

# Educator Guide



## Harvest House

By Cynthia Leitich Smith





# About the Book

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In HARVEST HOUSE, sophomore Hughie Wolfe receives disappointing news that his school's fall play has been canceled. His hope for a lead role has vanished. So, he volunteers to work with his friend Sam at a fund-raiser Halloween haunted house. The attraction is based on local folklore centered on supernatural happenings at the crossroads where it's located.

As Halloween approaches, a video goes viral about a "Bad Man" stalking a girl at the crossroads. Suspense builds as Hughie, Sam, and their friends investigate and discover connections to the crisis around missing Indigenous women.

Along the way, the author seamlessly layers the paranormal element with everyday teen life experiences like making mistakes, learning to better communicate, fending off bullies, and navigating family dynamics.

Author Cynthia Leitich Smith connects her stories, like HARVEST HOUSE, through her settings and cast. Readers who're familiar with her work will recognize the fictional towns depicted in the novel as well as characters who previously appeared in RAIN IS NOT MY INDIAN NAME and HEARTS UNBROKEN.

## Cynthia Leitich Smith

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Cynthia Leitich Smith (Muscogee Citizen) is a NYT bestselling author and was named the 2021 NSK Neustadt Laureate. Her novel HEARTS UNBROKEN won an American Indian Youth Literature Award. Her recent books include ANCESTOR APPROVED: INTERTRIBAL STORIES FOR KIDS, an ALA Notable Book and winner of the Reading of the West Book Award for Young Readers, as well as SISTERS OF THE NEVERSEA, which received six starred reviews and made numerous "best of the year" lists. Her debut tween novel RAIN IS NOT MY INDIAN NAME was named one of the 30 Most Influential Children's Books of All Time by Book Riot. Her 2023 release is the YA novel, HARVEST HOUSE, an Indigenous ghost mystery. Cynthia is the author-curator of Heartdrum, an imprint of HarperChildren's and was the inaugural Katherine Paterson Chair at the Vermont College of Fine Arts MFA program.







# Discussion Questions

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1. Does it matter when and where the story takes place? Could the story have happened elsewhere? Why or why not?
2. After reading “52 Days Until Halloween” (chapter 2), describe Hughie’s worldview as a Muscogee teenager. What does the chapter reveal about his attitudes, ideas, and philosophies?
3. When the author introduces the other characters, what impressions of them form in your mind? [Celeste, Sam, Marie, Cricket, Louise, Rain, Ms. Fischer, the Vogel boys, Karl] How do your impressions change throughout the story? Why? Do any impressions stay the same? Why?
4. It is true in life, as Rain says on page 215, “I’m not saying it’s always easy. We’ve all got our stuff.” As you read HARVEST HOUSE, you’ll learn Hughie’s strategy to work through his problems:
  - If you make a promise, honor it. (Text evidence on page 99)
  - Think before you act. (Text evidence on page 99)
  - Think about others. (Text evidence on page 145)
  - Try to change things in a positive manner. (Text evidence on page 255)
  - Realize that everyone is human. (Text evidence on page 281)

How does this strategy help him gather courage to speak with Ms. Fischer? What was Hughie’s defining moment in the story?

5. Why is Hughie’s perspective important to the story? How can you use his approach in your own life?
6. How do the chapters from Celeste’s point of view differ from the other chapters? How does Celeste’s perspective move the story forward?







# Discussion Questions

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7. Books provide material for a reader's ongoing effort to make sense of our world. Stories provide a way to open conversations in a safe way. This story reflects on stereotypes, misunderstandings, and the current crisis of missing Indigenous women. Identify and discuss at least two themes and what you've learned. Recognize your understanding about the themes. Then explain how your knowledge has improved. (At first, I thought...but now I know....)
8. Think about the future: What actions can you take to improve your community?
9. Why is it important to learn and connect past and present to inform the future?

## Curriculum Connections

Cite text evidence, Make logical inferences, Develop questions, Determine theme and analyze how it develops, Analyze how complex characters develop and interact, Explore the impact of the author's choices, Investigate story structure, Analyze how author employs point of view, perspective and purpose, Evaluate author's point of view of historical events, Role of culture in a society, Explore how we learn about the past, Evaluate reliable historical resources, Investigate why the past is important to today, Examine influences of how people learn, perceive, and develop over time, Recognize goals, values, and principles of two groups in conflict, Evaluate fairness, and work towards common good, Consider citizenship and civic responsibility.

## About the Guide

Written by author-educator Andrea Page (Lakota - Standing Rock). Andrea is Co-President of the Rochester Area Children's Writers and Illustrators (RACWI) group and a member of SCBWI. Andrea lives with her husband in Rochester, NY. Visit [www.WriterAndreaPage.com](http://www.WriterAndreaPage.com).

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