

When Grief and Violence Hit Home

Vivian Gussin Paley on Leo Lionni's Lasting Magic

Cahners

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WERKLEY, Vicki Hessel. *Girl-on-Fire*. 230p. map. Haven Bks. 1999. Tr \$14.95. ISBN 1-58436-400-9. LC number unavailable.

YA—Red-haired Carrie McEdan, 17, is smitten with Danny, a wealthy rancher's son. At a church picnic, the two make plans for Carrie to remain behind when the rest of the family goes to town so that they can discuss their future. However, it isn't Danny who comes to the "soddy," but four Comanche warriors.

They abduct Carrie, along with her father's prized horse herd, and embark on a grueling five-day trek across the Texas prairie. Determined to survive, the teen spends the next two months with the tribe. Just as Carrie (whose hair color has earned her the name *Girl-on-Fire*) grows more accepting of her captors, a startling turn of events reconciles her previous life with her more recent one. The strength of this book is in the rich details of Native American culture in the 1870s. The smell of wood smoke and simmering

stews; the "tidy efficiency" of a tepee with its inner drape, rawhide trunks, and willow-slat beds; and the sounds of the language and songs all encourage readers to experience the human complexities of tribal life. Even teens reluctantly fulfilling a dreaded historical fiction assignment should become caught up in the protagonist's bittersweet adventure with a people who will soon face many tragic losses of their own.—*Dori DeSpain, Herndon Fortnightly Library, Fairfax County, VA*

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