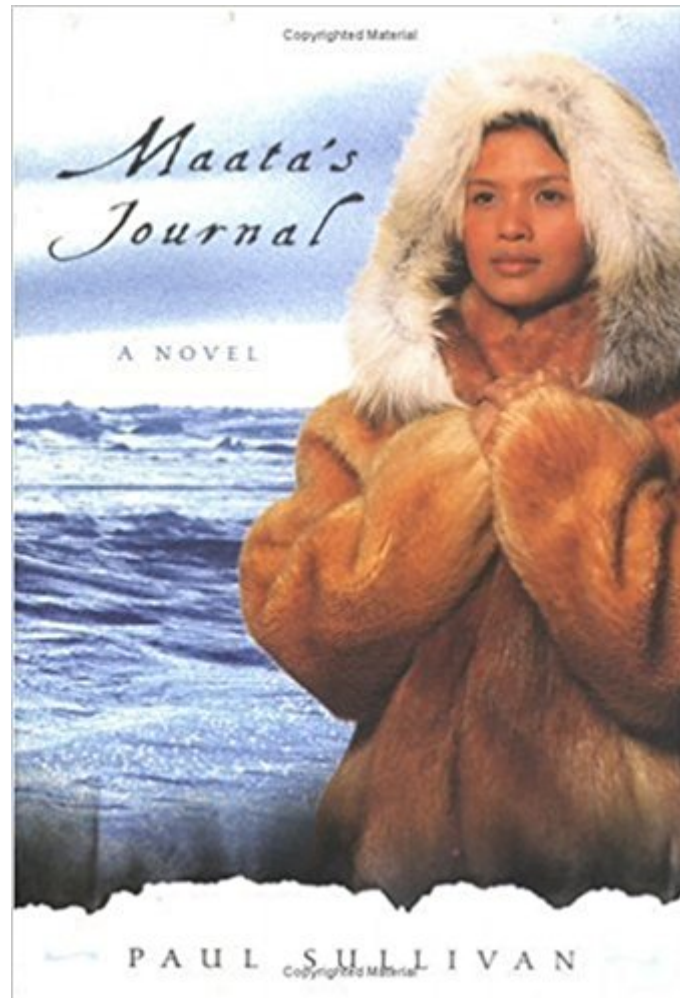




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# Maata's Journal : A Novel



## Synopsis

Can you live in two worlds at the same time? Maata has spent her life on the Arctic tundra, in a world of snow and ice. Her people, the Inuit, live a blissfully nomadic life, carrying all of their possessions on sleds, traveling with the seasons and the game. But one day a huge ship steams into their bay and forces her people onto it. They are taken to a Canadian government settlement camp, where there are incredible electric boats and houses with glass windows...and also alcohol and violence of a kind the Inuit have never known. Though her brother rebels and runs away, Maata realizes that in order to thrive in this new world, she must adapt to this new way of life. As she learns to read and write in English, she begins to keep a journal as she struggles to retain her traditional ways. However, when she is chosen to join a mapping expedition to her beloved homeland, she finds that all of her skills -- both from her Inuit and western educations -- become equally invaluable when tragedy strikes. In this remarkable story of courage, survival, and the power of language, Paul Sullivan brings the breathtakingly harsh Arctic landscape, and a breathtakingly determined girl, to life.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Grade 6 Up-A picture of Inuit life in northern Canada in the early 20th century. The novel, a 17-year-old girl's journal, puts Maata at a northern island research camp, along with Morgan, the last of the four men who embarked on the expedition, taking the teen to assist them and for her local knowledge. As Maata and seriously ill Morgan wait for summer breaks in the Arctic ice in the hope that a ship will rescue them, the young woman describes both the circumstances that brought them

to this dire state and her people's forced evacuation by the Canadian government from their traditional hunting grounds to a small settlement. Unfortunately, Sullivan forces Maata to write in a pseudo-folkloric cadence of short, broken sentences: "They hunted here. They were born here and died here. And their bones lay in the earth. A sacred place. Land of the Inuit." A purportedly good student with a self-professed affinity and love for languages, Maata seems perfectly capable of writing and thinking in longer sentences, as she proves when she later writes about life in a boarding school in Quebec. But Sullivan is most irritating in his insistence that bright and articulate Maata has never learned the word for dictionary ("Mr. Webster's big word book," "my wintertime book") even though the whole English vocabulary of childbirth flows from her pen. What is so much more than a survival story is marred by stylistic choices. (And the jacket copy describes Maata's traditional life as "blissfully" nomadic, a strange adjective to describe nomadic life anywhere.)-Sue Sherif, Alaska State Library, AnchorageCopyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Gr. 6-9. The journal of a 17-year-old Inuit girl slowly reveals events in 1926 that lead to her being trapped on an island with a man ill with scurvy. Maata knows only the life of a nomad of the Arctic tundra until the government moves her people to a small settlement where the intrusion of the white man's culture changes her life. Although her brother runs away, Maata discovers an affinity for words from a school teacher, and her skill with English precipitates her joining a team of men on a mapping expedition. Maata's journal, which has some bumpy pacing, records four months but also flashes back to early circumstances that foreshadow, like a slow-moving ice floe, her cultural conflicts and events of the past--among them, the horrific death of her parents, months spent in a Canadian orphans' school, and the friendship of two white men. Although the story of an Inuit girl torn between cultures will beg comparison to Julie of the Wolves, there are clear differences: the narrators' voice here is strong, but differently pitched: this is written as diary; and the details of the survival vary. Communication, however, is key in both stories: one is a story with animals; the other with outsiders. Read together, the books can generate thoughtful discussion. Julie CumminsCopyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

That the Inuits were taken from their Arctic tundra to settlement camps by the Canadian government. Maata's family is forced to leave their home and they are rudely dumped in a freezing and empty place and basically left to die. There is, however, plenty of alcohol. It is easy to see what the government hoped was in store for all the Inuits. In this story, they do have their champions. These come in the form of explorers who are there to learn the Inuit ways and map and study the

area. Although it is freezing and harsh, we are able to see the amazing beauty of life and the cold landscape. We understand why Maata's mother wants her to learn both her own and the English way of life. She will be a bridge for both worlds. When the explorers take Maata to be their guide on an expedition, all is almost lost. I enjoyed going along with Maata on all her journeys.

Maata was only 8 years old when the Canadian government forced everyone in her village to move to a new settlement - one with wooden buildings, a school, a church and a place where they would be separated from the land that had been part of their culture for generations. It would be more difficult to hunt and observe the rites of passage in the high arctic lands. There was also the availability of alcohol - something that threatened to destroy their community. Through her diary entries in the year 1924, when she is marooned on a remote island with a mapping expedition struck by disaster, Maata reflects on her life's adventures - from going to a boarding school in Quebec City, to learning English from a wizened old Inuit woman. This book is a nice, easy read that will teach people many things about the culture of the Inuit and their history.

Until I reviewed this book for my school booktalks, I had no idea that the Inuits were forced by the Canadian Gov't. into camps. This is a very interesting and informative read that most young adults will easily get "into". The reader is torn for Maata as one reads her life accounts....great for those who prefer the "journal entry" type of book.

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