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## **Review: Prairie Lotus**

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## *Prairie Lotus*

By Linda Sue Park

Clarion Books, 2020

### DESCRIPTION:

After the death of her Chinese mother, Hannah, fourteen, and her white father move from San Francisco to the Dakota Territory to start a new life in LaForge. While her father plans to open a simple dress goods store, Hannah harbors a dream to make it a real dress shop where she can use the sewing skills taught by her mother to create and sell her own designs. Hoping to finish her schooling while the shop is being built, Hannah encounters deep-seated racism as many of the parents react to her presence by pulling their children from the school. This type of behavior is not new to Hannah and she determines to overcome the town's prejudice by facing it with dignity and strength. However, when the future of her father's business is threatened, she must rely on the support of the few friendships she has been able to develop, to turn the tide of opinion. Adding depth to an understanding of the social currents of this era comes through Hannah's chance encounter on the prairie with some women and children from the nearby Ihanktonwan tribe.

### CRITIQUE:

This story is perfectly paced for readers in the ten to twelve year range. The author makes clear the difficulties of being of mixed white and Asian blood in the 1800's without descriptions of events being overwhelming. Hannah is a likeable and exemplary young heroine, struggling with the normal fears and uncertainties of adolescence as well as having to prove her worth to an unfriendly community. Her somewhat uncertain relationship to her father, who displays his own problems with knowing how to navigate their situation, adds another layer of depth to the text. The author's note at the back of the book outlines her own struggle with the attitudes encountered by her heroine. She relates her childhood love of the books by Laura Ingalls Wilder and her struggle to with the racism sometimes portrayed in them. *The Prairie Lotus* is in part her answer to that struggle. This book reads quickly but has great impact. It has been a starred review and is worthy of future awards.

### RELATED SUBJECTS:

1800's, Abuse, Chinese Americans, Death of parent, Father-daughter relationships, Friendship, Frontier and pioneer life, Native Americans, Prairies, Prejudice, Race relations, School, Sewing, South Dakota,

### CHARACTER THEMES:

Coping, Courage, Dependability, Determination, Diligence, Ethnic pride, Fairness, Fearlessness, Hope, Passion, Perseverance, Resourcefulness, Self-acceptance, Spunk, Tolerance, Trustworthiness, Unselfishness, Wisdom, Work ethic