



If I Ever Get Out of Here

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"A heart-healing, mocs-on-the-ground story of music, family and friendship." -- Cynthia Leitich Smith, author of TANTALIZE and RAIN IS NOT MY INDIAN NAME

Lewis "Shoe" Blake is used to the joys and difficulties of life on the Tuscarora Indian reservation in 1975: the joking, the Fireball games, the snow blowing through his roof. What he's not used to is white people being nice to him -- people like George Haddonfield, whose family recently moved to town with the Air Force. As the boys connect through their mutual passion for music, especially the Beatles, Lewis has to lie more and more to hide the reality of his family's poverty from George. He also has to deal with the vicious Evan Reininger, who makes Lewis the special target of his wrath. But when everyone else is on Evan's side, how can he be defeated? And if George finds out the truth about Lewis's home -- will he still be his friend?

Acclaimed adult author Eric Gansworth makes his YA debut with this wry and powerful novel about friendship, memory, and the joy of rock 'n' roll.

If I Ever Get Out of Here Details

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Author : Eric Gansworth

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From Reader Review *If I Ever Get Out of Here* for online ebook

jv poore says

This book begins with an “Indian” (Native American) entering Jr. High. While, on the surface, his trials and tribulations appear to be based on ethnicity and, in turn, poverty. The facts are that many students entering Jr. High (or Middle School) this year will experience the same taunting, teasing and bullying that Lewis tolerates. Maybe a student will be singled out due to ethnicity, body shape, hair color, name or wardrobe. The results are the same, which is why I strongly recommend this book. Although a work of fiction, the core issues are very, very real and kids need to know that they are not alone.

It is so easy to recognize exclusion and to immediately attribute it to race, ethnicity, size or social class, when maybe that is not exactly the case. The old chicken or egg. Yes, maybe Lewis was ostracized, at first, because of his red skin and low socioeconomic standing. Maybe, that initial reaction caused him to be defensive and to toughen up. But, what about the next year? Is it possible that he carries the defensiveness with him? If so, maybe people are turned off, not by the color of his skin, but by the prickliness in his personality.

Another aspect of this book that I truly love: friendship. As Lewis leaves behind the kids he has grown up with to attend a “White” school, he begins to learn the difference between true friendship and friendship by default. He sees that although he has grown up with and hung out with someone almost every day of his life, that person may not actually be a true friend; whereas a new guy, free with unsolicited advice, may turn out to be the best friend he’s ever had. This is the most realistic portrayal of a true friendship between boys that I have ever seen. The strength and loyalty become clear based on actions and secrets kept hidden, rather than articulated enthusiastically as tends to be the case with girls.

This story, set in 1977 and filled with Beatles and Paul McCartney references, is remarkably well-written. The prose is not flowery or lyrical; rather, it is a bit raw---exactly as it should be for the subject matter. The simplicity is deceiving. Mr. Gansworth manages to say more, with fewer words. I experienced many emotions while reading this book. I felt sad for the nastiness Lewis is constantly faced with, I felt frustrated with him for not trying a bit harder---for seeming to be too stubborn. The random acts of kindness filled me with joy, and the show of true friendship renewed my hope.

This Review originally written for Buried Under Books Blog.

Alicia says

I picked it up after recognizing that we had the title in our library and it had been featured on a list of books with Native American main characters. But I didn’t connect and it likely had more to do with the incongruous way that it was supposed to be set in 1975 but the book itself looks and reads contemporary. It did not compute and then add the musical elements that was supposed to place it in history and I just became disinterested.

Reading fail unfortunately.

grieshaber_reads says

Actual rating: 4.5 stars. It's 1975 and Lewis is a Tuscarora Indian living in poverty on the reservation. Being the only Indian on the "smart kids" track at the white school, Lewis is friendless and feels invisible. At the beginning of 8th grade, he vows to fit in and make a friend. Luckily for Lewis, this is the year George's Air Force officer father is transferred to the base in Lewis' town. George and Lewis become friends mainly due to their shared love of music - especially the Beatles and Paul McCartney & Wings. Their friendship is not an easy one; however. Lewis feels he must hide his poverty and keep his Indian life separate from his white life. The beauty of this book is how Lewis slowly learns to trust George and his family through all of the adversity Lewis faces, including bullying and prejudice.

Oh, how I loved, loved, loved this book! Although I wouldn't categorize it as a page turner, I could not put it down because I was so in love with the story and the characters. I read it in one day. I was in awe of the way Gansworth wrote this story. It was set in 1975, but the time period was not jammed down the readers' throats. One way the time period does stand out is that Lewis and George (and George's dad who is the best YA Dad I've read since *Eleanor & Park* and *TFIOS*) listen to records. And the main records they listen to are by PM & Wings. By the time these three go to the Wings concert, I couldn't stand it anymore. And by "couldn't stand it anymore" I mean I finally had to click on the iTunes store and purchase Wings' Greatest Hits and listen to it on loop the rest of the day/evening as I read/finished this book. BTW, I highly recommend you do that, too :). Another cool thing Gansworth did in the way he told the story was include his original artwork (just a bit, but it was awesome) and use Beatles/Wings songs as chapter titles. Very cool playlist and discography included. I would really love to see this book make the Gateway list and I plan to fight to get it there!

Laura (bbliophile) says

I have a feeling that parts of this book are going to stay with me for a long time. I loved the friendship, the family relationship, and a lot more. I would definitely recommend this.

Jennifer says

Another shout out to Powell's Daily Dose for alerting me to this YA novel about Lewis Blake, a middle-school boy growing up in the Tuscarora Reservation in upstate New York in the 1970's. Like Junior in Sherman Alexie's *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, Lewis moves between two different worlds—the mostly white world of his junior high, where he gets tracked into the “smart section” but he is the only reservation kid—and his home on the Tuscarora reservation—where he lives with his mom and Uncle Albert in a dilapidated house with no indoor plumbing.

After a disastrous sixth grade year, Lewis hopes that seventh grade will be different and his encounter with a new kid, George Haddonfield, on the first day seems to suggest that it will. Recently relocated to the local air force base, George and his parents have come from Guam and before that, Germany. George and Lewis connect over music, especially the Beatles and post-Beatles Paul McCartney, as well as a shared sense of humor. However, as their friendship develops, Lewis has to face the fact that they do live in two completely

different worlds and he's not ready to show George his. To add to this tension, a school bully has decided that Lewis is the perfect target and the bully's personal connections go so high, there is nothing the school will do about it, especially because Lewis, no matter how academically gifted, is just another reservation kid.

This is not just a story of two worlds—one white and one Native American—it's also a story of a particular time—one that I lived through with its 33 rpms, Wacky Packs, the 7-3 section of seventh grade and the blizzard of 1977. Gansworth recreates middle school hallways and elements of grinding poverty with a sure hand and a steady eye and both his and Lewis's love of music shines through this heartbreaking yet curiously optimistic story.

Yodamom says

A very good read, realistic in it's peek at Rez life. I found it sometimes funny sometimes sweet, sometimes heartbreaking and more often then not I found it bittersweet. I great look at the other side of the coin from the other side's viewpoint

Debbie says

There are LOT of reasons I love Eric Gansworth's debut novel, and there's lot of entrance points for a broad range of readers, too.

If you're looking for a book with any of these, IF I EVER GET OUT OF HERE delivers.

Native characters

Kids with parents in the Air Force

Books in which Beatles/Queen figure prominently

Single mom

Viet Nam vet

Cross cultural friendships

My full review is at American Indians in Children's Literature

"What I like about Eric Gansworth's IF I EVER GET OUT OF HERE" -

<http://americanindiansinchildrenslite...>

Kate Olson says

An AMAZING book - can't wait for his next title to come out in May 2018! This book gave me so much to think about, and I'm very happy that 1) I read this for a Librarian Battle of the Books and 2) I already had it in my MSHS library. Should be required reading in all schools in the US.

Wendy says

I stayed up until 2 am finishing this. When I started, I was all, "Oh, Part-Time Indian in upstate New York." But no. I still love Alexie's book, but this is no imitation or little brother. *If I Ever Get Out of Here* stands firmly on its own feet. It is a story of friendship, first and foremost. It's a story of family, school, poverty, standing up for yourself in the face of intense prejudice--but mostly it's about the power of friendship. And music.

Grittier than many MG novels, but solidly PG, with an ending that is realistic yet optimistic. I could read this to a middle school class--porn movies and magazines are alluded to, and a few people who really, really deserve it are called assholes, but that's as far as it goes.

Cassi aka Snow White Haggard says

Review is below PSA that everyone should know about.

When I first started *If I Ever Get Out of Here* I immediately wanted to compare it to Sherman Alexie's amazing *The Absolutely True Diary of A Part-Time Indian*. Which is absolutely terrible of me. *If I Ever Get Out of Here* is a good book in its own right. It doesn't need to be compared to Alexie's work. There is room for more than one YA book about the American Indian experience growing up on a reservation.

First I want to address the similarities because I know everyone's curious. Yes the books have a few things in common. The main characters are students of above-average intelligence that are surrounded by white classmates who don't always understand them. They're poor and live on a reservations. That's pretty much it. Let's not talk about how many white YA main characters are written as smart misunderstood kids because I'm pretty sure that's a commonality among most heroes and heroines. As for the rest, I think that's just a realistic portrayal of the American Indian experience. (Being white and from Kentucky it's hard to actually know that though).

So now that I've gotten that out of the way let's talk about the book (And FYI that was not to criticize anyone else. That was 100% to criticize the way I originally approached reading this book). Lewis is a poor boy, like pretty much everyone on the rez, but unlike all of his Indian friends he was placed in a higher level class by the guidance counselor. Intelligence-wise, Lewis belongs in that class but socially he has trouble fitting in. He doesn't have the money to buy nice clothes, doesn't know how to dress and doesn't hang out where all of the white kids do.

When Lewis finds out there's going to be a new kid in his class he hopes for another Indian. What he gets instead is George, a military brat who's just moved to rural New York from Guam. Against the odds, George and Lewis become best friends. They're both big fans of the Beatles, Wings and Queen. Even though they are friends, it's painfully obvious at times that they don't understand each other's lives.

While on one-hand this book is about growing up on a reservation, it's also about growing up in poverty. To

me that's where this book really struck a chord. After seeing George's nice clean house, Lewis's makes up lie after lie to avoid inviting George to his home. It's not because he doesn't like George or doesn't trust him. It's because he's ashamed. Lewis lives with his single-mother and disabled uncle and it's hard to keep the house clean and pay the bills. His house is falling apart and he doesn't want George to see how he really lives. Reading the sections about poverty and Lewis's shame was painful, but in absolutely the best way because those sections rang heartbreakingly true.

This book deals with friendship realistically, with all its embarrassments, pitfalls and awkward moments but also how friends overcome obstacles, arguments and ultimately forgive. In some ways this book is very sad and bittersweet, but mostly because it chooses to be realistic. And I like that. It doesn't beat around the bush or give you a neatly-wrapped-box ending. Instead it just tells you a story, gives you a window into someone else's life experience and hopefully increases your understanding and empathy because of it.

I received an advance reading e-book in exchange for an honest review.

For this review and more check out my blog [Galavanting Girl Books](#)

Aurora Dimitre says

I don't want to compare this to *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, because every single review compares the two. I'm pretty sure this is because that book is just about the only book with a Native American protagonist that almost anyone has ever read, but you know - there we go.

All of that aside, I did really enjoy this book. Part of it was the fact that this book takes place in the '70s - that not-quite-historical-fiction-yet is one of my favorite time periods for books to be set in. Like, the Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe, or the *The Miseducation of Cameron Post* type of deal. As well as that, this is the story of Lewis, a Native American kid who's the only one from his class to get into the 'smarter' class at the white school. There's issues with a bully, with a friend that he doesn't quite want to take back to his house, and just a plethora of things that you don't really think about.

The author, Eric Gansworth, grew up on the reservation that Lewis lives on, and I kind of assume that at least parts of this book are autobiographical. And I find it really interesting. I think it's an important book, too, and one that needs to be read more. Talked about more. Like, dude, I'm all for diversity in books, but one group of people that always gets shunted to the side is the Native American population. You get books like this, and Sherman Alexie's, but other than that, you've got nothing. This is a fairly recent YA release, and a) I'm definitely going to be reviewing it on my channel, for more than one reason, and b) it was great, so go read it.

My thoughts are all jumbled on this book, and this review wasn't all that coherent, but my main point is - this was great, and there need to be more books like it. And also read it.

Nina O'Daniels says

Yes, yes, this book can absolutely be compared to Sherman Alexie's novel *The Absolute True Diary of a Part-Time Indian* BUT there are some major differences between the two main characters (both of whom I

love) that make each story separate.

Lewis attends school off the reservation and has been placed with the smart kids almost since kindergarten. That part is great, because he likes school. What he doesn't like is being completely invisible due to him being a res kid- an Indian. He has tried to make friends but the banter that he is used to with his reservation friends is out of place here at school, not to mention his clothing is all wrong and due to a decidedly bad choice in haircuts, he isn't exactly much to look at. This finally changes when Lewis meets George, a military kid whose dad was just transferred here. George is used to meeting new kids and handles the transition well and he talks to Lewis. Eventually a friendship is forged out of the love of music. I should mention this takes place in 1975 and if you aren't a Beatles, Paul McCartney, Wings or Queen fan, you just might very well be after reading. Lewis and George's friendship does have its flaws. Lewis is extremely embarrassed at his poverty and home and constantly makes excuses as to why George can never come over. George gets a girlfriend and their time spent together overrides his time with Lewis.

This is a great story about friendship, identity, and music. Mad props to George's dad in this story. Always refreshing to see a good, strong male role model for those teenage boys. Not all of the adults in this story got the same reaction from me. Be warned-you will be angry.

Trami says

*1 1/5 stars

{seriously it deserves a million stars}

^ my reaction after finishing this book

conclusion: I freaking loved everything about this book I need to reread it about twenty times over.

This book broke my heart. Its story rang so true to me, and after closing the book, I almost felt like crying in memory of all the amazing characters I had been taken on a journey with. It's not easy to create characters that readers will love, but it's a true talent to be able to write a story where every character feels real and important. Eric Gansworth's YA debut is brilliant, inspiring, and telling of the experience American Indians had on reservations.

Lewis Blake is the only Tuscarora Indian in the advanced class in his year, and as a result of this, he has no friends in his class. His identity makes him an outcast, and as much as tries to make friends, everyone ignores him.

"The force field kept me inside and everyone else out. I'd given up trying to make friends by Christmas break."

Yet as he starts his new school year, he befriends new kid George Haddonfield and they forge a bond that transcends cultures and society's rules. George and Lewis's friendship is portrayed wonderfully well, Eric Gansworth somehow manages to describe the barrier between the two and the simultaneous connection they

have with each other. You see the stark contrast between their experiences and how they fit together like two puzzle pieces. Where Lewis can be a little bit of a cynic, George sees the other side of things and vice versa. I was never bored of their interaction and it killed me when (view spoiler)

Beyond that friendship, I loved how Eric Gansworth portrays the relationships that Lewis has with everyone. Lewis experiences (view spoiler) It's amazing how they each have a unique viewpoint and their own experiences, and how it feels like we know each of these characters personally, no matter how likeable/hateable they were or how small of a role they played. This novel almost read like a memoir with how fresh the experiences were.

Honestly, this book is *so, so much more* than what the summary has to offer, or even what I can tell you about it. It covers a myriad of things like family relationships, racism, pop culture, friendship, prejudice, single moms, life in poverty, bullying, standing up for yourself, and so many other issues. You'd think that if a book tried to describe all those things in depth in a span of about 360 pages, it would drag and become boring. But *If I Ever Get Out of Here* was entertaining while being educational, and it linked all of these together flawlessly. Now excuse me while I crumple in a ball of feelings and recommend this book to everyone I know.

Lulu (the library leopard) says

Read for the 2017 Diversity Bingo: indigenous main character (#ownvoices).

I think it's really a testament to how good this was that I managed to enjoy it despite the dangerous combination of many, many Beatles references and my own passive-aggressive attitude towards the Beatles! (That was a compliment, if it wasn't clear.)

Crystal says

Review copy from Netgalley

I had really been looking forward to reading this book after reading the review from Debbie Reese at *American Indians in Children's Literature*. Whenever she raves about a book, I know I will love it or at the very least find something that makes me think. I was not disappointed. It was everything I had hoped it would be and more. *If I Ever Get Out of Here* is a look into the life of a boy as he's coming of age. Like many young people, Lewis is searching for his identity. He thought he knew who he was, but as he comes into more contact and closer relationships with people outside his reservation, he questions himself. He straddles that line of embracing his home culture and feeling the need to distance himself from it so he can fit in with the mainstream culture of his classmates.

Gansworth has crafted an intriguing story that will appeal to a wide variety of young people with music, humor, fights, friendship, and romance. He wove the music of the Beatles and Paul McCartney throughout using songs as chapter titles and within the storyline too. Music is something that can connect people across age, gender, and even culture lines. We don't have to share the same background to share an enjoyment of music.

I loved the subtle and not so subtle moments of humor in the story. Lewis and his friends and relatives hassle each other as part of their way of bonding with rather rude nicknames like Stinkpot. Often though, the humor is just his matter of fact rather deadpan style like the exchange with his mother after he had someone cut off his braid.

"You look like a Welfare Indian."

"I am a Welfare Indian," I said.

"You don't need to look the part," she said.

Another example is way back in the acknowledgments. Even there Gansworth is still cracking jokes. He begins, "If you're reading this book for class, you can skip this page. There will surely not be a quiz on any of this information."

Along with humor, Gansworth has included quite a few heavy topics. Bullying and how to fight or not fight takes up a good deal of the book. More importantly, friendship is examined. Friendship across cultural lines can be an amazing thing, but it can also be difficult and Gansworth reveals this over and over again.

Another aspect of this book mentioned within the first five pages is the history of the Indian boarding schools and the long-term damage that they caused. The effect of the Indian boarding schools is far reaching and is being brought to light in more and more works of children's literature (there are a few titles for older readers in this list also).

The boys start navigating the waters of dating before too long. This brings up the complications of dating and marrying non-Indians. If a man married a non-Indian, their children wouldn't have legal status as an Indian. That is some heavy stuff to think about as a middle-schooler and being the kid that he is, Lewis is thinking about it.

I would highly recommend this book to any young adult. Lewis and George come alive in the book and there are so many fabulous personalities. Lewis's Uncle Albert and George's father add great voices to the story. I am going to be sharing this title with many people because these characters should not be missed.

This review was originally posted at <http://readingtl.blogspot.com/2013/11...>
