



The Magic Of Spider Woman

By Lois Duncan

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An enchanting, authentic Navajo tale about the importance of keeping one's life in balance. Wandering Girl, a strong-willed shepherdess, promises Spider Woman she won't weave too long. But as soon as spring bursts into glorious colour, she begins creating the most beautiful blanket in the world. "Begay's dramatic shifts of perspective, his innate sensitivity to the land and people depicted, and the text's powerful message about pride's deadly effects combine in an appealing and meaningful way." - School Library Journal, starred review

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Duncan blends several versions of a Navajo myth for this relatively abstract moral tale. When the Fourth World is created, the girl who will be Weaving Woman misses the lessons in leading a balanced life the rest of the People receive. Spider Woman later teaches her how to weave, and warns her not to spend too much time at it. But she becomes obsessed with weaving a beautiful blanket-and her spirit gets trapped in it. Spider Woman herself has to pull a strand of wool loose to free her. To this day, Navajo weavers leave a "spirit pathway" in their blankets, "so the spirit of the weaver will not be imprisoned by its beauty." As in Begay's *Ma'ii* and *Cousin Horned Toad*, the graceful figures of the characters appear on dappled backgrounds, brightly colored against pastoral Western landscapes during happy times, darker and often spooky as Weaving Woman traps herself. Duncan's tale carries a thoughtful message, grounded in well-chosen details and adeptly relayed through her personable storytelling. Ages 6-9.

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From School Library Journal

Grade 3-6?Much more than a *pourquoi* tale, this story also concerns the rejection of obsession, even in the service of beauty, and recalls the Greek myth of Arachne. When Wandering Girl learns from Spider Woman how to make blankets from her sheep's wool, she is renamed Weaving Woman. She marries and spends a winter at her loom. In the spring, she discovers how to make dyes and is inspired to "create the most beautiful blanket in all of the world." As this goal consumes her, she forgets the Navajo Middle Way; her life loses its balance and her spirit becomes trapped in the blanket. Through a shaman's intervention, Spider Woman returns to pull a loose strand from the border, spoiling its perfection and freeing the weaver's spirit. Since then, the text adds, "every Navajo blanket has been woven with a pathway, so the spirit of the weaver will not be imprisoned by its beauty." The details Duncan adds from the Dineh creation story, as well as the happy ending, make it distinctively Navajo, as do Begay's light-spangled paintings. Significantly, in almost every one, the perfect rectangle of the illustration is broken by an element of the design extending beyond it: a visual reminder of the story's moral. The impact of the heroine's decision to use dyes is somewhat lessened by the brightly patterned clothing she wears throughout. Nevertheless, Begay's dramatic shifts of perspective, his innate sensitivity to the land and people depicted, and the text's powerful message about pride's deadly effects combine in an appealing and meaningful way.?Patricia (Dooley) Lothrop Green, St. George's School, Newport, RI

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From [Booklist](#)

Ages 5⁺-8. This Navajo legend tells of a young shepherdess who shivers from the cold until the mythic Spider Woman teaches her how to shear sheep, card and spin wool, and weave blankets. Spider Woman warns the newly named Weaving Woman to "walk the Middle Way," keeping her life in balance and avoiding weaving for too long at any one time. Although Weaving Woman promises to follow the Middle Way, she becomes so involved in her craft that she begins to weave from sunup to sundown. Soon she is trapped in a blanket of her own weaving, her spirit woven into its cloth. Loosening a thread makes the blanket imperfect and creates a path for her spirit to escape. Although the message may have more resonance for adults than for kids, the tale appears here in a colorful, picture book edition that should hold the interest of primary-grade children. *Carolyn Phelan*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Michael Brown:

Playing with family within a park, coming to see the sea world or hanging out with friends is thing that usually you will have done when you have spare time, then why you don't try factor that really opposite from that. One activity that make you not experience tired but still relaxing, trilling like on roller coaster you are ride on and with addition info. Even you love The Magic Of Spider Woman, you could enjoy both. It is fine combination right, you still would like to miss it? What kind of hangout type is it? Oh come on its mind hangout folks. What? Still don't understand it, oh come on its identified as reading friends.

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