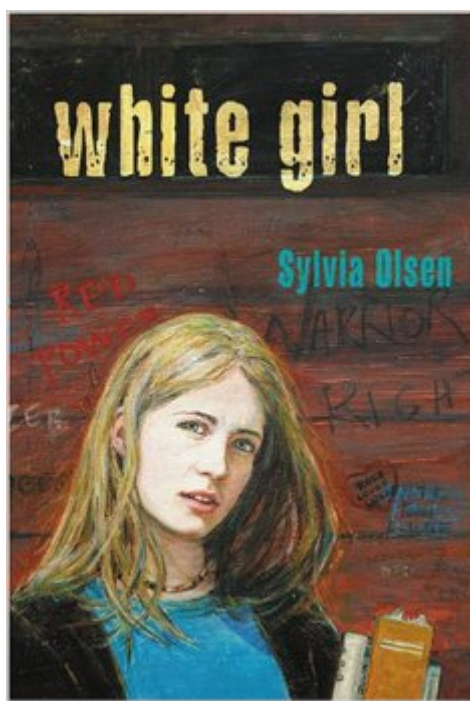


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# White Girl



## Synopsis

"I never thought about being white. I didn't have to. I was transparent-no colour at all. I hung out, was a good enough student and no one paid any special attention to me at all. Then I became a white girl." Until she was fourteen, Josie was pretty ordinary. Then her Mom meets Martin, "a real ponytail Indian," and before long, Josie finds herself living on a reserve outside town, with a new stepfather, a new stepbrother, and a new name-"Blondie." In town, white was the ambient noise, the no-colour background. On the reserve, she's White, and most seem to see her only for her blond hair and blue eyes. Her mother's no help. She never leaves the house, gripped by her fear of the "wild Indians" beyond Martin's doorstep. But Josie can't afford to hide out forever. She has to go to school, and she has to get herself a life, one way or another. So bit by bit, she finds a way through the minefields. She makes a friend, Rose, with whom she tries to bridge the chasms between out and in, white and Indian, town and reserve. She finds a family in Martin, Luke, and Grandma. And bit by bit, the place itself, the reserve-the run-down houses, the way the people live in them and around them, the forest and the sea-finds its way into her, like nothing else ever has, or ever will.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 760L (What's this?)

Paperback: 235 pages

Publisher: Sono Nis Press (January 1, 2004)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 155039147X

ISBN-13: 978-1550391473

Product Dimensions: 5.2 x 0.2 x 7.8 inches

Shipping Weight: 10.4 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 5.0 out of 5 stars Â Â See all reviews Â (2 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,335,573 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #75 in Â Books > Teens >

Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Family > Stepfamilies #478 in Â Books > Teens >

Literature & Fiction > Social & Family Issues > Prejudice & Racism #829 in Â Books > Children's

Books > Geography & Cultures > Multicultural Stories > Native North & South Americans

Age Range: 12 - 17 years

Grade Level: 7 - 12

## Customer Reviews

I am 44yo Black Female and I'd seen this book on the library shelf, and finally decided to read it. I

loved it! What makes a family is an overarching theme. Some mild mysticism, but everything is handled with sensitivity and Sylvia Olson's sure hand. Ms. Olson ties the many issues discussed under the umbrella of learning to see from different perspectives, and a life-changing decision viewed in flashback. There is some strong cursing—four letter words, and violent threats, but not by the main characters. The use of raw language is to show the rudeness, coarseness and troubled nature of the characters that use that language. It shows how they are not part of the solution, but part of the problem. There is a romance that captures the intense emotions and physical feelings of first love, and a kiss, but the couples don't go beyond that. What I liked best about this book is that it is one of the few books I have ever read that explores the difficulty of understanding racism when you are the majority ethnic group. It is not until Josie leaves town, where the majority are white Canadians and goes to the Indian Reserve where she is a very visible minority that she understands what she has taken for granted all her life. She is singled out, bullied, mocked and shunned, which teaches her about the acidic effects of prejudice not just on the individual, but on the perpetrator. She is scared, lonely and alone until she finds the courage to accept friendship. She finally realizes that while her mother is outwardly prejudiced, she herself has a subtle form of prejudice that contributed to her difficulties fitting in. The characters speak frankly about race and hatred. Where do you belong when you are different from everyone around you? They discuss how to treat others who are different, how they feel when stereotypes are applied to them. They don't have all the answers, but they talk and talk and figure things out together. The book has insightful things to say about learning to trust others who are different, learning to trust yourself and standing up for yourself and those you care about, no matter how scary the circumstances. Intra-racial prejudice, traditional problems on Native American reservations also surface. Class distinctions are addressed. My review makes this book sound preachy and hopelessly goody-goody, like an ABC Afterschool Special, from my youth. But some of those specials were pretty good. Josie's voice is very realistic, as are the dialogue of the other fifteen year olds and the adults. Sure Josie makes some poor choices, but it's part of growing up. It was so gratifying to see her finally set aside her fear and speak up for herself and those she cares about. And also good to see her learn to open her heart and her mind to the world around her, the good and the bad. This book was inspiring, and I plan to buy it for a 15 year-old white girl that I know. I think it should be required reading— it's not anywhere near as dry or superficial as a lot of teen books I have read. I hope you will at least like it too.

Read this for the first time at the library and enjoyed it so much I had to buy it. Check it out.

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