



Thirteen Moons on Turtle's Back: A Native American Year of Moons

By Joseph Bruchac

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"Unusual and intelligent...An exemplary introduction to Native American culture with its emphasis on the importance of nature." —*Publishers Weekly*

In Native American legend, the thirteen scales on Old Turtle's back hold the key to the thirteen cycles of the moon and the changing seasons. These lyrical poems and striking paintings celebrate the wonder of the seasons, from the Northern Cheyenne's Moon of the Popping Trees to the Big Moon of the Abenaki.

"This book instills a spiritual respect for our land and an appreciation for the people who were its first caring guardians." —*American Bookseller*

A Notable Children's Trade Book in the Language Arts

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

To many Native Americans, the 13 cycles of the moon represent the changing seasons and the passage of time. Each moon has its own special name that, while varying among the tribal nations, is consistent with the legend that the 13 scales on Old Turtle's back hold the key to these moons. The authors present 13 poems that take readers through the year, from the "Moon of Popping Trees"--when the "cottonwoods crack with frost"--to the "Big Moon" of the Abenakis. The book's effective design consists of verses in vertical columns at the left of each spread, with the remainder occupied by Locker's (Family Farm ; Catskill Eagle) typically lush artwork. His oil paintings are eye-catching in their depth of color reflecting dramatic seasonal changes. Trees, skies and woodland creatures are rendered in vivid hues that combine to produce an enthralling vision. This unusual and intelligent book is an exemplary introduction to Native American culture with its emphasis on the importance of nature. All ages.

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From School Library Journal

Kindergarten-Grade 4-- The book opens with an Abenaki storyteller explaining to his grandson that just as there are always 13 scales on "Old Turtle's back," there are 13 moons in a year, each of which has a name and a story. The poetic tales and corresponding paintings that follow represent myths or legends of different Native American tribes. Although the language of these poems is not particularly memorable or childlike, it does evoke images and passes on some of the traditions of the native people and their closeness to the natural world. The cadence is that of an adult explaining things to a child. Both text and illustrations have a distancing effect on readers. Locker's large, dark paintings stand parallel to or in tandem with the poems but are not integral to them. They create a mood and capture portions of the text, encouraging viewers to look "at" rather than "into" these images. There is a sense of vastness in these paintings, and sometimes a harshness, but little of the lushness or the warmth of the land. Although the cover illustration of the turtle is inviting and the large format attractive, these are poems that will probably not entice most youngsters on their own. They can be appreciated, however, when presented by an adult and will be a welcome addition to units on Native American cultures. --Kay E. Vandergrift, School of Communication, Information and Library Studies, Rutgers University, New Brunswick, NJ

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From Kirkus Reviews

From a velvety moonlit wetland scene in "Big Moon" to the glory of a deciduous forest in the "Moon of Falling Leaves," Locker once again proves himself a gifted landscape artist. In illustrating this Native American lunar calendar, he makes forays beyond the Hudson River valley to the lands of the Lakota and Northern Cheyenne, Cherokee and Huron, Abenaki, Cree, and more, catching the seasons in light, clouds, trees, and wildlife. As in his other books, human and animal figures are rather awkward intrusions, with some exceptions--notably a huge, four-square moose in "Frog Moon." Folklorist Bruchac and poet London work together on brief, dignified retellings of Native American legends for the accompanying text, properly pointing out in an afterword that tribes in different areas see different seasonal patterns and hold different beliefs. (Poetry/Folklore. 7-9) -- *Copyright ©1992, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lauren Barnett:

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