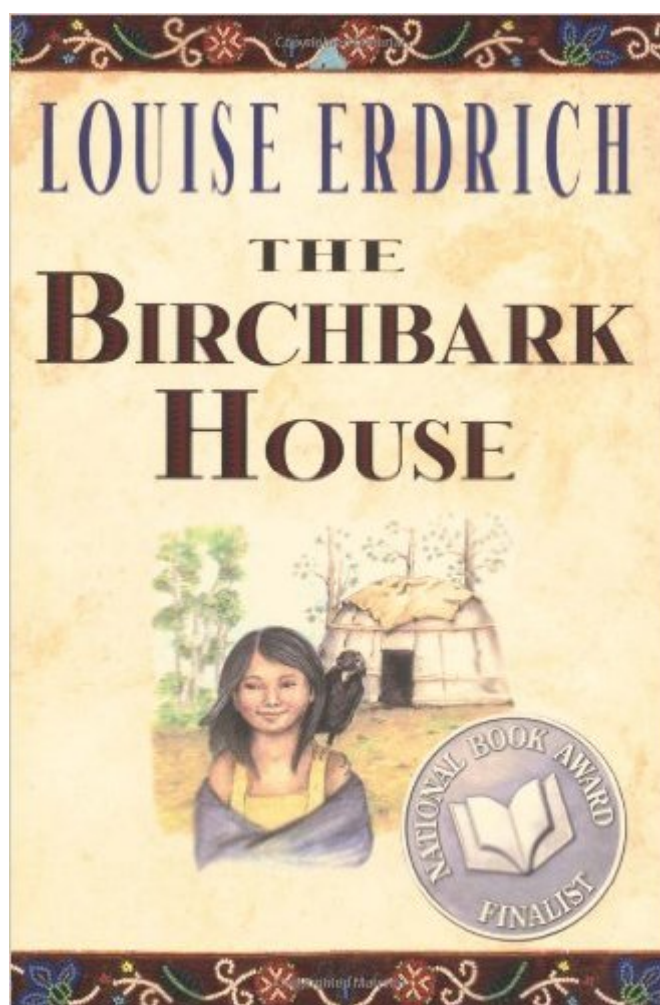


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# The Birchbark House



## Synopsis

"[In this] story of a young Ojibwa girl, Omakayas, living on an island in Lake Superior around 1847, Louise Erdrich is reversing the narrative perspective used in most children's stories about nineteenth-century Native Americans. Instead of looking out at 'them' as dangers or curiosities, Erdrich, drawing on her family's history, wants to tell about 'us', from the inside. The Birchbark House establishes its own ground, in the vicinity of Laura Ingalls Wilder's 'Little House' books."

--The New York Times Book Review

## Book Information

Age Range: 9 - 12 years

Lexile Measure: 970 (What's this?)

Paperback: 256 pages

Publisher: Disney-Hyperion; Reprint edition (May 13, 2002)

Language: English

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Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.5 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 8.8 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (103 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #8,766 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #9 in [Books > Children's Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories > Native North & South Americans](#) #25 in [Books > Children's Books > Literature & Fiction > Chapter Books & Readers > Intermediate Readers](#) #56 in [Books > Children's Books > Growing Up & Facts of Life > Family Life > Values](#)

## Customer Reviews

Any child who has read and loved such classics as the [series](#), or [will](#) welcome the gift of this book. My 8-year old daughter declared it to be the best book she's ever read, and urged me to read it. I did, and I concur. It's a wonderful read, and one that I plan to buy as a gift for years to come. The heroine of this book is such a delight. The hundred-plus years that separate her from the modern reader melt away. Erdrich has done a powerful job of maintaining the historical accuracy of this book while making her characters relevant to modern readers. Really well done.

The Birchbark House is a very good topic book for people learning about Native Americans. Though it is historical fiction, it shows a daily Native American life very well using the example of a little girl

called Omakayas and her siblings. Louise Erdrich is very descriptive in her writing, and I recommend it to readers of any age.

A beautiful book. Parallel in many ways to Wilder's series, this tells the other side in a moving way. We follow a year in the life of an 8-year-old Ojibway girl, including a tragic smallpox epidemic, a meeting with a bear family, and finding out her true heritage.

I read this book aloud to my daughter's 3rd-4th grade class. Thirty or so children (ages 8, 9 & 10) listened attentively for 30 minutes near the end of each day for several weeks. If a child had been absent, other students would update him or her. Their teacher took over one day when I couldn't be there and read the chapter when the family is stricken with small pox. The next day a group of girls met me in the hall to tell me how sad it was when Omakayas' little brother died. Another time, the entire group burst out laughing at a comical event. The pictures were beautiful, but I chose not to show them while I read. I enjoyed having the Ojibwe words interspersed throughout the text. I had to slowly sound words out, and I believe that learning them together helped the students and me connect.

The book starts slow. It builds background knowledge and "flavor", but it may be hard for a pre-teen child to continue to read independently. That's why I think this book would be a good choice for read-aloud or adult-child paired reading. However, the author really grabs the reader by Chapter 10 (The Visitor). It becomes a "can't-put-it-down book" as the reader experiences Omakayas' fear and sorrow because of the White Man's visit. It is an excellent book to show the everyday life of Native Americans before their lives were severely changed by foreigners in their lands. It would be a good book to read with the Little House series to compare lifestyles, but also to illustrate the American Indians' perspective of the pioneer movement.

I taught this novel to a group of approximately eight 5th graders in a literature circle where it was met with mixed reviews. Some students loved the story while others were lost in the cultural references and Ojibwe vocabulary. The beginning of the novel is slow as background information about the Ojibwe culture is revealed. Having to constantly flip back and forth between the text and the glossary and pronunciation guide did contribute to a disjointed feeling, but that lessened as the story developed and I became more familiar with the vocabulary. I loved the feeling of being immersed in the Ojibwe culture, but several references were beyond my scope of knowledge. One

such reference is the windigo. The glossary describes it as a "giant monster of Ojibwe teachings, often made of ice and associated with the starvation and danger of deep winter." After further research, I discovered that the windigo is one of, if not the most feared creatures to the Algonquin people which include the Cree, Blackfoot, Ojibwe, and Algonquin. It is believed to be once human but has since turned into an icy cannibal of pure evil. This gave me a deeper understanding of its context in the book. This book is an excellent read for young readers and immerses them in the Ojibwe culture, but it may require more than one pass to fully understand it and its references. The glossary is fine to get a quick answer to fill in the gaps, but to fully appreciate the text, some outside research may be necessary.

This is an excellent book! I loved it! The Birchbark House is about a girl's life. That girl's name is Omayakas. Omayakas suffers a very hard life. She has a little brother who suffers a terrible disease called smallpox. This book had me thinking a lot about life and death and thankfulness. I mean if you really want something such as Pokemon supplies, stuffed animals, toys, think of the people that are less fortunate and put aside that thing that you want!

This book is a great book about a young Native-American girl named Omakayas. She lives on an island in Lake Superior. Omakayas doesn't consider herself a heroine, but in this wonderful book she becomes one without knowing it. As you read this book you will become part of her world, an 8 year old girl who doesn't realize just how important she really is. At least, not until a visitor arrives. That's where Omakayas discovers who she really is. I really enjoyed this book. No one could interrupt me till I was done.

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