

There There: A Novel

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Urban Native Americans prepare for a celebration called a powwow. All of them feel a bit disconnected with their culture and we're sort of struggling to find solace at home, so going to the powwow and learning from each other helps them come to terms with their situations and background. Among the group is an aspiring filmmaker, a drug dealer, two sisters and their grandchildren, and a young angry man. This group finds out that their stories are all connected, and it helps them bond with each other during the festivities. However, things are not as peaceful as it seems, for two of the group are planning to rob the powwow. Will they fail, give up, and immerse themselves in the festivities? Or will they succeed causing much worse problems?

I loved the way the novel describes the historical elements that caused the divide between Native Americans and society. The context really helps explain some of the events in the novel because it shows how Native Americans have been rejected and dehumanised for several generations, and how forced assimilation leads to a lack of self awareness. It also made reconnections with culture a lot more interesting to read about because the novel teaches us more about these characters through that. It was interesting to learn more about Native American history. I feel that though history books report some of the damage colonizers and Americans had caused, we never really learn the extent of the damage caused. There are parts of Native American history that goes unknown, such as how the Thanksgiving dinner ended with most of the tribe mysteriously dying in the night. In addition to the historical aspect, I quite enjoyed the style in which the book was written. The way the author let us into each character's mind and let us understand their problems completely makes the story much more interesting because the novel gives us one whole joint solution. We learn how the problems are so interconnected that they're all caused by the same disconnect.

The novel is important for all history buffs and anyone with an interest in US History particularly. The novel helps uncover Native American history, a lot of which is left out of textbooks. Anyone in ninth grade or older should be equipped to handle this book. However, the book is fairly dark so those who cannot handle scenes of violence should not read this book.

Recommended Titles:

The Namesake – Jhumpa Lahiri

East of Hounslow – Khurram Rahman

Night – Elie Wiesel

The Kite Runner – Khaled Hosseini