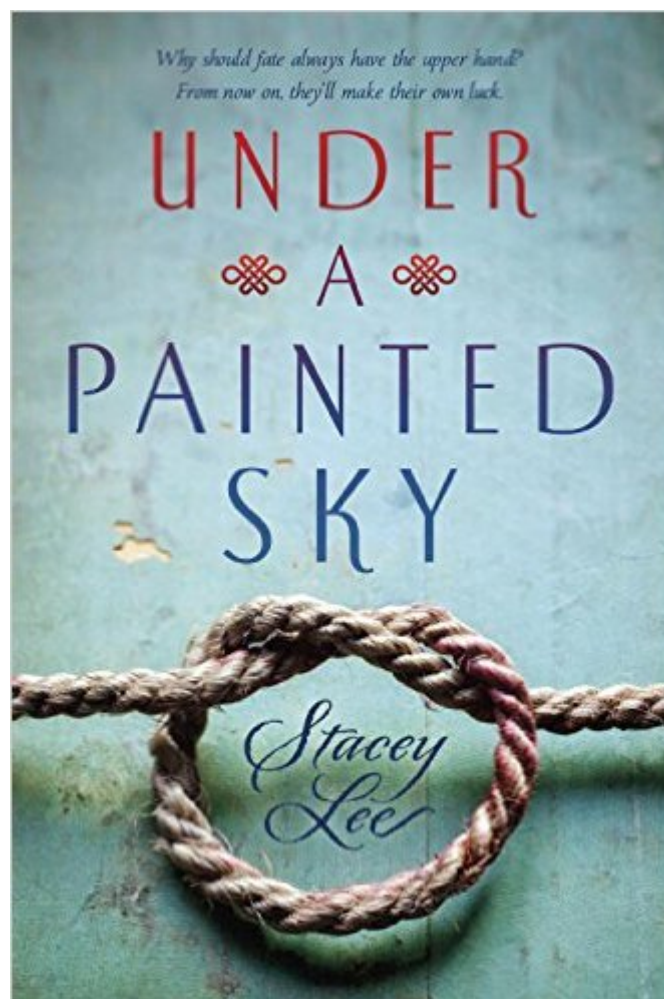


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Under A Painted Sky



Synopsis

From the author of *Outrun the Moon*, Stacey Lee's debut novel is a powerful story about love, friendship, and sacrifice. Perfect for fans of *Code Name Verity*. "This moving novel will captivate you." [Buzzfeed.com](#) "All Samantha wanted was to move back to New York and pursue her music, which was difficult enough being a Chinese girl in Missouri, 1849. Then her fate takes a turn for the worse after a tragic accident leaves her with nothing and she breaks the law in self-defense. With help from Annamae, a runaway slave she met at the scene of her crime, the two flee town for the unknown frontier. But life on the Oregon Trail is unsafe for two girls. Disguised as Sammy and Andy, two boys heading for the California gold rush, each search for a link to their past and struggle to avoid any unwanted attention. Until they merge paths with a band of cowboys turned allies, and Samantha can't stop herself from falling for one. But the law is closing in on them and new setbacks come each day, and the girls will quickly learn there are not many places one can hide on the open trail." Winner of the SCBWI Crystal Kite Award An ALA Best Fiction for Young Adults Pick An Amelia Bloomer Book

Book Information

Lexile Measure: 730 (What's this?)

Paperback: 384 pages

Publisher: Speak; Reprint edition (March 1, 2016)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0147511844

ISBN-13: 978-0147511843

Product Dimensions: 5.4 x 0.9 x 8.3 inches

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

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars See all reviews (100 customer reviews)

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Historical Fiction > United States > 19th Century #130 in Books > Children's Books > Geography

& Cultures > Multicultural Stories > Asian & Asian American #340 in Books > Children's Books >

Literature & Fiction > Historical Fiction > United States > 1800s

Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

Customer Reviews

I don't usually read historical fiction, partly because I had to teach really boring ones to

coincide with my school's US History curriculum during my first few years of teaching. The experience turned me off to the genre for a long time, yet I loved *Under a Painted Sky* so much that I stayed awake until 3 a.m. to finish it! Stacey Lee's debut novel is anything but boring. Within the first few chapters, people die and Samantha and Annamae run away and become wanted fugitives. Dressed as boys, Sammy and Andy meet up with Cay, West, and Peety, three cowboys who help them on the danger-filled trek to California. The characters living out this adventure are layered and relatable. I loved Samantha and Annamae's friendship from the start, and the cowboys add fun, romance, and more trouble to the story. The diversity in the novel is also worth mentioning. Samantha is Chinese, Annamae is an escaped slave, Peety is Mexican, and they meet Scottish and French people, among others, on their journey. Because of the different backgrounds, Lee seamlessly weaves in the social norms of the time, Christian beliefs, the Chinese zodiac, French, and Spanish. *Under a Painted Sky* can be read for fun or used in a school's history or language arts curriculum. Do yourself a favor and add it to your To Be Read list!

This is one of the best Historical Fiction YA books that I have read in a very long time! There are not too many YA books set in the US during this time period, so *Under a Painted Sky* is quite different and refreshing. I adored all the characters as well. I also loved reading about the Chinese zodiac animals and their characteristics. It was fascinating. I am extremely impressed with Stacey Lee's debut novel and I love her writing style.

Honestly I was a skeptic at first. I thought this book would be one for the kids. It was absolutely filled with adventure. There was something new at every turn of the page. I kept trying to put the book down and get some sleep but I couldn't stop reading about the journey that Sam and Andy were taking. I recommend this book to everyone. It's suitable to anyone's taste. I'm sad that it's over..

Under a Painted Sky is a beautifully written story that I know will stick with me for a long time. Stacy Lee fearlessly writes about the discrimination surrounding race, class and gender of the Wild West. It's the kind of story that will keep you up long past your bedtime with humor, action, and romance, all built around the exciting Wild West.

Over the past year I have made a foray into YA Westerns and I have yet to be disappointed. *Under a Painted Sky* is a diverse, cultural infused tale of two girls, Our main character, Sam a Chinese,

newly orphaned girl, teams up with Annamae (Andy), an African-American, runaway slave. Together they flee St. Joe, Missouri disguised as boys and begin on the Oregon Trail. They soon join three cowboys who help keep them safe and teach them how to survive. I think what I loved most about this book is how Lee was able to incorporate Sam's Chinese heritage and beliefs along with Andy's and intertwine all it beautifully into this richly told story. Sam's and Andy's friendship was also a highlight of the book. It caused for some great moments, some funny, many heartfelt, and I was glad to see such a positive example of female friendship in a YA novel. Although "girl disguised as boy" seem to be a common theme in YA westerns I did not mind it here and thought Sam's inner thoughts about the challenges of pretending to be a boy were hilarious. I think Lee struck the perfect balance between an adventure story, a coming of age tale, and portrait of what life could be like for minorities and females in the 1800s

I decided that I needed a "day" break from life and read *Under a Painted Sky*....I loved this book. Well written with interesting characters, well paced and the most important thing....I did not want to put it down. I hope there will be another book to continue this journey...

Friendship is unnecessary, like philosophy, like art.... It has no survival value; rather it is one of those things which give value to survival.-----C.S. Lewis

Stacey Lee, a Chinese-American author, has woven a heart-touching and thoroughly engrossing tale of friendship and shifting backdrop through the infamous Oregon Trail, in her debut book, *Under a Painted Sky*. Synopsis: Missouri, 1849: Samantha dreams of moving back to New York to be a professional musician—not an easy thing if you're a girl, and harder still if you're Chinese. But a tragic accident dashes any hopes of fulfilling her dream, and instead, leaves her fearing for her life. With the help of a runaway slave named Annamae, Samantha flees town for the unknown frontier. But life on the Oregon Trail is unsafe for two girls, so they disguise themselves as Sammy and Andy, two boys headed for the California gold rush. Sammy and Andy forge a powerful bond as they each search for a link to their past, and struggle to avoid any unwanted attention. But when they cross paths with a band of cowboys, the light-hearted troupe turn out to be unexpected allies. With the law closing in on them and new setbacks coming each day, the girls quickly learn that there are not many places to hide on the open trail. This beautifully written debut is an exciting adventure and heart-wrenching survival tale. But above all else, it's a story about perseverance and trust that will restore your faith in the power of friendship. Lee's debut historical fiction simply made me fall for the history of America, cowboys, the Oregon Trail, unbreakable friendships, first loves,

means to survival, racial in-differences and the wild, wild west. Just like every other 15-year old teenage girl, Samantha, a Chinese-American girl too has dreams of her own to achieve. She wants to be a professional violinist and wants to open a music conservatory with her father. But an unfortunate tragedy leaves her penniless, orphaned and an unlucky murderer. To save herself from the prosecution and the consequences of that tragedy, she embarks upon a journey to reach New York with the African-American slave girl, Annamae, by cross-dressing and disguising themselves as boys. And on their expedition to the wild, wild west, they join forces with a group of three cowboys and together they face issues like race, sexuality, trust and unity. The strongest aspects in this book are female friendships and the Oregon Trail. The friendship, between Samantha and Annamae is depicted like something which blossoms and nurtures into a more mature and supportive relationship, despite their racial, culture and background differences, with their each leg of expedition ultimately turning into something indestructible like family. Moreover, their demeanor is a stark contrast with one another- one is highly cultured whereas the other one is sensible, which is what ultimately completes each other, and together they beat all the challenges in their path. Yes, there was some romance between Samantha and one of the cowboys on their journey, but the author never shifts her focus from Samantha and Annamae's friendship all throughout the tale. *Under the Painted Sky* not only guides us in the back-breaking and unexplored journey of the first west-settlers through the Oregon Trail, but it also captures the Oregon Trail very lively. Yes, the author have done a great job in painting the unfathomed land of Oregon Trail from its color and sharpness of the grass to the fear of criminal attack to falling sick with dysentery and cholera to the every hiss of the blowing wind to the call of the wild animals. And with her intricate detailing of every aspect in the Oregon Trail, we are easily transported to the place and time. The writing is evocative, though the emotional depth felt bit hasty at times, and the essence of the wild west is so deep that we lose ourselves easily into the tale and never want to come out of it. The characters are strong and the author have marvelously disguised two girls into young lads not just by looks but also by their demeanor and have portrayed their difficulty on being boys strikingly. The prose is articulate thus giving a fast pace to this book. In one word, Lee has created a compelling and thought-provoking tale that give us glimpse into the challenging era of the American history and how this land of opportunity is actually a country of various diverse immigrants from all over the world who traveled a long, difficult path to make their fortune as well as living. Verdict: A very promising historical YA that will appeal not only to the historical fiction fans but also to the YA readers.

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