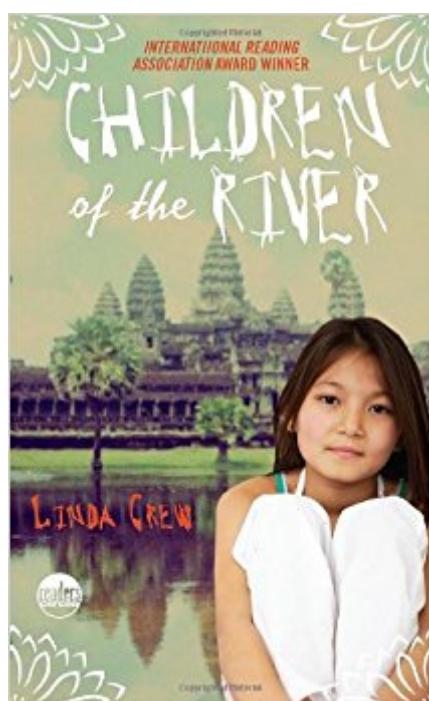


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# Children Of The River (Laurel-Leaf Contemporary Fiction)



## **Synopsis**

Sundara fled Cambodia with her aunt's family to escape the Khmer Rouge army when she was thirteen, leaving behind her parents, her brother and sister, and the boy she had loved since she was a child. Now, four years later, she struggles to fit in at her Oregon high school and to be "a good Cambodian girl" at home. A good Cambodian girl never dates; she waits for her family to arrange her marriage to a Cambodian boy. Yet Sundara and Jonathan, an extraordinary American boy, are powerfully drawn to each other. Haunted by grief for her lost family and for the life left behind, Sundara longs to be with him. At the same time she wonders, Are her hopes for happiness and new life in America disloyal to her past and her people?

## **Book Information**

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## **Customer Reviews**

A Cambodian girl who fled her country struggles to fit in to an American lifestyle. In PW 's words, "The resolution comes smoothly and plausibly, offering a moving look at the way in which a survivor of great tragedy. . .faces young adulthood." Ages 12-up. Copyright 1991 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Grade 7 Up-- Forced to flee from the dreaded Khmer Rouge several years before, 17-year-old Sundara struggles daily to reconcile the cultural conflicts she encounters as a refugee in Oregon. When handsome, popular Jonathan asks for help with a report on her native land, she is unable to

refuse, even though as a Khmer girl, she is to have no discourse with boys. Risking censure by her family, she agrees to sit with Jonathan during lunch in the school cafeteria. Jonathan, for whom everything has always been easy, is intrigued with Sundara's elusiveness and honestly moved to sympathy and love after learning her story. When Sundara's aunt expresses rage and shame about the chaste romance, the conflict-ridden girl is eventually launched into a severe emotional crisis. Crew deftly applies ironic juxtaposition to convey the cultural leaps that a refugee must attempt. Americans pray publicly to win a football game; Sundara importunes silently for the survival of her parents and sister in a land which kills babies for sport. Crew's characterization is excellent. The Cambodians are each portrayed as individuals with flaws and follies, but never are they denied their inherent dignity. Their perserverance, hard work, and family unity see them through many stressful adjustments. The plot is well-structured, allowing profound concepts to be simply and beautifully presented. Dramatic tension melds past and present, pain and hope seamlessly together so that readers are swept effortlessly to a most believable and emotionally satisfying conclusion. Crew entertains without trivializing and instructs without sermonizing. She salutes the resilience and basic goodness of humankind which triumphs in some way even under the most inhumane circumstances.- Cindy Darling Codell, Belmont Junior High School, Winchester, Ky.Copyright 1989 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Library Binding edition.

good

I read this book with my nephew for an honors English summer assignment. I learned alot about Cambodia and Viet Nam even though I'm old enough that I was a young adult when all that actually happened. I guess I didn't pay enough attention when all that was going on. I'm really glad I helped with this summer assignment. The story is told through the eyes of a Cambodian teenage girl fleeing her homeland and coming to live in America. Though I enjoyed it my nephew struggled with it. If the main character had been a boy the nephew would have liked the book more.

Linda Crew does a terrific job of describing how life changes for refugees to the U.S. She is particularly clear about the tension in families when teenagers begin to adapt to Western ways and the risks involved for the immigrant. Children of the River is a wonderful book for teachers who wish to show the difficulties immigrants face in a new culture, and to teach empathy at the same time.

I enjoyed reading this book. I read it for a class and really enjoyed the issues raised. It gave me a

perspective about culture and maintaining customs in a new land without fully being able to. It also demonstrated the bravery of a young girl leaving her own family to help an aunt and living with the guilt that she's a failure to her family and ancestors. What she comes to learn is that love should never wait to be shown . I really enjoyed this book.

Had to read this for class. Despite it being required, I actually enjoyed it. Slightly depressing, but it gives you a real glimpse of what some people go through to get a better life.

I read this reluctantly so I could discuss it with my daughter before she wrote her report on it. I was deeply moved and would recommend it readers of any age. Linda Crew pulls off the most envied feat of a fiction writer, convincing you the story must be a first-hand experience, such is its verisimilitude.

:p

Required reading for 9th grade

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