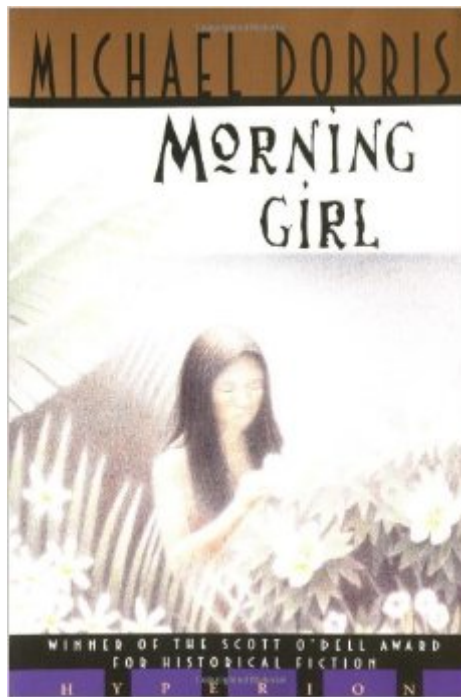


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# Morning Girl



## Synopsis

The award-winning author of *A Yellow Raft in Blue Water* presents a tale based on an entry in the diary of Christopher Columbus that tells of a native family living in a vibrant community striving to coexist with the natural world.

## Book Information

Age Range: 9 and up

Lexile Measure: 980 (What's this?)

Paperback: 80 pages

Publisher: Disney-Hyperion; Reissue edition (January 1, 1900)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 078681358X

ISBN-13: 978-0786813582

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 7.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 3.7 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.0 out of 5 starsÂ Â See all reviewsÂ (40 customer reviews)

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## Customer Reviews

"Morning Girl," by Michael Dorris, is a short novel that is told in the first person by two of its characters, Morning Girl and her brother Star Boy. The chapters alternate between these characters' two voices. The children live with their parents in an island village; their community has a pre-industrial culture. Morning Girl and her brother have the type of conflict you might expect between a sister and her sometimes annoying younger brother. This relationship is explored against the backdrop of the children's culture and the island setting. I particularly liked the character of Star Boy: he's experiencing some emotional growing pains as he yearns for respect while still engaging in some childish actions. An important theme in the book is the naming tradition of the children's culture. Dorris writes in a clear, poetic prose style that is touched by a mystical element. And don't miss the startling epilogue which pulls the whole story into focus.

Instead of reading this book for plot, try reading it as a poem, in book form. The book paints emotions and images and experiences that are wonderful to feel. These things are so much more important than the plot, in which the Spanish don't show up until the last five pages. This is a book about naming and being and growing up. It is excellent for adults (I agree that this is not exactly a children's book, although some children might understand it) who are dreamers, who dream of becoming a rock or a breath of wind.

I Am thirteen and I read *Morning Girl* for a unit on the Age of Exploration. I would recommend this book to other children studying the Age of Exploration. *Morning Girl* is about a girl named Morning Girl because she gets up when the sun gets up. The book alternates narrators between Morning Girl and her brother Star Boy. In the story they live through storms and other hardships. Some times they loose just the roof, other times a loved one. I would give this book 4 1/2 stars because when I read it in the end it says that Morning Girl meets explorers but it does not say who it is and I think this would confuse young readers. I felt that the book was complex and always changing even though I understood it perfectly well. To me it was sort of compelling.

I'm posting this review because there may be other teachers out there who think this might be a good book for them to read to their class. Don't make the mistake I made. I am a fifth grade teacher. This book is recommended in some of our grade-level curriculum guides, so I decided to purchase it and read it in class thinking it would create a nice bridge between literature and social studies. (We study explorers and the discovery of the New World.) Unfortunately, the book offered very little plot, too much reflection from isolated points of view, and very awkward pacing to allow for a good read-aloud experience. My fifth-graders hung in there with me as I read the whole book over the course of a few weeks, but it was not a very satisfying experience. (It took us a few weeks because the book wasn't interesting enough to keep our attention - we would go days without reading it rather than give up more interesting activities we were doing.) This book might provide a valuable reading experience to students who read it individually and then discuss it in a small group setting with an adult facilitator. The book isn't bad - it's just not a good read-aloud book. The language is too ponderous. The plot is hard to decipher. There is no excitement or energy. It has a maturity that makes it feel like it is a book written to appeal to adult reviewers of children's books - not to appeal to real children. (Just the fact that the main characters are children doesn't mean children will relate!)

I am saddened to hear this beautiful book called boring in some of these reviews. Obviously the true message Michael Dorris gives is missed. The author paints a very vivid picture of how close this family is, how they belong to a real community of loving people, and how they are much like the contemporary family today. Then comes Christopher Columbus to snatch the Tainos from the Island and whisk them to Spain to become "real people". What a great discussion this book leads. This is one book that may not be picked up willingly by young hands, but needs to be suggested. Then, watch the discussion begin!

Morning Girl takes place in the late 1400's when Christopher Columbus discovered a Bahamian Island. While Christopher was there, he wrote an entry saying that he was taking 6 of the natives back to England to teach them English. The family that the book focuses on endures a course of events that includes an unborn child dying, a family member running away, a strange meeting, and a new name. The main character Morning Girl is almost exactly the opposite of her brother, Star Boy. Star Boy loves the dark and is always up at night. But in the afternoons, Star Boy is sound asleep. However, Morning Girl is up at the crack of dawn, so Star Boy and Morning Girl only cross paths in the evenings. My favorite scene in the book included my two favorite characters. Morning Girl was curious about her face and her mother suggested that Morning Girl could trace her face with her hand to allow her to picture in her mind what she looked like. I liked Morning Girl and her Mother because I thought if they were alive today they would be nice people to meet.

This book describes a girl's life in the Caribbean just as Columbus "discovered" it. Michael Dorris was a wonderful, talented writer for adults, and I was pleased to find this book written at the level my 11-year-old daughter could understand it. I'd say it's probably best for age 11-14 or so.

It is incredibly powerful and emotional. Morning Girl and her brother Star Boy are full-dimensional characters - Taino people in 1492. The book shows several aspects of their lives before the Europeans come along. Children should read this book to understand other cultures.

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