



The Surrounded

D'Arcy McNickle

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As *The Surrounded* opens, Archilde León has just returned from the big city to his father's ranch on the Flathead Indian Reservation in Montana. The story that unfolds captures the intense and varied conflict that already characterized reservation life in 1936, when this remarkable novel was first published.

Educated at a federal Indian boarding school, Archilde is torn not only between white and Indian cultures but also between love for his Spanish father and his Indian mother, who in her old age is rejecting white culture and religion to return to the ways of her people. Archilde's young contemporaries, meanwhile, are succumbing to the destructive influence of reservation life, growing increasingly uprooted, dissolute, and hopeless. Although Archilde plans to leave the reservation after a brief visit, his entanglements delay his departure until he faces destruction by the white man's law.

In an early review of *The Surrounded*, Oliver La Farge praised it as "simple, clear, direct, devoid of affectations, and fast-moving." He included it in his "small list of creditable modern novels using the first Americans as theme." Several decades later, long out of print but not forgotten, *The Surrounded* is still considered one of the best works of fiction by or about Native Americans.

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