feel confident in reviewing this #ownvoices book that is outside my culture, I did feel the need to verify some of the facts and to be sure my names and descriptions were correct. From reading the Notes at the end of the book and checking with Cynthia Leitich Smith and Debbie Reese, I think I know a little more about Native American culture than I did before beginning this review. We have to learn to ask what we don't know. There are elements of the book that belong in a Native American book, but not in a review written by an African American woman. Given that 'Apple' is in the title and is the name of the character, I had to use it and explain it. Slurs should be left alone. But, Apple Starkington wasn't that slur. She was the apple of her mother's eye. full review is on my blog <https://campbele.wordpress.com/2018/1...>

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## Madeline says

**Summary in a sentence:** Apple Starkington, who has been raised by her wealthy white father and stepmother, spends a summer with her maternal grandparents on the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation, growing into her Native identity.

**What I liked:** The rich cultural details. There's plenty of Native food, and there's an annual powwow, but this story also does an excellent job of giving readers a deeper look into the culture--the values, the humor, the beliefs--of this particular Turtle Mountain Ojibwe community. Apple meets her late Ojibwe mother's family members and is immediately welcomed into the fold. She learns about her family members' views on nature, interconnection, and family. The way of life on Turtle Mountain is vastly different from Apple's life with her dad, and Apple finds herself at home there and belonging in a way she's never felt before. (Great character growth.) I'm white and can't speak to the accuracy of the details, but the author is Turtle Mountain enrolled Ojibwe and includes an author's note with additional information and resources for learning more.

**What didn't work for me:** The writing is not very strong, and the dialogue in many places is cringe-worthy. There are a lot of places where there's unnecessary exposition, and I think the narrative suffers overall because it's trying too obviously to teach the non-Ojibwe reader. I also think that some elements of the plot are unnecessary and clunky, such as Karl and his sons feeling the need to exact some sort of payment or revenge for Apple's mother marrying a White man, (view spoiler)

I also thought it was an interesting choice on the author's part to give Apple and her family "mystical" powers. (They have unexplained visions when around certain people, and it turns out these visions reveal something unfinished or unexplored by that person.) It reminded me of the magical Native American stereotype.

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## Tom says

I purchased this book from the author at a local book signing event. The book started a little slowly for me but I stuck with the story and soon began to love the characters. In the end, I was sorry not to have more time with the characters in the story. This story of personal discovery, of family, and of friendship, is touching. It is humorous at times, and will perhaps even cause you to shed a tear. I was glad I took the journey through Apple's eyes.

## Rachel Craig says

More of a 3.5 stars.

A couple of weeks ago, Book Riot sent out an email titled "? Don't Sleep On These Great 2018 YA Reads." The titles on this list included real teen problems, grief, trauma and inclusive characters. The title that caught my eye was *Apple in the Middle*. I was intrigued and put myself on the hold list at the library. After I received my copy, I finished the book in one night. I fell in love with Apple, the characters and the setting, but had some major issues with the ending that knocked my review down a half star.

Plot- Apple Starkington is a teenage girl living in Minnetonka (a suburb of Minneapolis, for those not in the know) with her white father, stepmother and stepbrother. Ever since she was called a racial slur when she was a little kid, she has turned her back on her Native heritage. Her mother, dead minutes after Apple was born due to injuries from a car crash, named her. One summer, her father and stepmother take an extended trip. Her stepbrother goes to stay with his grandparents. Apple reluctantly goes to stay with her mother's family on the Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation in North Dakota. Apple spends the summer connecting with her large and friendly family, her Native heritage and learning more about how to be confident in herself.

What I loved- the Native characters and how their heritage is weaved into the story. Apple is a likable and flawed protagonist. Reading along with her (told in 1st person) as she learns about herself, her mother, her family and her heritage was wonderful and deeply rewarding. She starts off the book as a lonely, uncertain girl and becomes a confident, sociable woman. Some of her quirks, including talking in random accents and blurting out uncomfortable questions, are accepted by her family.

Her family in North Dakota is also a wonderful group. Her grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles and friends are all fun characters, lovable and realistic.

The antagonists are also fleshed out well. An ex-friend of her mother's and his kids give Apple a hard time about her heritage by using the negative connotations connected to her name- "red" or Indian on the outside and white on the inside and in general, harassing her. The harassment was too painfully real, from both the ex-friend and the white person who calls her a racial slur at the beginning of the story that caused her to reject her heritage in the first place.

What I didn't like- The ending. Without giving too much away, the last 30 pages of the book were super out of the blue and took the story down a path I wasn't a fan of. It felt manipulative and I felt wasn't necessary for the story. The ending was so out of the blue that it took the story down a half star for me, which was disappointing. Others may not be as put off by the ending as me, so take what I say with a grain of salt.

The characters and heritage are enough to for me to recommend this book for anyone looking for more teen novels starring Native characters set in present day. I'm excited to see what Dawn Quigley does next!

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## Kelly says

Many details about the Turtle Mountains ring true in this Young Adult novel.

## Eti says

Apple's voice drew me in and kept me reading with its often unfiltered, authentic, vulnerable and searching perspective. Her sense of humor is paramount throughout this story that deals with grief and loss, belonging and identity, family and home. I loved how she developed relationships with her mother's parents and extended family who are enrolled members of the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa, and by doing so, discovered undiscovered depths about herself. This was a powerful Own Voices contemporary that should be in all library collections. It's a fantastic crossover book that has both middle grade and YA appeal.

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## Debra says

Such an awesome story and beautifully written. It is marketed as YA, but I definitely think it could also be middle grade. I'm so glad I didn't pass it up because of the YA label! I know I will be adding it to my 5th grade class library. The character is a teen...10th grade...but grade5-6 would enjoy. We need so many more contemporary fiction stories from Native people! Middle grade please!

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## Gary Anderson says

Apple Starkington is half-Native American. Her Native mother died in childbirth, so April is raised by her white father, a wealthy Minnesota surgeon, and his second wife. Apple always feels like she is in the middle, not quite one thing, not quite another, not quite fitting in anywhere. She doesn't look like the other kids in her school, and when a classmate calls her a racial slur, she can't easily shake it off. Although Apple's father rarely talks about his late wife, in the summer between tenth and eleventh grade, he decides Apple should get to know her mother's family on the Turtle Reservation in North Dakota.

Apple is an appealing, quirky, funny narrator. Although back in Minnesota she considered herself odd, Apple discovers that humor is one of her tribe's consistent traits. As she becomes accustomed to living in a pink double-wide trailer instead of a mansion, and begins to enjoy dressing less fashionably than is her habit back home, Apple starts to appreciate the priorities of her mother's tribe: "But what they do have is a quiet, gentle knowledge of the beauty that's found in life through four main things: family, faith, nature, and humor. You can't buy that. Not even at the Dollar Store. Eya!"

Immersion in the tribe for the summer means Apple discovers a lot about her mother's side of the family, including her tribe's history and culture. As Apple learns about her people, readers share in the revelations about tribal traditions, including their spiritual practices, family relationships, and attitudes toward hardship.

Although *Apple in the Middle* is a character-driven novel, the plot includes intriguing elements of mystery, danger, and conflict. Still, the most memorable aspect of *Apple in the Middle* is its people. Author Dawn Quigley brings to life Apple's two very different families, as well as her extended Indian family. Readers will be drawn to Auntie Auber, the tobacco-loving dream interpreter; Junior, the protective giant; Nezzie, the abandoned daughter who becomes everyone's child; Grandpa, the mischievous, humble war hero and intellectual; and Grandma, the wise center of the family.

Native Americans are underrepresented in young adult literature, and Dawn Quigley's YA debut is a welcome addition. *Apple in the Middle* is published by North Dakota State University Press and is the first offering in its NDSU Press Contemporary Voice of Indigenous People Series. Reading and sharing the terrific novel *Apple in the Middle* is an excellent way to support both a small publisher and the inclusion of Native Americans in young adult literature.

*This review also appears on my What's Not Wrong? blog in slightly different form.*

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### **Amanda says**

This is a phenomenal book. The search for identity in Apple's story is told in such a way that anyone can identify with her. It may be a YA novel, but it is rich with traditions and pieces of Native culture. There are so many pieces to dig into and talk about. This is a must read for Middle School and High School teachers. Well done Dawn!

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### **Thomas Isern says**

Here is that historical chestnut: the person poised between two cultures, unable to rest with either until making peace with both. Quigley's Apple is such a person, who through family developments in her suburban world is brought into touch with her native side, among the Chippewa of Turtle Mountain. Why she is named Apple, and why she was estranged from her Turtle Mountain ancestry, you should read for yourself. The encounter, when it comes, is well recounted by the author, in a voice that seems true to the age and situation of her protagonist. There is a process of enlightenment, maybe even healing all around--and then near the end, a bite of reality (no spoiler here!). I like Quigley's gentle touch and her touches of humor. You read along and enjoy yourself and in the end realize how significant are the themes raised. Get this book for a young person in your life, but read it yourself, too.

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### **Amy says**

A stunningly beautiful story about a young girl balancing the two halves of herself, never feeling like she truly belongs with either. Half white and half Native American, most of her life has been spent with her dad and stepmom in upper class Minnesota until she journeys to visit her mother's family for a summer on their reservation and begins her path to self discovery.

As the world of YA Literature evolves and we hear more stories that represent diverse voices, Dr. Dawn Quigley's book brings her Native voice to the table in a beautiful heartwarming tale.

Go out and get it... right now. ?

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### **Susan says**

A coming into self book about Apple and her summer spent with her Native American family from her mom's side. This story is about finding her true self while grappling with the truth about her long deceased

mother. It's about the pain felt when a little one dies. It's about finding and accepting herself for who she is, half Native American and half Caucasian.

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