

The Night Wanderer:

A Book Talk Intro

Citation: Taylor, Drew Hayden. *The Night Wanderer*. Toronto: Annick Press, 2007. Ages 12+

Summary

Tiffany Hunter is having a rough year. Her mother's left, she's locked in constant conflict with her father, and she's about to fail most of her classes. The shine is starting to wear off her relationship with her white boyfriend Tony, who keeps using her reservation status to get tax exemptions on his purchases. When her father tells her he's renting out her room to a new lodger, Tiffany feels like things can't get much worse.

The new lodger is polite but unusual: preferring the basement to his offered room and maintaining a highly specialized 'diet'. Neither Tiffany nor her family realize the truth: that the mysterious Pierre L'Errant is actually a vampire, returning to his tribal home after centuries spent in Europe.

When Tiffany's tension with her father escalates into a fight that sends her running into the woods, a tense midnight encounter with Pierre brings about great changes in both their lives.

Characters, Setting and Style

Set in the fictional Otter Lake reserve, *The Night Wanderer* is primarily told through the dual perspectives of Tiffany Hunter and Pierre L'Errant. Pierre's voice brings a historical perspective, as he muses on the history of colonization and travel that led to his current vampiric status. Tiffany's perspective is occasionally humorous, as her total absorption with stereotypical teenage concerns -- grades, parental restrictions, her boyfriend -- verges on parody. The novel also occasionally features the viewpoints of Tiffany's father, grandmother, and minor tertiary characters, providing external perspectives on Pierre. The style is classically Gothic, building tension around the mystery of Pierre's return. Are his intentions benign or malicious? The fate of several characters who encounter Pierre and the reasons Pierre has chosen to return are kept ambiguous until the end of the novel, increasing the narrative's suspense.

Appeal Factors

The Gothic tone will likely appeal to readers who enjoy tales of supernatural suspense. Teen readers will likely be able to empathize with Tiffany's coming-of-age narrative and her struggles to define how she relates to her culture and history. Readers may also appreciate the older more knowledgeable perspective Pierre provides to counter Tiffany's more limited experience.

Thematic appeal factors: depiction of a cross-racial relationship, importance of language, exploration of vampire mythology

Noteworthy Information

The *Night Wanderer* has received much critical acclaim¹, including:

- 2007 - Nominated for the RAND MCNALLY BEST ABORIGINAL BOOK OF THE YEAR and BEST CHILDREN'S BOOK
- 2008 - INDEPENDENT PUBLISHER BOOK AWARDS - Gold Award in the Juvenile/Young Adult fiction category
- 2008 - Honourable mention in FORWARD MAGAZINE BOOK OF THE YEAR in Juvenile category
- 2008 - Finalist for the ARTHUR ELLIS AWARDS (Crimewriters of Canada) in the Juvenile Category.
- 2008 - Shortlisted for the SUNBURST AWARD
- 2008 - Shortlisted for the MANITOBA YOUNG READERS' CHOICE AWARD
- 2009 - Nominee for THE SASKATCHEWAN YOUNG READERS CHOICE AWARD
- 2009 - Shortlisted for the STELLAR BOOK AWARD.
- 2009-2010 Teen Readers Choice Award

The Night Wanderer was also adapted into graphic novel format by Allison Kooistra in 2013, which may lend the title further teen appeal. It can also be purchased as an e-book.

Intended Audience

Though published as YA and rated by NoveList as appropriate for readers between grades 7-9, the amount of narrative devoted to more adult perspectives such as Pierre and Tiffany's grandmother make this a title likely to hold crossover audience appeal for adults.

Readers May Also Enjoy

Eye Killers by A. A. Carr

Rain Is Not My Indian Name by Cynthia Leitich Smith

The National Uncanny: Indian Ghosts and American Subjects by Renee L. Bergland²

¹ Information acquired from the Awards section of Drew Hayden Taylor's website: <<http://www.drewhaydentaylor.com/awards.html>>.

² For the older reader interested in a critical historical perspective on Native characters in American Gothic fiction. Would also be a good reference text if you wanted to build a lesson plan around the novel.