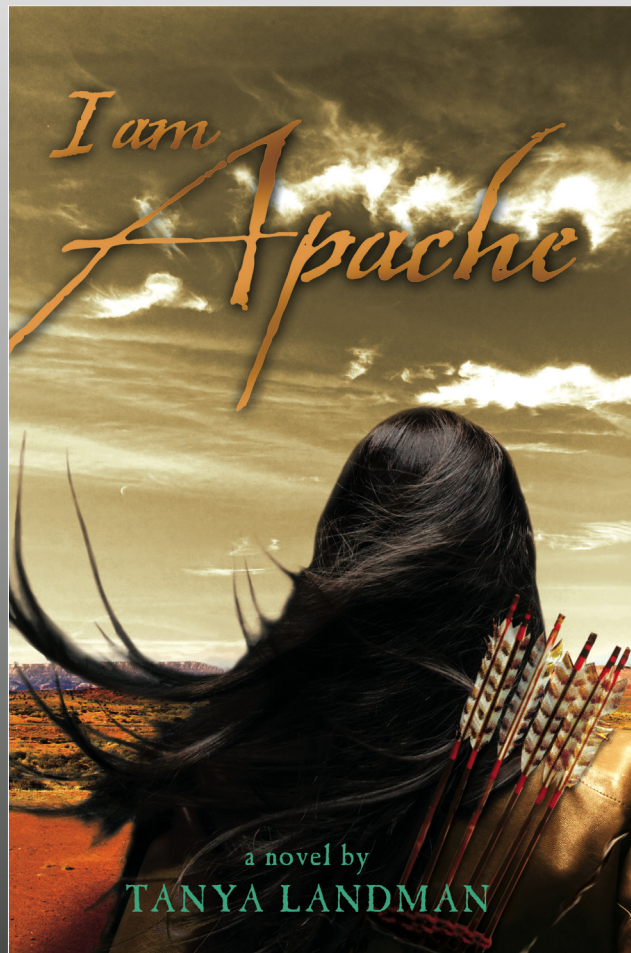


# I Am Apache

A young woman follows the path of a warrior — and learns a startling truth about her own identity — in a powerful coming-of-age tale.



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“A magnificent account of life in a doomed tribe on the Mexican border toward the end of the nineteenth century: a disturbing but exhilarating experience.” — *The Independent* (UK)

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R & A

with TANYA LANDMAN

author of *I Am Apache*

***Where did you get the idea for the story?***

A chance remark by my agent sparked the idea. She said something about warriors, and the picture of a girl carrying a spear formed in my mind. (I was born in Gravesend, Kent, where Pocahontas is buried. I used to find her statue—standing alone beside the cold, gray River Thames—very powerful. I guess that image must have seeped deep into my subconscious.) As soon as I put the phone down, I wrote the outline of the story. When I stopped to draw a breath, I began to worry about whether it was plausible—I wasn't sure what a woman's role was in the Native American tribes, or how much freedom women had. I didn't know if a girl would have been allowed to become a warrior. That's when I started to do some research.

***How did you go about researching Native American history and culture for the book?***

Geronimo was the first name that popped into my head, and when I typed it into Google, I was astounded to find his autobiography on the Web. It made electrifying reading, and I was instantly hooked on Apache history. I read everything I could get my hands on, ordering hundreds of dollars' worth of books through the Internet. When I found references to Lozen, Chief Victorio's sister, who was herself a warrior who rode and fought with Geronimo right up to his final surrender, I was thrilled. The more I found out, the more I realized that what I'd imagined was entirely plausible.

***Why did this story in particular have to be told?***

I grew up on a diet of TV westerns and B movies: *Little House on the Prairie*, *Alias Smith and Jones*, *Davy Crockett*, *The Virginian*, *Bonanza*, *Rawhide*. They all had one thing in common—a firm belief in the heroism of the plucky settlers who set forth to conquer the wilderness, people who went out with nothing but their courage to carve a place for themselves in a hostile world, using their honesty and virtue as a force for civilizing the Wild West. The settlers and cowboys were always the heroes, while the Indians (if mentioned at all) were a nasty, savage race that were best avoided. It was a myth I never thought to question. When I started my research, I was immediately gripped by the spirit of the Apache people: their courage and extraordinary abilities; the passion—the spiritual reverence—for the land in which they lived. The more I read, the more I realized that Cochise and Geronimo, Mangas Coloradas, Victorio, and Lozen were the real American heroes. I wanted to tell their side of the story.

***What character did you most enjoy writing about? Which character was the most challenging to develop?***

I loved telling Siki's story. It was amazingly intense and wonderful writing this book, and seeing the world through Siki's eyes was a truly exhilarating experience. It's difficult to pick out a favorite from among the other characters—I was very emotionally involved with all of them. Golahka was magnificent, but I also relished writing Keste's story line. The worst thing was finishing the book. Having to pluck myself out of Siki's world and come back to this one was really hard.

***What do you most want readers to take away from this novel?***

First and foremost, I'd love people to enjoy reading it as much as I enjoyed writing it. It's a gripping, emotional adventure. And at the risk of sounding pious: no matter what culture or race we are, we're all linked by a common thread of humanity. I think the purpose of fiction is to underline that link. If *I Am Apache* gives the reader's imagination and capacity for empathy a workout, I'll have done my job.

**Tanya Landman** runs the Storybox Theatre, a touring puppet theater for children, in England and is known there for her many books for children. She lives in Devon, England.