

Publisher's Weekly, April 8, 1996

"The Unbreakable Code"

Setting a solidly intriguing, little-known historical episode within a fictional framework, Hunter (*Don't Touch My Stuff*) pays warm tribute to the Navajo "code talkers" who served in the Marine Corps during World War II. To comfort a grandson distraught about an upcoming move, an elderly Navajo man tells him about the time that he, too, had to leave their canyon home and, along with hundreds of other Navajo men, came to perform a crucial mission for the U.S. Government. The Navajo language, which had never been written down and was virtually unknown to outsiders, became a "secret weapon: in preventing the Japanese from intercepting and decoding American Radio Messages. Hunter's lengthy but absorbing story, based on interviews with former code talkers, casts a well-deserved spotlight on these skilled soldiers and on a wartime role that is almost guaranteed to interest readers. Miner's (*The Shepherd's Song*) subtly textured oil paintings realistically depict serene canyon landscapes, tense battle scenes, and the affectionate rapport between the narrator and his grandson. Young code-crackers will appreciate the inclusion of the original Navajo code in the endnotes. Ages 6-up (Apr.)