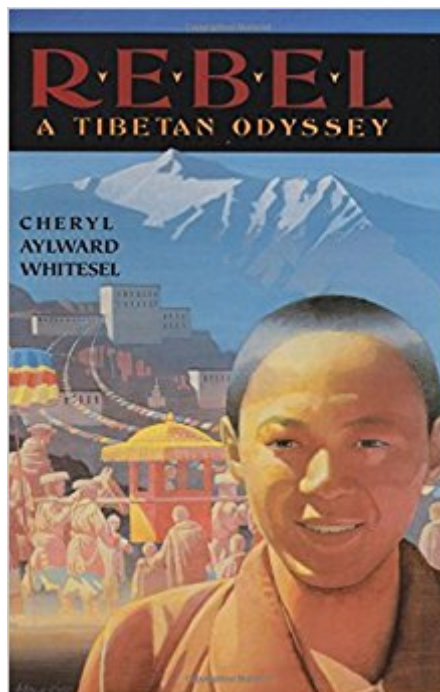


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Rebel: A Tibetan Odyssey



Synopsis

In the closed society of turn-of-the-century Tibet, the outside world is a threatening place. But not to Thunder. Ever rebellious, he longs to become a trader and visit faraway places. But when he has forbidden contact with a foreign explorer, Thunder is banished from his village. He is forced to join a monastery to lead a quiet life of study and meditation under the tutelage of his uncle, a high-ranking monk. At the monastery, though, life is anything but quiet. Thunder has to stand up to Zang-po, his uncle's resentful servant, and--even worse--defend himself against Pounder, the menacing soldier who endangers his life. Will he find peace at the monastery, or will he rebel against the life set out for him? Readers will come to care about Thunder as they turn the pages of this fast-paced, engrossing story set in a truly captivating time and place. Books for the Teen Age 2001 (NYPL)

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Whitesel sets her ambitious first novel against the backdrop of a mysterious, uninfiltrated turn-of-the-century Tibet, with mixed results. When Thunder, an adventuresome and inquisitive boy, goes against his parents' wishes, they send him to live with his uncle in a monastery, where a series of adventures and misadventures unfold. The author intermittently integrates descriptions of the food, mercantile system and customs of the time, and includes a glossary of Tibetan words. But because these details of daily life aren't consistently woven into the novel, they call attention to

themselves instead of shedding light on time and place. The narrative brushes over definitions and explanations through the course of the story, leaving readers to flip back and forth to the glossary. The Tibetans here live under the threat of invasion by Fringies (foreigners), against which they furiously, if futilely, attempt to protect themselves; the sense of danger is palpable. But many questions remain unanswered. For example, Thunder is under the tutelage of his lama uncle, but readers never see him at his studies and learn little of what they entail. Also, Thunder is chosen to be the playmate of the new young Tulku lama, but the novel doesn't explain the significance of the Tulku lama to the monastic community or what his daily life is like. Whitesel succeeds in creating sympathetic characters in Thunder, the Tulku lama and Thunder's friend, Seventh Hand, even if she doesn't quite bring their world to life. Ages 10-up. Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 5-8-As the 19th century turned into the 20th, most of the world was open to travelers. One exception was Tibet, a closed society whose people believed an eighth-century prophecy that caused them to prohibit any foreigners from entering their country; those who did were often brutally murdered. Unfortunately, the flap copy gives the only clue as to when this story takes place. When Thunder becomes separated from his younger brother and uncle during a fierce rainstorm, he becomes anxious and exhausted. Found by a foreigner who gives him some medicine, he returns home. When his family realizes he had been in contact with a "fringie," they protect him from the wrath of the villagers by sending him to live with his uncle, an important lama in a Buddhist monastery. Working first in the kitchen and later living as an apprentice monk, Thunder finds himself immersed in a world of gentle ritual and sometimes frightening power. Whitesel paints a convincing picture of this world, full of unfamiliar sights, strange people, and a harsh landscape. Many fascinating, well-developed characters fill the pages-fearsome Pounder, the captain of the soldiers; kind, crippled Seventh Hand, the kitchen boy; and Samjam Rimpoche, the tulku who wishes he was still Little Radish-though their actions sometimes are more useful to the plot than true to their natures. Still, despite too many coincidences, Thunder's quest to understand who he is and where he belongs is compelling. Barbara Scotto, Michael Driscoll School, Brookline, MA Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

(...)It is set at the turn of the 20th century when Westerners were exploring and mapping Tibet without the Tibetan government's permission. Thunder's adventures revolve around his meeting of a foreigner, then his life in a "gompa" or monastery, after he has been banished there for meeting the foreigner. Also involved is an ancient (real life) prophecy implying that when foreigners invade

Tibet, Tibetans will be "scattered like ants" around the earth. Sadly, that's happening to Tibetans today, prompting my interest in Tibet. Lots of complex ideas are subtly introduced, such as the Buddhist concepts of karma and reincarnation. We even meet a yong "Tulku"--a child being raised to become a high lama. All in all, the book offers adventure for the kids, and easy access to a vision of Tibet for them and adults, too!

It has your not so typical bad guy in it. It's thrilling. It's fiction, yet you learn about Tibet! It's action filled. It relates to every day life but with a twist of exoticness. The main character is pretty daring and brave.

Tibet has always been very difficult to understand, so different from Western culture. "Rebel" lets a reader see Tibet from the inside, through the eyes of Tibetans at home there, not through the eyes of Western visitors. It gave me a feel for what it might be like to actually be Tibetan, and helped me to see how people from other non-Western cultures might think and feel. Definitely not just for teenagers.

I got a lot out of Rebel: A Tibetan Odyssey and my kids really enjoyed it too! Not only is it filled with adventure and excitement but we learned so much about Tibetan culture. We couldn't wait to find out what was going to happen to Thunder, the main character. This is a great story to read out loud and a wonderful first book by Ms. Whitesel. Hope she writes more!

I think everyone should read this book. It was great. I learned new words. I loved how there is a glossary at the back. It is also very exciting. Everything about Tibet seems different from America.

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