



Kiska

John Smelcer

Leapfrog Press (Oct 10, 2017)

Softcover \$12.95 (192pp)

978-1-935248-93-4

Kiska is the heart-wrenching story of a fourteen-year-old girl living on the Aleutian Islands of Alaska at the beginning of World War II. Her ordinary, happy life in a small hunting village quickly changes when, after Japan invades neighboring islands, she and the rest of the islands' inhabitants are rounded up by United States soldiers and sent to internment camps.

Kiska and her neighbors are moved into an abandoned cannery and given only an army blanket each. There is no electricity, no plumbing, and little food. The American soldiers assigned to detain them are unsympathetic and often cruel.

Though the conditions are harsh, Kiska learns to survive. She becomes friends with a boy named Sasha and an old man named Agafon. Agafon teaches her to fish, though it is forbidden for girls, so that she can secretly help feed her people.

The fear and horror felt by the interned Aleutian people comes through clearly in Kiska's story. So, too, does their will to survive, to hope, and to try to do good even in the darkest circumstances.

Even though the injustices described are difficult to accept, *Kiska* is hard to put down. Photos in the back of the book offer a window into Kiska's time and place, while discussion questions with each chapter will help young adults process the story and its lessons.

Though it is a work of fiction, *Kiska* is based on very real events from a tragic and nearly forgotten time in American history. Its lessons are ones that all would do well to remember. Smelcer's beautifully written story of Kiska, and of the misery she faced with hope and love, is nearly impossible to forget.

CATHERINE THURESON (September/October 2017)

Disclosure: This article is not an endorsement, but a review. The publisher of this book provided free copies of the book to have their book reviewed by a professional reviewer. No fee was paid by the publisher for this review. Foreword Reviews only recommends books that we love. Foreword Magazine, Inc. is disclosing this in accordance with the Federal Trade Commission's 16 CFR, Part 255.