

Opinion: What Have Other People Thought About *Julie of the Wolves*?



It's a winner!

In addition to winning the 1973 John Newbery Medal, *Julie of the Wolves* was also a National Book Award finalist and has been recognized as one of the 10 best American children's books in 200 years by the Children's Literature Association. These are some very important honors.

Before *Julie of the Wolves* was an award-winning book, it received much praise from literary reviewers. A reviewer from *School Library Journal* said, "George has captured the subtle nuances of Eskimo life, animal habits, the pain of growing up, and combines these elements into a thrilling adventure which is, at the same time, a poignant love story." What this reviewer means is that the author shows the many different aspects of the ways Eskimos live, the ways animals live, and how hard it is to be an adolescent. The author combines these three things and creates a great adventure story. The reader gets to know Miyax, a young girl trying to find her place in the world. She is battling to survive in the tundra while trying to figure out who she is. At the same time, Jean Craighead George has written a love story. The reader sees how much Kapugen loves Miyax and vice versa. The reader also sees how much Miyax and the wolves love one another and how much Miyax loves her native culture.

According to *Booklist* magazine, “the well-written, empathetic story effectively evokes the nature of wolves and the traditional Eskimo way of life giving way before the relentless onslaught of civilization.” The reviewer from this publication feels that Jean Craighead George has shown what Eskimo life was like before it began to be modernized, and how the American, modern way started creeping into the Eskimo culture and wouldn’t go away. More and more modern methods and objects keep replacing traditional ways of life in this culture.

Horn Book magazine called *Julie of the Wolves* “a book of timeless, perhaps even classic dimensions.” By using the words *timeless* and *classic*, this reviewer thinks the book will speak to its readers as much in future years as it did when it was first written.

Age disagreement

Most of the reviews that *Julie of the Wolves* received are positive. But there were some people who thought the book was not appropriate for kids in some ways. A school district in Littleton, Colorado, tried to move the book from its sixth-grade reading list to its high school reading list because it contains references to family alcoholism, abuse, and divorce. What they were specifically referring to was Naka’s alcoholism, the way he hit his wife when he was drinking, and the fact that Miyax wanted to divorce her husband, Daniel. This dispute was settled, and the book was left on the school’s sixth-grade reading list because the author shows how the characters overcome problems and show good decision-making skills.

**Thinking about what others think about
*Julie of the Wolves***

- Should Jean Craighead George's book have won lots of awards? Are there other award-winning books you have read that were better or worse? How so?
- Are the messages and themes and lessons taught in *Julie of the Wolves* important now? Do you think they will be more or less important in the future? How so?
- Is it okay that the author included some sensitive issues and events in *Julie of the Wolves*? Do you think anything should have been left out?

Glossary



Here are some words that are used in *Julie of the Wolves*. Knowing what these words mean will help you better understand the novel.

amber a yellowish brown color

ambrosia something extremely pleasing to taste or smell

bounty a reward offered for the capture of an animal

bravado conduct that is foolish and adventurous

caribou a large North American mammal of the deer family.
Caribou are related to reindeer.

carrion dead and rotting flesh

concave curved inward, like the inside surface of a dish

contort to twist something out of its usual shape

croon to sing or speak in a gentle, nurturing way

deference respect or esteem shown to an older or more superior person or creature

deft skillful, quick, and neat

derisively in a ridiculing or scornful manner

deviate to do something differently from the usual way

discern to distinguish between; to recognize as different

dispel to put an end to something

elated very pleased and excited

enamored to be in love with

evoke to bring to mind; to call forth

flail to wave or thrash something

forage to go in search of food

grovel to be unnaturally humble and polite to someone because you are afraid of the person or because you think he or she is very important

gussak the Inuit word for a person who looks more Caucasian than Eskimo

harpoon a long spear with an attached rope that can be thrown or shot out of a special gun. It is usually used for hunting large fish or whales.

hoist to lift something heavy

improvise to do the best you can with what is available

incorrigible not manageable

instill to put into a person's mind slowly, over a period of time

knoll a small hill

lair a place where a wild animal rests and sleeps

larder a small room or pantry in which food is stored

monotony without change; going on and on in a boring way

morsel a small piece of food

nomadic wandering around instead of living in one place

pinnacle a peak; the highest point

plaintive sad and mournful

plumage a bird's feathers

predator an animal that lives by hunting other animals for food

predicament an awkward or difficult situation

preen when a bird cleans and arranges its feathers

quell to stop or crush by force

quiver to tremble or vibrate

refrain to stop yourself from doing something

remote far away, isolated, or distant

saunter to walk in a slow, leisurely, or casual way

shaman a person who uses magic to control events or cure the sick

sheath a holder for a knife, sword, or dagger

stifle to hold back or stop

strewn covering a surface with things that have been scattered or sprinkled

sustain to keep something going

taut stretched tight

ulo an Eskimo woman's knife

undulate to rise and fall

vitality energy and liveliness

wane to get smaller in size

wean to start giving a baby food other than its mother's milk

writhe to twist and turn around, as in pain