American Indian Mythology Study Guide

American Indian Mythology by Alice Marriott and Carol K. Rachlin

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

This book is a compilation of several short retellings of North American Indian myths and legends. Stories of how the world came to be the way it is, how people came to be the way they are, and cautionary tales about the way people are meant to behave are juxtaposed with sometimes metaphoric, sometimes graphically realistic tales recounting the ways in which white men came to dominate the Indians. Each story, according to notes provided by the editors, is a transcription of a narrative told them by an Indian elder or storyteller. In many cases, there is the sense throughout the book of a direct line of com-munication between those who originally lived the stories, and those who have lived to tell them.

The book begins with an extensive introduction describing the anthropological origins of the North American Indian people, and the development of their myths and legends. The Introduction also examines the altering and frequent elimination of Indian culture by the aggressive forays of white culture, influence, and military strength into Indian territory, both geographical and spiritual.

The stories themselves are divided into four main categories. The first is entitled "The World Beyond Ours", and contains what could broadly be described as stories of origin. These include tales of how the world came to be, how the light of the sun was brought into the world, how the constellations were formed, and how specific geological and/or natural phenomena came into being. The second category of story is entitled "The World Around Us", and contains stories that describe specific circumstances within the history of the Indian people. These include narratives of how Indian people came into the world, how corn and buffalo became their main sources of food, and how certain animals (such as the turtle and the bear) came to be the way they are.

The third category of story is entitled "The World We Live In Now", and contains two different types of stories. The first has to do with relationships between Indians and White Men, and in particular the way Indians were at times victimized by white diseases as well as by white military and economic conquest. The second type of story portrays the way Indian spirituality adapts and persists in contemporary, white-dominated society and culture. The fourth category of story in this book is the briefest, and contains stories relating to the Indian experience of life after death.

An interesting aspect to this collection of myths, legends, and fact-based narratives is that in its structure can be found an almost novelistic sense of through-line. The first story is one of how the world came into being, while the last is one of how individuals living in that world come to the end of their existence, the thematic point of that story being that life is a cycle-what is at the beginning is at the end, which is itself a beginning. The stories between these two points paint a picture of a culture going through extensive transformations, internal ones triggered by the Indians' own quest for wisdom and knowledge as well as external transformations triggered, and sometimes forced, by the ever-increasing influence of the White Man. As the Indians struggle, are sometimes defeated, and sometimes triumph, their spiritual beliefs evolve but

essentially remain intact. In other words, the stories of this book chronicle the spiritual journey not of an individual, as a novel might do, but of an entire people.

This journey plays out on what might be described as a traditionally epic scope. The Creator plays a direct role in many stories in the same way as, for example, the Greek gods became involved in the lives of those who worshipped *them*. Humans are taught lessons by their encounters with mystical, spiritual beings-as they are in mythologies throughout the world. Finally, stories play out on a large physical canvas. Great plains, mighty rivers, baked deserts and towering mountains are all central in these myths in the same way that the Nile is central to Egyptian mythology and the climate is central to the myths of Scandinavia. In fact, careful reading and interpretation of the stories in this book will reveal similarities between several of its key spiritual components and those of other belief systems; not only ancient mythologies like the Greek and/or Egyptian, but also of contemporary religions, such as Christianity and Buddhism, in particular. Here, perhaps, is the book's greatest value. In spite of the fact that many of its stories are defined by the differences between white and Indian culture, there is nevertheless the suggestion that these two cultures, and perhaps even any society that has a spiritual belief system integrated with its culture, are more similar than they might first appear to be.

Part 1 Section 1

Part 1 Section 1 Summary and Analysis

Part 1 of the book is entitled "The World Beyond Ours". Section 1 contains various stories of creation.

"How the World Was Made" (Cheyenne) An introduction describes the Cheyenne community's history, its socio-cultural reliance on the buffalo, the particular craft-making skills of the women in the community, and how they retained their stories and legends.

The story begins with Maheo, the Creator, inhabiting a universe of nothingness and deciding that his power (a rough translation of a word that in the original language means "creativity" or "genius") should be put to good use. He creates salt water and sea creatures to live in the water, sea birds to live atop the water, and light by which He can see it all. He then gives the sea birds the ability to fly, but when the Loon asks for something solid upon which the birds can build their nests, Maheo tells her that his power is now limited to shaping that which He has already created. He asks for help from the sea birds in finding land. After several attempts by larger birds, the smaller, humbler Coot is successful in bringing land from the bottom of the water to the surface. Maheo thanks the Coot, blesses him, and then uses His power to shape and grow the land that the Coot brought to the surface. The land eventually becomes too big for Maheo to control. Again He again asks the animals for help, and again He goes through all the animals and discovers they are unsuitable. Finally, He calls on Grandmother Turtle, and discovers that she is the right shape and the right strength to support the land. The land grows, Maheo's power replenishes itself, and He creates the many beautiful things on the surface of the land: flowers, trees, and more. He sees that what he has created is beautiful. He calls it Earth Woman, and realizes that she is alone but should not be. From one of His ribs he creates first a man and then a woman, who populate Earth Woman with their children. Maheo then creates the rest of the animals, concluding with the buffalo, which the story describes as being able to "take the place of all the others put together". The story concludes with the comment that Maheo is everywhere, and is with us, watching all his creation. "We are all here because of Maheo."

"How the World Was Made" (Modoc) An introduction describes how the Modoc community's history and perspective was shaped by their home being in a fertile valley.

The story begins as Kumokums sits contemplatively by Tule Lake and wonders what it would look like with some land around it. So he digs to the bottom of the lake, pulls up handful after handful of mud, arranges the handfuls of mud until the lake is completely surrounded, and he is left on an island. Surprised by what he created, he shapes the mud even further, creating mountains and carving paths in the mountains for the rivers. He then draws trees and plants out of the earth, and places the birds, fish and animals in their places. After he's done, Kumokums is so tired that he digs a hole under the

bottom of the lake and prepares to hibernate like a bear. Before he goes to sleep, however, he digs himself a small hole he can look out of without having to get up. He goes into the hole, covers himself up, and goes to sleep. The lake then dries up. At its conclusion, the story expresses the hope that Kumokums will one day wake up, see how the world has changed, re-fill the lake, and remake things in the world as they once were.

In the first of these two myths of creation, a core component of both Indian spirituality and of Indian culture can be seen-the way of cooperation. Yes, Maheo initiates the creation and the shaping of existence, but he needs help to complete his task. In other words, he cooperates with nature to create a new life and a new world. In the same way, a core belief of Indian culture is that nature must be worked with and cooperated with in order to ensure a successful, productive, happy life. As pointed out in the Introduction, this belief system is markedly different from those in White and/or European and/or American cultures, in which nature is something to be conquered, used, and ultimately exploited.

Maheo and Kumokums are both manifestations of the Creator, a central character / presence in almost all Indian mythologies and belief systems (see "Characters"). Both versions appear in later stories - Maheo is referred to, mostly in passing, in several stories, while Kumokums plays a prominent role in a story in "How Death Came into the World" (Part 4, Section 1), a story which is presumably set in the time in which he was busily creating the animals, birds, plants, and other things. A key difference between these two manifestations of the Creator is that Maheo is clearly described as being present all the time and in all things, while Kumokums is described as having gone to sleep. Whether this perspective on the Creator can be considered a factor in the ongoing existential debate of whether God is dead might be worth discussing in another context, but within this context, Kumokums' extended nap can perhaps be interpreted as an explanation for the suffering experienced by the Indian people at the hands of the white man. Either that, or it is an aspect to the story unique to the geological area in which it's told-as an explanation for the dried up lake.

An interesting through-line to explore and/or consider throughout this book might be to watch for similarities between the myths and stories of the Indians and other similar stories. For example, the story of how Maheo created man and woman can be seen as having similar elements to the story of Adam and Eve in the Bible, as well as other such stories in, for example, Scandinavian narratives.

Part 1 Section 2

Part 1 Section 2 Summary and Analysis

Section 2 of "The World Beyond Ours" contains myths about how two important elements of nature, the sun and the thunder, came to play important roles in the lives of human beings.

"How the Sun Came" (Cherokee) The introduction to this story describes how the Cherokee were pushed out of their homelands by English settlers, how this particular story is similar to several other "arrival of the sun" stories, and also how it's different: rather than the sun being caught by a hero figure, it's caught by someone quite different.

The story begins with the animals of the earth stumbling around in the dark, commenting on their need for light, and attempting to figure out how to get it. A woodpecker comments on how he heard people on the other side of the world had light, and so the animals resolve to steal some for themselves. The first animal to try is the opossum, who says he can bring some light back in his bushy tail. He sets out on his adventure, becomes squinty eyed (as all opossums are) as he comes closer and closer to the light, steals some of the sun, and hides it in his tail. On his way back, however, the sun is so hot that it burns all the hair off his tail (which is why to this day opossums have no hair on their tails). The next animal to try is the buzzard, who says he can hide the stolen sun in the feathers on his head. He flies away, steals some of the sun, and hides it in his feathers. However, the sun is so hot that it burns the feathers away (which is why to this day all buzzards are bald). The animals are in despair, until finally a very quiet voice offers to try. None of the animals can see who's speaking, and it turns out that the speaker is Grandmother Spider, who is too small to be seen and who says she wouldn't be missed if the sun burns her up. The other animals give her a chance to try. She fashions a little bowl out of clay and sets out to get the sun, spinning a web behind her so she can find her way home. On her way, the bowl dries and hardens, so when she captures a bit of the sun and places it in the bowl, it's kept safe. She travels back home, from east to west, bringing the sun with her (i.e., the sunrise). This is why, to this day, spiders' webs are shaped like the rays of the sun, why webs are always spun before sunrise, and why clay bowls are slowly dried before they're fired, the way Grandmother Spider's bowl dried before the heat of the sun hardened it.

"The Sky Beings: Thunder and his Helpers" (Iroquoian) The Introduction explains that the Iroquois were in fact five separate Indian nations who formed an alliance, that stories of thunder and weather appeared often in their mythology and form the majority of stories that survived the past, and that similar stories are found within the cultures of several other communities.

The story begins with three young men, close friends and brother warriors, who are out hunting. One of them injures himself, and begs his friends to take him home to heal so that when he's better he can take care of his mother. The friends bandage his leg and

start on their way home, but they soon become tired and throw the Hunter over a cliff. They then return to their village and tell his mother he was killed by a wild animal. The Hunter, however, survives. After several hours, he wakes up and finds he's being watched over by an Old Man, who offers to cure him if the Hunter will agree to hunt for him. The Hunter agrees, the Old Man cures him, and for a couple of seasons, the Hunter does as the Old Man asks. He begins to become discontented, but still does as he was told. One day he kills a large black bear. As he's trying to figure out how to get the bear back to the Old Man, he hears voices ... turns ... and discovers four men watching him. They introduce themselves as The Thunders, who go about the world helping people. When they learn the Hunter is unhappy in his situation, they reveal to him that the Old Man is evil, and together they devise a plan to end the Old Man's life. As part of the plan, the Hunter lures the Old Man away from his home with the promise of fresh, fat bear meat. The Old Man becomes excited and rushes out to claim all its meat for himself. As he's struggling to get it home, however, the Thunders appear and, after a brief battle, strike him dead with lightning. They then give the Hunter a magical cloak with wings that he can use to return home. The Hunter thanks them, and the Thunders tell him that someday there will come a time when he'll be able to return the favor. The Hunter returns home, greets his mother (who is at first dubious but then becomes overjoyed), and returns to his life in the village, never once saying anything about the friends who abandoned him. One day a few seasons later the Thunders return, inviting the Hunter to join them on their journeys about the earth. The Hunter puts on the cloak and flies with the Thunders across the earth, doing good for the people who need it. One day he dives down from the sky to take a drink from an appealing pond. When he rejoins the Thunders, they realize by the water left on his lips that he has discovered the lair of their archenemy. They destroy the pond with a lightning bolt, revealing the enemy's giant slug-like body. The Thunders tell the Hunter that he has returned the favor they did him, and that in return they will do another favor for him and his people. In the spring, if the Hunter's people turn the soil and expose the slugs and grubs under the soil, when the first thunder comes, it will destroy the grubs and the farming that season will be good. This myth explains why the agricultural Indian tribes don't plow their fields until after the first thunderstorm.

There are several important elements in these two stories. The first is that they contain the first appearances in this book of three key, archetypal characters: Grandmother Spider, the Hero (who, in the second story, manifests in the form of the Hunter), and the Trickster (who, also in the second story, manifests as the Old Man). For more detailed information on these archetypes and the roles they play throughout Indian mythology, see "Characters".

The second important element in these stories is that they both, at least in part, offer mythological explanations for naturally occurring phenomena: the forms and nature of animals and the appearance of the sunrise and sunset in the first story, and the nature of thunder in the second. Meanwhile, in the passing comment about Grandmother Spider's clay bowl and the reference to farming rituals, there are explanations of how and why Indians make what they do in the way they do, and follow patterns and routines. Both sorts of explanations, those about things that live and things that are made, are frequent features in Indian stories. In addition, here again can be seen

lessons and guidelines in the practice of living in harmony with nature, particularly in the story of the relationship between thunder and the right time to plow.

The third important element here is that while the stories offer explanations, they also offer examples of how human beings should behave. Grandmother Spider's prudence and wisdom, for example, are clearly intended to provide guidance for those to whom the story is being told, particularly to children. The impulsiveness and thoughtlessness of opossum and buzzard, on the other hand, can be seen as examples of how not to behave. Meanwhile the behavior of the Hunter and the Thunders can also be seen as examples of good behavior, while the actions of the selfish friends and the Old Man can also be seen as warnings.

Part 1 Section 3

Part 1 Section 3 Summary and Analysis

Section 3 of "The World Beyond Ours" contains stories about "The Waters Beneath".

"Fifty Young Men and a Turtle" (Cheyenne) The introduction to this story tells of an actual lake where archeologists find large numbers of ancient bones: "But the Cheyennes know ... how those bones came to be there."

The story begins with forty hunter/warriors and their chief setting out on a hunting trip. As they travel, they see a large silver vision in the distance. For many it looks like a mirage, an illusion of a lake filled with water. However, when they get closer, they discover that it is in fact a giant water turtle, walking slowly across the dry prairie. One of the young and foolish hunters jumps on the turtle's back so he can ride rather than walk. When the other hunters see that the turtle doesn't react, they jump on its back as well. Only their chief remains on foot. The first young hunter wonders how it's possible that the turtle can carry so much weight, and tries to pry its shell apart with his spear. The shell remains intact, and the chief realizes the turtle is a very powerful being. He tells the young warriors to get off it and walk with it as a sign of respect. The young hunters argue, with some saying the turtle is a gift that's been sent to them and others agreeing with the chief. Ultimately, however, they all decide to get off-but discover they can't. They plead with the turtle to let them go, the chief flatters the turtle and pleads for the hunters to be freed, but the turtle pays no attention and continues to walk. Soon a lake comes into view, and all the hunters realize that they're doomed-the turtle will walk into the lake, with them all still attached to its back, and will swim to the bottom. With increasing desperation, they plead with the turtle to let them go, but to no avail. The hunters then realize they're about to die, and plead with their chief to return home, tell their families what happened, and bring the families back to the lake so they (the hunters) can be properly mourned. The chief agrees, watching helplessly from the lakeshore as the turtle goes deeper and deeper and the hunters all drown. The chief sadly returns to the village, and tells all the families what happened. The next year, the chief and the families return to the lake only to find that it's a lake no longer, but a deep dry hole filled with bones.

"The Underwater Village" (Kiowa) The introduction describes the differences between this tribe and the other tribes, most notably having to do with the uniqueness of their language and the relative earliness of their ability to work with metal. The introduction alludes to the possibility that this story might actually be a combination of several stories, and refers to the water described therein as a protective power.

A young hunter is out hunting when he comes across an old, diseased man with horrible breath. The Old Man introduces himself as Smallpox and tells the young hunter that he is on his way to pass his illness on to all the Indian people because it has been "willed". The young hunter pleads to be spared, and Smallpox relents. He tells the young hunter

to gather his family and friends, whoever will believe him, and flee the village. Once they do, he says, they will be spared. The young hunter rushes back to his village, gathers the people together, and tells his tale. Because he's young and has no experience, most of the people don't believe him and, in fact, laugh at him. In despair, the young man returns home and leaves with his family in the middle of the night. They journey for several days, eventually coming to the shores of a lake. A guiding spirit leads them into the lake, where they make their new home. Several years later a pair of young warriors comes upon the lake, and sees the tracks that the young hunter and his family left behind, leading INTO the lake. The young warriors circle the lake but cannot find any tracks coming OUT. They camp by the side of the lake and fall asleep, but are awakened in the night by what sounds like the singing and dancing of a village coming from inside the lake. They return to their village and consult the elders, who return to the lake with them, and also hear the voices. They search for a way in, but can't find one, mournfully admitting that they will be unable to see their brothers because they don't have the magic they need. The people of the village went back to the lake again and again, just to hear the sounds of the village and the words of the villagers' song (see "Quotes", p. 50).

"The Great River Monster" (Cheyenne) The introduction tells how this story is among the oldest of all the Indian legends and describes how burial mounds all along the Mississippi River (where this story is set) contain visual references to the monstrous snake who lives in the river. It also describes how the Cheyenne's ritual tradition of making offerings whenever they approach a large body of water continues into the present.

Two young hunters journey across the plains. They are hungry and thirsty, and when they discover two very large eggs, one of the hunters sees the eggs as a gift and sets down to cook them. The other hunter, however, is more cautious, and doesn't take any of the eggs when they've finished cooking. The first hunter eats them both, but then the next day complains of feeling unwell, begs his friend to help him, and makes him promise to never leave him. The friend promises, and helps the first hunter walk. The next day the first hunter's legs become useless, and dry and scaly like snakeskin. He's forced to drag himself along using only his upper body. As he does so, he continues to beg his friend to stay with him. The friend agrees, and stays with his friend as he goes swimming and declares himself to be feeling better than he ever has in his life. Over the next couple of days, the first hunter becomes more and more snakelike and less and less human, but his friend stays with him. One morning, the first hunter wakes with the knowledge that he is meant to go to the Mississippi River, and his friend goes with him. The first hunter, who is now almost fully a snake, tells him to stay and not leave until he (the first hunter) returns. The friend agrees, and the first hunter dives into the lake. The friend spends a long, fretful, worried, prayerful night wondering about his friend. The following morning the first hunter, now completely a snake, reappears and says his friend can go. He says he's to return to the village, explain what has happened, and tell them that any time they come to cross the river they must bring food for him to eat or tobacco for him to smoke. He also says that his family and friends are not to come specifically to see him, because it will not go well for them if they do. He kisses his friend goodbye (with his forked snake tongue), and disappears under the water. The

friend returns to the village and tells everyone the story of what happened. The first hunter's parents are desperate to see him and convince the reluctant friend to take them back to where he last saw their son. When they get there, however, the river is dangerously turbulent and a fire is rising from where the first hunter rests. His parents return home, saddened. The story concludes with a reference to the way the Cheyenne always take an offering with them whenever they're about to cross an important body of water.

Together these three stories create a culturally important example of how the powers of nature, specifically water, can be ambivalent-good or bad, savior or danger, either or both. The water in the first story is clearly a threat, the water in the second story is clearly a sanctuary, and the water in the third story is both-sanctuary for the snake-man, and yet threat to those who come to see him. Inherent in this portrayal is the warning common to many if not most Indian stories and myths: nature must be respected. This warning manifests quite vividly in the first story, in which the young warriors behave with complete *dis*-respect for the turtle and, as a result, are punished with death. It also manifests in the third, in which the greedy hunter is punished for what is at its core an act against nature-the devouring of eggs that he should have left alone.

"The Underwater Village", meanwhile, is significant for two additional reasons. The first is that it is the first of two stories in this book to include a personification/embodiment of smallpox, a disease brought to North America by European colonists that proved to be the most fatal to the Indian peoples of *all* the diseases brought across the ocean. The second story in which smallpox appears is the first story in Part 3 Section 1 ("The White Man's Gift") which, like "The Underwater Village", is significant because both stories serve as examples of the way Indian myths and legends incorporated contemporary realities into narratives that had presumably been told within Indian culture for hundreds of years previously. Both stories also dramatize one of the book's overall key themes, relating to the troubled, damaging relationship between Indians and white people.

The second reason that "The Underwater Village" is significant is that it can be seen as a metaphor for the nature of Indian culture's continued existence. As they colonized North America, White Men made aggressive incursions into almost every aspect of Indian life. The Old Man Smallpox can be seen as an embodiment of those incursions, while the disbelief of the Indians warned by the young warrior can be seen as representative of the disbelief of many Indian tribes that the White Man could be as dangerous as some feared them to be. The disappearance of the young man and his allies into the bottom of the lake can be seen as a metaphor for the way Indian culture and belief systems had to disappear, become "submerged" (as it were) within White culture in order to survive. The haunting and mysterious sounds issuing from the bottom of the lake can be seen as a metaphor for the quiet echoes of Indian culture and beliefs that could be heard throughout the various peoples even as the White Man continued and increased his cultural domination. Finally, the way that there are tracks leading into the lake but none leading out suggests that the Indians found themselves in a situation of being dominated and controlled from which they, as a society, could find no way out.

"The Great River Monster" is another of those stories in which a natural phenomenon-the turbulence of the Mississippi River-is given a mythological explanation. It's also another of those stories that provides moral guidance. The consequences of the greedy hunter's actions in eating the eggs can be seen as a warning of the dangers of such greed.

Part 1 Section 4

Part 1 Section 4 Summary and Analysis

Section 4 of "The World Beyond Ours" contains stories about "The Stars Above".

"Pursuit of the Bear" (Musquakie - Fox) The introduction to this story comments on how most of the astronomical/astrological legends and stories of the Indians have been lost. There are apparently three main reasons for this-because the lore of the stars was a secret passed between priests and not shared with most people, because Indian constellations were different from European constellations, and because the original anthropologists who recorded these stories weren't familiar with astronomy at all.

One early winter, three hunters and a little dog went out in search of game. They found a bear's cave, chase the bear out, and then chase the bear in all four directions-north, south, west and east. They then chase the bear into the sky, where they capture it and take it down into the treetops, where they butcher it (this, according to the legend, is why so many trees turn bright blood-red in the fall). They throw parts of the bear into the sky in various directions, where they each become separate constellations. In particular, the backbone of the bear and its body becomes the Big Bear Constellation, while the faint star near one of the brighter big stars is the little hunting dog.

"Long Sash and his People" (Tewa) The introduction to this story comments that it comes from a tradition in which the Sun and Moon are powerful deities, while the stars have less power. The introduction also comments that there are several stories in this tradition that are too sacred to be told to people outside the specific Indian community.

The story begins with the statement that the star that appears just over the horizon in the east in the moments before sunrise is the spirit of Long Sash, a famous warrior and guide. One day, after suffering many attacks from other Indian tribes, his people beg Long Sash to guide them to a new home. He warns them that if he did there would be many dangers on the way. However, his people are so desperate to leave that finally, he agrees: "So Long Sash started out, and the people followed him. They set their feet on the Endless Trail that stretches out like a white band across the sky. This was the road they were going to follow until they found a place of their own." As the journey continues the people begin to argue, with their disputes becoming so angry and so frequent that Long Sash finally orders that they all stop. He comments that it's nearly time for many of the group's babies to be delivered, so it's a good time for everyone to stop and consider whether they want to go on. The story indicates that two particular stars, known as the Place of Decision, represent the place where they stopped. After the people rest, they decide they're ready to go on. However, Long Sash himself is getting tired and weary, finally realizing that he has to stop and pray to the ancestors for guidance. To the dismay of his followers, he falls into a kind of trance, and remains so for a long time. Just as his people are becoming worried he wakes up, announces that he's been given a number of signs, and that soon their journey will be over. He also comments that any

time any of his people become doubtful or uncertain, they should do as he did-pray to the ancestors. He sets his headdress in the sky as a constellation to serve as a reminder. The meanings of other constellations, placed in the sky as reminders of people's ability and responsibility to help one another, are also described. Finally, the story tells of how Long Sash and his people finally arrived at the place "which was to be their home forever".

In this section once again natural phenomena (in this case the stars) are given mythological origins, once again a Hero character appears (Long Sash), and once again hearers of the story are advised to consider looking to the life beyond this one (in this case, the experience of the ancestors) for solutions to troubles in the world of the living. Once again, hearers are reminded of their responsibility to live in unity with each other and with nature.

Given contemporary astronomical knowledge, it's possible to assume relationships between several stellar phenomena described in these stories and contemporary locations on a star map. The Big Bear Constellation, for example, can easily be compared with the Big Dipper, which also bears the Latin name of Ursa Major-literally, Big Bear. The obvious question here is which name came first, and who knew of which name-did the Indians know the Latin name, did those who gave the constellation its Latin name know its Indian name, or did two very different cultures across the world from each other give the same constellation the same name? Hmm. Other possibly familiar constellations include Long Sash/the Hunter, who could easily be likened to Orion, while the "Endless Trail/White Band" followed by Long Sash and his tribe is likely the Milky Way. The authors make these comparisons in their introductions to these stories, but they also make the point that further comparisons were difficult because those who told them these stories were unwilling and/or unable to make detailed comparisons, possibly because of the sacred nature of the stories.

Part 2 Section 1

Part 2 Section 1 Summary and Analysis

Part 2 of the book is titled "The World Around Us". The first section tells stories of how Indian peoples found their way to new homelands.

"How the People Came to the Middle Place" (Tewa) The introduction to this story indicates that the Tewa community is a part of the larger Pueblo community, in which the dominant socio-cultural trait was an achievement of a "middle" ground. No one individual strove to be greater in any way than another, with the result that both community and individual achieved a life of harmonious, peaceful balance.

At the beginning of the story, the People live in darkness underground (see "Quotes", p. 66). When they begin to wonder whether there is light life beyond what they already know, Mole offers to guide them to where the world feels different-he's blind and can't see, but senses a difference in the air. He digs his way to the surface and is followed by the People, who fill in the tunnel behind them as they go. This is why the People couldn't return to their former life underground (where there were no White Men). When they reach the surface, the People are nearly blinded by the sun, but the wise words of Grandmother Spider guide them and soon they're able to open their eyes and look around. She shows them a field of corn, which she says will feed them forever as long as they take care of it. She also shows them her two grandsons, the War Twins, and warns the People of the dangers they represent (see "Quotes", p. 67). Finally, she shows them four mountains, one in each direction. She warns that three of them represent significant and deadly dangers, but the South Mountain can and will be their new home. She tells them that once they recognize their friends, her and Mole, the people will know they're home. Night falls, and the weary Grandmother Spider disappears, followed by her grandsons. After a fearful, restless night, the People awake and immediately argue amongst themselves. Many want to travel to the other mountains, in spite of Grandmother Spider's warnings, because they're closer. These People win the argument and as a band, the People travel to the East, North, and West mountains, where they are systematically killed. After visiting the third mountain, where they have a brief encounter with the mocking War Twins (who are described as now living as stars in the sky), there are only two of the People left: a man and a woman. They set off towards the South Mountain, the Shining Golden Mountain, and endure a long and difficult journey. Eventually, however, they reach a forest and a river where they encounter a turtle, who moves as slowly as Mole and who has the pattern of Grandmother Spider's web on its shell. The man and woman recognize their friends in the turtle, and realize they've come to their new home.

"Nanih Waya: The Sacred Bluff" (Choctaw and Chickasaw) The introduction to this story describes the Choctaw as being notable for their skill as traders, and describes the story as containing several familiar, traditional elements.

The story goes that a long time ago, the Indians lived happily in a large community in the east. "But at last the time came when their fire was old, and they could no longer live there." The people consult an Old Man, who tells them they must choose two leaders, one of which will take over if the first is unable to continue. He then tells them that there is a pair of twins in the community, Chatah and Chikasah, who are the only ones who can fulfill these responsibilities. The twins accept the leadership of the community, and the Old Man then tells them to find a young, strong tree. They do and return with it to the community, where the Old Man paints it in alternating stripes of red (representing war) and white (representing peace). After telling them to make war only when necessary, he then tells them to plant the pole in the ground and travel in the direction in which it leans, adding that when it stands up straight the people will have arrived at their new home. The Old Man then dies. The pole is planted and leans towards the east. The twins and the people set out on their journey, which turns out to last for months and even years. Along the way, children are born and elders die. The flesh is taken from the elder's bones and buried, but the bones are carried with the tribe: "the bones are the heart of a man, and endure long after his flesh is gone". Eventually the people arrive at a great river, and because they're weary and need to construct vessels in which to carry the bones, the twins agree that the travelers can rest. After a few days, they try to cross the river, but their first attempts fail-only after they construct the first dugout canoe do they succeed. After several days of traveling on the river, the people, who have followed the directions of the leaning pole all this time, arrive at a place where the pole stands straight, but where there's not enough room for the entire community. The twins reluctantly agree to separate and establish two different communities. They also agree to leave the bones of their fellows at the first community, and bury them after a great ceremony. The tribes separate, then the narrative explains that the place where they came to rest was Nanih Waya, and that this is why Nanih Waya was the sacred place for both the Choctaws and the Chikasaws.

The first story in this section, like many of the stories in Part 1, defines the origins of the Indian people and their relationship with the earth and with nature. Three elements are of particular importance here. The first is the initial trust that the people display in the knowledge and skills of both Mole and Grandmother Spider, while the second is the inherent warning in the extensive destruction of the people when they ignore Grandmother Spider's advice and go in directions she specifically warned against. Here again is a lesson to trust the teachings of nature. The third important element in this story is that it dramatizes one of the book's core themes: that of the people's emergence from darkness into light or-in metaphorical terms-from ignorance into awareness and knowledge.

The second story in this section takes the origin type of story even further. Instead of the people finding their way to an important, sacred, mythologized *area* of land, in this story they find their way to an equally important, equally sacred, but actual and very specific location. Both sorts of stories, the general and the specific, are common throughout Indian lore and mythology. Also in this story, another mythologized origin of an everyday object appears-in this case, the object is the dugout canoe, used for transportation and trading by water-faring tribes like the Choctaw. Finally, the ambivalent nature of water is again highlighted, as it was in the three stories of the previous section. Here water is at

first a threat (to the people's journey to the new land), but once they figure out a way to work *with* nature, their journey can continue. Here again is a lesson in the importance of creating harmony with the world, rather than striving to subdue it.

Another main character archetype appears here in both stories: the War Twins. In these stories, they manifest in both their essential forms: warrior/leaders, and threats. For a more detailed discussion of the relative values of these archetypes, see "Characters".

The recurring image, or motif, of the sacredness and spiritual importance of the bones of the dead appears again here, the first time having been in the Part 1 Section 3 story, "Fifty Young Men and a Turtle". It reappears in several other stories throughout the book, and seems to be one of the cornerstones of Indian spirituality. In contemporary society, there are frequent references to tribes of Indians being unwilling to leave their ancestral lands out of reluctance to leave behind the bones of various ancestors.

Part 2 Section 2

Part 2 Section 2 Summary and Analysis

The second section of "The World Around Us" recounts how different sorts of mythological people came into being.

"How the Half Boys Came to Be" (Kiowa) The introduction to this story tells of an ancient ritual celebrated by the Kiowa people, in which ten medicine bundles, called the Ten Grandmothers, each guarded by a male and female priest, were ritually cleansed once a year. During this ceremony, the story of each bundle's contents was told. However, because the telling of the stories always took place in private and in secret, most of those stories have been lost.

A beautiful young Woman journeys to the World Above the Sky where she meets the Sun, marries him, and about a year later becomes mother to a little Boy. One day, as the Woman prepares to go out and dig potatoes, the Sun (who is about to go hunting) warns her to never dig up a potato that's had its leaves nibbled by a buffalo, for if she does it will bring misfortune. For five days, the Woman goes out and digs potatoes, taking the Boy with her. Each day she passes the same potato that's had its leaves nibbled and resists the temptation to dig it up, but on the last day, she gives in to that temptation and digs the potato. The hole it leaves behind is bottomless, and gives her a view of earth, and in particular, the village from which she came. She immediately becomes homesick, and spends more and more time every day at the hole, looking down at life on earth. One day, as the Sun is about to go hunting buffalo, she asks him to make sure to bring back plenty of tenderloin meat-he tenderloin has a strong sinew running through it which, she says, can be used to make moccasins. The Sun does as she's asked, bringing back plenty of sinews. Instead of making moccasins, the Woman weaves a rope that she plans to use to climb back down to earth and be with her family and her people. The Sun becomes suspicious when he doesn't see any moccasins anywhere, and becomes even more suspicious when he wakes up one morning and discovers that his wife and son are gone. He follows their trail to where the Woman dug up the potato plant, and sees that she and the Boy have started to climb down the rope. He also sees, however, that the Woman miscalculated the amount of rope she needed to get to the earth-both she and the Boy are stuck. The Sun angrily constructs a magical hoop and sends it down the rope with orders to kill the Woman but to avoid the Boy. The hoop does as it was told-the Woman is killed. At the same moment, however, the root anchoring the rope to the sky comes loose, and the Boy falls to the ground, landing atop his dead mother's body.

Frightened and alone, the Boy stays with his mother's body day and night. Eventually, however, he becomes hungry and begins to search for food. He discovers the tipi of an Old Woman and goes in, but becomes frightened and runs away before he's caught. The Old Woman comes home, realizes that someone's been in her tipi, and wonders who it was. The Boy visits several more times, and each time the Old Woman becomes

more and more interested in whether her visitor is a boy or a girl, and finally sets out some toys to see which ones are played with. When she comes home that night, she discovers that the bow and arrow have been played with, and deduces happily that her visitor is a little boy. The next day she pretends to go out, but hides herself so that when the Boy comes back, she can confront him. The Boy returns, the Old Woman appears, and overcomes the Boy's fears by convincing him that she can be his grandmother and he can make his home with her. The Boy accepts her offer and asks what he should call her. The Old Woman says that because she is the Spider Woman, he can call her Grandmother Spider.

The Boy and Grandmother Spider live together happily for a long time. One day, when Grandmother Spider goes away to do some trading, she leaves the Boy alone with a hoop to play with. She warns him to not throw it into the air, because if he does misfortune will follow. Once she's gone, however, the Boy disobeys her (like mother, like son) and throws the hoop into the air. When it comes down, it lands on the boy's head and splits him right down the middle-into twins. As the boys try to sort out how to live their lives now that they're two people instead of one, Grandmother Spider returns, sees what has happened, and sadly tells them their destiny has changed. She says that they are now meant to go out into the world as warriors: "Now there are two of you", she says, "you have double strength", and orders them to defend the people against their enemies. The twins accept their destinies and go out into combat, each time returning with trophies from their enemies that Grandmother Spider sews into medicine bundles. Eventually there are ten of them, and these are the Ten Grandmothers.

"Male and Female Created He Them: The River of Separation" (Navaho) The introduction to this story sketches the history of the strong, defiant, proud Navajo people-the way they assimilated the cultural traditions of other tribes at the same time as they themselves resisted assimilation by the invading Europeans.

As the story begins, First Man and First Woman lead their people from the darkness of life in the underworld to the light and life of the surface. They are accompanied by their children, the Changing Twins, who had characteristics of both genders and who would have no children themselves. As the people settle, the Twins explore and, on the banks of the river, discover the materials that will divide labor and productivity between the men and the women. For the men the Twins create weapons, while for the women they create tools for pottery and basket weaving. The people soon settle down to village life, with each man and each woman fulfilling their roles. First Woman becomes particularly content, getting fatter and fatter on the meat that First Man brings home from the hunt. One night she pats herself between the legs and thanks her womanhood for bringing her such a good life. First Man becomes outraged at her apparent immodesty, First Woman becomes outraged at his outrage, and soon they're in the middle of a huge quarrel. Having had enough, First Man leads the other men of the people into their own village across the river, where they busy themselves making a new life apart from the women. After a while, both tribes, the men and the women, realize that they can't live without the other-the women miss the meat the men bring home from the hunt, while the men miss their wives' cooking and the comforts of sex. The Twins, who are the only people who can cross back and forth between the communities (because they have

characteristics of both genders) ferry the men back to the women, and the two communities then begin to live in harmony, each having learned that they cannot live without the other.

The archetypal Twins appear again in this section, albeit in two different incarnations. The first story tells of their origins and how they came to be designated as warriors. The second story, however, tells of a somewhat different aspect of what the Twins represent-a different kind of harmony. It's interesting to note that in the second story the Twins are described as having characteristics of both genders. This ties in with a comment in the book's Introduction, which suggests that the Twins were often spoken of and/or perceived as being homosexual. The descriptions in this story certainly evoke images of male homosexuals, while Indian spirituality in general contains several references to "two spirited" individuals, men and women alike who carried with them traits of both genders, who coupled with others of the same gender, and were often perceived as being spiritually advanced. Many, in fact, became revered elders and/or medicine men/women. It's also interesting to note that unlike many contemporary belief systems, no moral judgment is passed (at least in this context) on those whose lives and characteristics appear to share so-called gender specific traits. In the second story in particular, their unique perspective gives them the stature of mediator and teacher, both highly respected positions in Indian culture.

All that being said, in both their manifestations here, the Twins embody the key motif, or repeated image/idea of this section, which is that of duality, the creation of, and relationship between, the two sides of the same coin. The first story mythologizes the way those two sides were created, while in Grandmother Spider's sad but wise instructions to the newly formed twins can be found universal and transcendent advice on how to overcome diversity-two people have twice the strength, and must work together to overcome each goal. In this specific case, the goal is the ongoing safety of the Indian people, but the lesson is equally applicable to First Man and First Woman in the second story, who learn that their *complimentary* strengths combine to create a powerful, mutually nurturing, and supportive union. In short, both stories end with the divided being taught to become one, with the result that both are stronger and, therefore, the tribe is stronger as well. To put it in terms of the old saying "United we stand, divided we fall."

This sense of balance between unity and separation, the idea that one cannot exist without the other, is symbolized by the hoops that appear in the first story, used by the Sun and played with by the Son. The first is the cause of separation between the Sun and the Boy as well as between the Boy and his Mother, while the second is the cause of separation between the Boy and himself. The hoop is itself a symbol of eternity, in that it has no beginning and no end. There is possibly irony, therefore, in the fact that it is the cause of two major separations. On the other hand, however, there is also the possible teaching that without separation there can be no union or *re*-union, no joining together of strength. The twins do it at the end of the first story; the men and the women do it in the second. This is the second level on which these stories teach the value of harmony, and the frequent value of separation to realize that value.

An interesting development in this section is First Man's relative prudery when confronted with First Woman's joy in her femininity. For the most part, the male figures in these stories act with significant respect towards the females in their lives (the Sun in "How the Half Boys Came to Be" notwithstanding). Yes, males in these stories are sometimes foolish, but they are generally aware and accepting of female knowledge and power. First Man's reaction to First Woman may, in that context, seem surprising. It must be remembered, however, that this is ultimately a story about how *both* genders move from a place of disrespect for, and misunderstanding of, each other and into a place of mutual respect. In that context, therefore, its possible to see First Woman's gesture as one of disrespect towards First Man-in thanking her womanhood, she's forgetting the role that First Man, and his manhood, played in making her so fat, happy and comfortable. In other words, it's a chain reaction of disrespect-First Woman disrespects First Man, First Man in turn disrespects First Woman, there's a blow-out, and only the teachings of the Twins (who respect both because they *are* both) can bring about what might somewhat fancifully be called the Harmony of the Hoop. All are one, beginnings are endings, and endings are beginnings. This last is a secondary theme that appears in stories throughout the book.

Part 2 Section 3

Part 2 Section 3 Summary and Analysis

Section 3 of "The World Around Us" contains stories subtitled "To Feed My People", the first three of which tell of how the people discovered corn.

"The Coming of Corn" (Zuni) An introduction describes the complicated nature of Zuni mythology and ritual, suggesting that the story included in the book is only a small portion of the community's full myth of creation.

The first part of the story concerns the arrival of the people from the underworld, and their transformation into more human-looking individuals. The last people to emerge are two witches, male and female, who share all the power for good and evil in the world. They also carry with them all the seeds for all the plants, and demand that the Chief of the people hand over his two children who will be sacrificed in exchange for the seeds. The Chief attempts to change the witches' minds, but they persist. The Chief gives in and shows them to his sleeping children, who are immediately and magically killed, and their bodies immediately buried. The Male Witch causes hard-driving rain to fall for five days, at the end of which the male child returns to life. The Female Witch then causes gentle rain to fall for five days, and the female child also returns to life. The witches then plant their seeds, and the following morning the corn and other plants stand tall. The people try to eat it, but find it's too spicy. The witches summon Owl, Coyote, and Crow, who eat some of the corn. As they eat, the rest of the corn becomes less spicy, and the people are eventually able to eat it. The story ends with a warning to guard any crop against Owl, Coyote, and Crow, all of whom came to love grain at the end of that first encounter.

"The Coming of Corn" (Cheyenne) The introduction to this story describes the Cheyenne storytelling tradition; specifically, that stories were meant to be told during the long, dark, winter months. The introduction also describes how the early Cheyenne stories focused on agriculture, while later ones focused on hunting.

One day, a hunter takes his wife and little boy with him when he goes out hunting. The hunter doesn't return, and his wife and son are left behind. The wife goes out every morning to find food, but is never able to find anything other than wild tomatoes. She and her son get thinner and thinner. One day, while the mother is gone, the boy is visited by a boy who is just like him (a twin), only much fatter. The two boys play happily together, and when it gets dark, the fat boy gets ready to leave. Just before he goes, however, he sings a song that concludes with the line, "They might eat me!" The mother returns home, and the thin boy excitedly tells her about his new friend. The mother is pleased that he's got someone to play with, but is concerned about what the fat boy might mean by his strange song. This goes on for a couple of days, until the mother's concern becomes so strong that before she leaves one morning, she gives the thin boy a knife and tells him to stab the fat boy when he sings his song. The thin boy sadly

agrees, and does as he's told. Instead of bleeding, however, when the fat boy is stabbed, corn runs out of his wound! The fat boy runs away, leaving a trail of corn, which the mother comes home and discovers. Neither she nor the thin boy has seen corn before and both are bewildered, but they taste it and find that they like it. They follow the trail left by the fleeing fat boy and discover a sack of corn. They take it back to their tipi, live on it over the winter, and are discovered by the members of the tribe the following spring. The woman shares the corn with other members of the tribe, and from then on, everyone eats well.

"The Coming of Corn" (Mikasuki) The introduction to this story comments that there are variations of this particular myth in almost every regional, tribal mythology, while certain elements of it (death and resurrection) occur through ancient agrarian cultures and mythologies throughout the world.

The story goes that two young brothers live with their grandmother in a fine house. They are good hunters and always eat well, but become discontented with always eating meat-they become so discontented, in fact, that they ignore the beautiful sights and sounds and smells of the world around them. Grandmother asks them what's wrong, and they tell her they long for food other than meat. Grandmother promises them that when they come home from the hunt that night, they will eat something good they've never eaten before. The brothers go out, excited by what Grandmother said, and bring back a fine young deer. She cuts the deer meat into the wonderful-smelling pot of food she's been cooking, the brothers eat hungrily, and are happy to discover that Grandmother has made them something new and wonderful, which she calls corn. Over the next few days, they bring home different kinds of meat, which Grandmother serves with corn prepared in different ways (see "Quotes", p. 109). The brothers become increasingly curious about where Grandmother gets the corn, and one day while one of them is out hunting the other stays behind to watch what Grandmother does. He is astonished to see that Grandmother has a ritual-she brushes her hands down the sides of her body and as she does so, corn falls onto a deerskin which she uses to collect the corn. That night, after the hunter has told his brother what Grandmother does, neither boy is unable to eat-they believe they are eating part of their own Grandmother. Grandmother instantly falls ill, explaining that it's because they've discovered her secret. As she dies, she gives them instructions on how to bury her, saying that a few months after she's been buried a plant (recognized by the reader as corn) will sprout from her grave. As it's growing, she says, the hunters are to go out and find wives who will tend to the gardens and the crops sprouted from that corn. The hunters do as she says, and that (the story says) is how corn came to the Mikasuki.

These three stories, as with many other stories in this book, are origin stories, narratives explaining how relationships and/or aspects of Indian life came into being. Again, the over-arching theme to all three is the sense of relationship and inter-dependence between humanity and nature.

The idea of duality, initially developed in the stories of the previous section, is developed further in these three stories. The pairings of the two witches, the two children, the fat boy and the skinny boy, and the two brother-warriors are, like the pairings of the

previous stories, examples of the symbolic importance of partnership, balance, and relationship in Indian culture. It's possible to see these various pairings as being differing manifestations of the archetypal Twin characters, while the grandmother in the third story is clearly a variation on Grandmother Spider.

A second motif, or repeated idea, appears in this section for the first time. This is the idea of nourishment coming from a sacrifice, or an offering of self. It manifests three times-in the way the children of the chief are ritually sacrificed in the first story, the way the stabbing of the fat boy opens up a gush of corn in the second, and how the corn falls off the grandmother in the third. There are minor differences here-the chief's children are reborn, what happened to the fat boy is never explained, and the grandmother dies. In these differences, however, can be seen illuminations of deeper meaning-that the cycle of abundance is inevitably and unavoidably tied to the cycle of death. For a plant to grow, a seed must die-so the children die, the fat boy is stabbed, and the grandmother dies ... but life and nourishment, in all three instances, are born. In addition, in all three instances, several characters can be seen as embodiments or manifestations of nature's abundance-the two witches, the fat boy, and the grandmother. As their respective narratives indicate, all three must be listened to and obeyed if the people are to be on the receiving end of the abundance they offer. Finally, it's important to note that in all these stories, abundance is meant to be shared. This is the lesson passed on to the hearers of these stories by their tellers, and here again is a manifestation of the idea of duality, of partnership and of balance between sharer and recipient.

Part 2 Section 4

Part 2 Section 4 Summary and Analysis

This section of "The World Around Us: To Feed My People" contains two stories about the relationship between Indians and the buffalo.

"The Coming of Buffalo" (Jicarilla Apache) The introduction to this story describes the Jicarilla people as fierce, conquest-driven, and powerful. This myth, fully incorporated into the Jicarilla's larger creation myth, carries with it similarities to myths in other Indian cultures.

After the People emerge from the underworld, they have great difficulty finding food, and therefore subside on seeds. One day, while their mother and father are out collecting food, a little boy and a little girl invite a Raven into their home, but he doesn't stay, and instead goes right back out again but leaves his bow and quiver of arrows behind. The children become curious about what's in the quiver and look inside, discovering a magical lump of meat and fat that becomes no smaller no matter how much they eat. They invite the other children of the people, and soon they're all full and fat, their mouths shiny with grease. The mother comes home, is told about the meat, and she too quickly becomes full and fat. Raven, meanwhile, becomes aware of what happened and flies far, far away. The People, eager to find out where and how Raven got the food, follow him with the help of a Bat, but are unable to discover which in a flock of ravens is their raven. They consult their Medicine Man who, after performing a ritual, tells the boy who first tasted Raven's food that he is to be transformed into a puppy and be left behind while the rest of the People travel west. The plan is soon put into action, and the boy/puppy is quickly adopted by a family of ravens, observing closely as every night the father raven opens a doorway in the ground and brings forth a buffalo, which serves as food for the family. One day while the ravens are gone, the boy/puppy turns himself back into a boy, goes through the hole in the ground, and lures the buffalo and all the rest of the animals to the surface, where they follow him on a five-day long journey to rejoin the people. The people rejoice at having been brought such a wonderful source of food, but one old woman is angry-a deer nibbles at the leaves with which she's built her new home. She shoos it away, and all the animals follow, upset that their brother animal was treated so badly. The story goes on to say that this explains why wild, food animals always stay far away from humans.

"The Race Between the Buffalo and Man" (Cheyenne) The brief introduction to this myth comments that its story of competition is typical of the competitive, fierce Cheyenne people.

In the days after Maheo created the world (see "Quotes", p.120), the buffalo decide that they are the mightiest of His creations and decide to show men that they (men) are to be their servants. They arrive at the People's camp during a Sun Dance, and challenge the lead Priest's authority. When the Priest claims that everyone is equal in Maheo's

eyes, the buffalo taunt him and challenge the strongest man to a race with the weakest buffalo woman, confident that the woman will be stronger. The Priest protests that all his people are weak after fasting for the Sun Dance, proposes that the race be a relay race, and that all the other animals be allowed to participate. The buffalo chief agrees, and sends messengers out to all the animals, who soon appear and join sides: the antelope, elk and deer race with the buffalo, while the dog, the eagle and the hawk race alongside the fastest man. The crowds of animals and humans all laugh at the ungainly-looking Buffalo Woman when she comes out, and is placed opposite the hawk on the last leg of the race. The first legs are all quickly run, with the buffalo's team soon taking the lead. When the last leg of the race is run, Buffalo Woman turns out to be a very fast runner, but the Hawk turns out to be faster and wins the race. The story goes on to explain how the myth defines three aspects of Indian life. The first is why buffalo, elk, deer and antelope are all food animals for the People, the second is why the hawk is revered even above the eagle, and the third is why the Cheyenne created the Hawk Soldiers to honor the hawk (see "Quotes, p. 123).

The first story contains echoes of earlier stories (in particular, "How the People Came to the Middle Place", Part 2 Section 1) in its passing description of the people emerging from the darkness in the underworld. This motif's metaphoric meaning relating to the emergence from ignorance into knowledge is vividly dramatized in this first story in that the people eventually emerge from ignorance of a profoundly useful food source into awareness and utilization of that source. Granted, they have to go through a few adventures to get it, but the ultimate end of the journey is the same-as was the case when they dug themselves out of the darkness of the underworld, they now know something they didn't know before.

That being said, both the first and second stories contain the additional element of the explanation myth, as they define the reasons for the relationship between humanity and the animals. It's interesting to note that both the ravens in the first story and the buffalo in the second story act with a kind of selfish self-righteousness that would appear to go beyond the ideal relationship espoused in so many of these stories-that of mutual respect and living harmony. Both end up chastised and/or put in their place by human beings, thereby giving the sense that animals are just as capable of disrupting the natural order as humanity.

The first story in this section contains the most vivid example of a technique that appears repeatedly throughout the book, but in less developed ways-the way in which the Ravens, like many other animals, are given human characteristics. The members of the raven family have conversations in words like humans, prepare their food in pots like humans, and have pets like humans. On one level, this narrative technique simply makes for an entertaining, engaging story. On another level, it reinforces the thematically relevant idea that on some very basic levels, humans and animals are not that different. This idea is continually reinforced by the way that animals talk with human words throughout these stories, and humans can understand them. It's possible that the deeper, symbolic meaning of all these conversations is that communication between anyone and anything is possible-all that has to happen is that beings need to be prepared to listen in the same language as that in which they're being spoken to.

Part 2 Section 5

Part 2 Section 5 Summary and Analysis

This section of "The World Around Us" contains several stories of "How and Why" things are as they are.

"The Painted Turtle" (Sauk) The introduction to this story comments on how the so-called "little" stories, about how and why things became as they became, have over time all become influenced by stories brought by Europeans and also by African slaves.

Once upon a time, in the days when the people all made their home on the shores of a giant lake, the cleanest house in the village belonged to Jesus and his grandmother, who were both good-hearted and generous. Across the village, however, lived a soft-shelled Turtle, who had a bad reputation for using women sexually and making trouble for everyone. One day, Jesus' grandmother tells him to do something about Turtle and make life safe again for all the women. Jesus agrees, transforms himself into a beautiful woman, and goes to visit Turtle, who is busy painting himself with ornamental red markings, but isn't too busy to attempt to seduce the beautiful Jesus-woman. Jesus-woman allows herself to be taken out into the woods, where Turtle again tries to seduce him/her, but instead is lulled into sleep by Jesus-woman's magic. As Turtle sleeps, Jesus-woman places a tree filled with angry, hungry, torturous red ants near him. The ants crawl all over Turtle, eventually waking him and making him very angry. Jesus transforms back into himself, tells Turtle he's made enough trouble, and transforms him into the painted turtle form known today, complete with ornamental red marks.

"Why the Bear Waddles when He Walks" (Comanche) The introduction to this story recounts how the Comanche people, almost uniquely among all the Indian peoples of North America, don't regard the bear with any kind of awe or reference, but always saw it as a source of good eating.

One day, an argument erupts between the Day Animals (who want the sun to shine all the time) and the Night Animals (who want it to never shine again), with each side arguing that they have the right to have life their way. Bear proposes that they play a traditional guessing game, and whichever side wins will decide the fate of the sun. The animals all agree, sides and judges are decided, and at night, the game begins. The two sides are evenly matched, luck goes back and forth equally between them, and the game lasts almost the whole night. Bear, playing for the night side, eventually becomes tired and cramped in his chair, and slips his feet out of his moccasins to rest them. Meanwhile, the Sun becomes bored, waiting to find out what his fate will be, and starts to rise. The night animals flee in panic. Bear also tries to flee, but in his rush puts his moccasins on the wrong feet and so waddles back and forth, falling further and further behind the other night animals even as he tries harder and harder to catch up.

"Don't Be Greedy" (Comanche) The brief introduction to this story states that "little" stories were either explanations for natural phenomena or lessons on how to behave.

Old Man Coyote watches greedily as Owl gets food by pulling out his eyes, one eye at a time, tossing them into the air, catching them back in their sockets, and holding out his clawed hand, which was magically filled with food. Coyote asks Owl to teach him how to do that, but Owl says it can only happen for people who have the right kind of power. Coyote is convinced that *he* has that kind of power, plucks out his one eyes, tosses it into the air, and waits for the magical food. When it doesn't appear, he notices that his eye is caught on a tree branch. Angrily, he plucks out his other eye, tells it to retrieve the first eye, and tosses *it* into the air. That eye gets caught on the tree as well, and Coyote howls in frustration as Owl eats both his eyes.

Aside from the somewhat surprising appearance of Jesus in the first of these stories, their most marked characteristic of all three stories is their resemblance to collections of similar stories, Aesop's *Fables* and Rudyard Kipling's *Just So Stories*. In all these stories, there are not only explanations of how and why animals came to be the way they are but also lessons in behavior. The specific lessons in *these* stories have to do with treating everyone with respect (which the Painted Turtle doesn't do, and is punished for), being careful even when hurried (which Bear doesn't do, and is made awkward for), and being greedy (which Coyote is, and is blinded for). Just as in the *Fables* and in the *Just So Stories*, the animals here receive punishment for bad behavior, just like how people hearing the stories will be punished if they don't heed the lessons the stories contain. Just what those punishments will be, the stories don't make clear-it's doubtful, for example, that everyone who treats someone else badly will be turned into a turtle. Nevertheless, the warnings are there, and are vivid.

As the Introduction to "The Painted Turtle" indicates, the integration of Jesus into the action is an example of the way the Christian faith was itself integrated into Indian spirituality. There are several other examples of this later in the book-in particular, "A World of Beauty" (Part 3, Section 4). But what's particularly interesting to note is the way in which Jesus is integrated-specifically, the character whose place in the narrative he takes. Consider-He changes his appearance, He plays a trick, He exposes the flaws in another being. Who does He sound like-Trickster, or perhaps more accurately, Hero-Trickster. At first glance this may seem sacrilegious-Trickster is, above all, irreverent and disrespectful, a rule-breaker and a troublemaker. But then so was Jesus-look at what He did to the moneychangers in the temple, to the Pharisees with his radical teachings about God, even to His mother on the occasion when he disappeared and she and His father spent a frantic day looking for Him. It could be argued that the only difference between Jesus and Trickster, is that Jesus in his trickster-ism is *holy*, whereas Trickster, in *his* trickster-ism, is merely crafty-good-hearted sometimes, but far from holy.

Part 2 Section 6

Part 2 Section 6 Summary and Analysis

This last section of "The World Around Us" contains two stories unrelated to any that have come before.

"How Horses Came to the Navaho" (Navaho) The introduction suggests that this story is only one of several stories explaining how horses came into the lives of the Navajo.

Once upon a time, there was a Navaho man known as Gambler, a man who would bet anything and win anything. One day as he returned home from a very successful gambling trip, he encountered another man who liked to gamble, who challenged Gambler to a game. Gambler becomes nervous when he realizes his opponent is a Jicarilla, who are renowned for being good gamblers. He also soon realizes he had good reason to be nervous, since the Jicarilla wins everything from him. When Gambler has nothing left, the Jicarilla sets an arrow on his bow, attaches the point to Gambler, and fires the arrow into heaven, where Gambler encounters the Creator. The Creator tells him he's to be given new responsibilities-the people of the South, Mexicans, who he must take care of. Gambler is returned to earth and is quickly hailed as a god by the Mexican people, who re-name him Moctezuma. Gambler/Moctezuma spends several years leading and taking care of the Mexicans, but one day becomes homesick and decides to lead the Mexicans, their animals (including horses) and their way of life, north into the land of the Navaho. The Mexicans agree, and follow Gambler/Moctezuma north. Along the way, however, he becomes tired and rests on an outcropping of rock that the Hopi Indians to this day call Moctezuma's Chair. When Gambler/Moctezuma resumes his journey, he decrees that the place where he rested is forever to be held sacred, and populates it with poisonous rattlesnakes to make sure his will is obeyed (again, to this day, Moctezuma's Chair is dangerously over-run with poisonous rattlesnakes). Gambler/Moctezuma leads the Mexicans to where they can unite with the Navaho, and then is called by the Creator to return to the World Above-his work on earth is finished.

"The End of the World: The Buffalo Go" (Kiowa) For the main body of the Introduction to this story, see "Quotes, p. 138". This is a mythologization of why there are no more buffalo.

This story begins with a recounting of how completely dependent the Kiowa people were on the buffalo: for food, clothing, sacrifices, rituals and more, and how the buffalo in turn defended the Kiowa against incursions by white men. Eventually, however, white men and their weapons prove too powerful for the buffalo and they are slaughtered by the thousands. The buffalo realize they cannot defend the People against the white men, and one morning, as a beautiful Kiowa maiden watches, the last remaining buffalo walk towards a mountain which opens up to reveal a beautiful, green, fresh, healthy,

blossoming land. The buffalo walk through the opening and into the mountain, which closes up behind them, and are never seen again.

Both these stories are, on one level, myths of origin, the first explaining how horses came to be part of Navaho culture and the second explaining the disappearance of the buffalo. But on another, more symbolic level, they are representations of ways in which the divine influence of the Creator changes and defines life on earth. This influence plays out more overtly in the story of Gambler/Moctezuma, an almost Christian story of redemption and transformation. There is something akin to the many stories of conversion in the Bible: how Peter was taken from his fishing nets by Jesus, how the (reviled) tax collector Levi was led from a life of evil by Jesus and became St. Matthew, and how the atheist Saul experienced conversion on the road to Damascus and became the legendary apostle Paul. These stories aside, Gambler's story is ultimately one of transcendence and hope-an aspect of human existence that contrasts vividly with the evident folly of humanity, in the form of the white man and his decimation of the buffalo, in the second story. The influence of the Divine/Creator is less vividly defined here, but can be inferred to be behind the realization by the buffalo that they no longer have the strength and/or capacity to fulfill their destiny of feeding and/or protecting the People. In other words, the Divine / Creator awakens realization of truth in them, and they take action. Here again can be seen Biblical similarities, and in this case, stories in which godly and/or spiritual truths were revealed: the doubting Saint Thomas, the frightened Mary Magdalene, and Christ himself on the Cross. It might not be going too far to suggest that in the cave into which the buffalo disappear, there is an echo of the cave in which Christ's body was laid and from which He was resurrected. In both caves, a new life begins, and outside both caves, a young woman is a witness (in the Bible, the young woman is Mary Magdalene).

The point of all this is not to suggest that there has been a deliberate attempt by the tellers of these stories to *create* these Biblical similarities, although there is enough clear evidence in others of these stories, particularly "The Painted Turtle" (in which Jesus plays a key role) to suggest that such deliberate similarities are in fact possible. The point is made to suggest that within American Indian culture, Christian culture, and other spiritual cultures there are commonalities, parallels of meaning in existence that the specifics of circumstance cannot obscure. These parallels are, ultimately, evidence that-despite those specifics of circumstance-when it comes down to it, people of all cultures believe similar things for similar reasons out of a need for answers to similar questions.

Part 3 Section 1

Part 3 Section 1 Summary and Analysis

This part of the book is sub-titled "The World We Live in Now". It contains various stories, some mostly mythic and some mostly fact based, but all containing illuminations of Indian spiritual belief systems. The first two tell of different aspects of the white man's destructive impact on Indian societies.

"Saynday and Smallpox: The White Man's Gift" (Kiowa) The introduction of this story describes how it's an illustration of the way mythic native figures such as Saynday (a Hero-Trickster) became integrated with contemporary realities-in this case, the late 19th Century reality of smallpox.

As he walks across the prairie, Saynday contemplates how things have changed: cattle have replaced the buffalo, settlers' cabins have replaced Indian tipis, and the People are being fenced in. As he's realizing there's no longer room for him in the world and that it's time to leave, Saynday spots a dark, moving shape coming from the east (see "Quotes", p. 144). He walks toward the shape and sees that it's a man wearing "a black suit and a high hat, like a missionary's" and riding a black horse. Saynday introduces himself as the Kiowa's Old Uncle Saynday, and the man introduces himself as Smallpox, saying he comes with the white man from across the ocean and brings death to all the men, women, and children. As he speaks, he brushes dust off his face and Saynday is able to see the scars disfiguring him. When Saynday asks if he brings death to all the people, Smallpox tells him that he does. Saynday thinks fast and persuades Smallpox to leave his few, poor people alone and visit the populous, wealthy Pawnee instead (the Pawnee are the traditional enemies of the Kiowa). Smallpox likes the sound of the Pawnee-plenty of people, plenty of places for him to hide, and possessed of too many material possessions to run away. He leaves to visit the Pawnee, telling Saynday to warn the Kiowa to be ready for them and put out all their fires, since fire is the one thing he's afraid of. After Smallpox has gone, Saynday sets fire to the ground where he (Smallpox) stood. The winds carry the fire to the Kiowa camp, where it forms a ring of protection around Saynday and his people. Saynday thinks to himself that maybe there's still some good he can do for his people after all.

"Tsali of the Cherokees" (Cherokee) The introduction describes how Tsali was a real person, and how his story has come to symbolize the story of all Cherokees (see "Quotes", p 147).

Narration describes how the leaders of many Cherokee tribes signed agreements with white settlers and traders to abandon their land. Narration also describes how the mountain dwelling tribe, the Ani Keetowah, heard what the tribes in the lower lands were doing, also heard that some tribes were refusing to go, and therefore resolved to stay where they were and hope that the white men would leave. One of the leaders of the Ani Keetowah was Tsali, who lived with his wife, several sons and daughters-in-law,

grandchildren, and farm animals on two hillsides and a valley. One day on a visit to a white settlement to trade, Tsali encounters a Missionary who warns him that he and his family will have to leave soon, explaining when Tsali protests that the white men are looking for gold. Tsali shows him a pinch of gold dust, asking whether that's what he's talking about. The Missionary becomes very excited at the sight of the gold, and offers to become Tsali's business partner. Tsali refuses, saying all he wants is a quiet life with his family. Later, when Tsali goes in to do his trading, he discovers that the Trader has heard about his gold and is also interested in becoming his partner. Tsali again refuses, saying all he wants is enough gold to trade for the things he needs. Some time later, when Tsali and his sons are out tending their fields, a group of soldiers arrives at Tsali's home, accompanied by the Missionary and the Trader. They confront Tsali's wife, Amanda, and tell her that all the Ani Keetowah are to be transported to settlement camps further west. Amanda sends her youngest son to tell Tsali what's happening. When he hears the news, Tsali and his sons go into hiding, sure that Amanda and the other women can take care of themselves. Back at the house, the soldiers become tired of waiting for Tsali and set up camp. As they do so, Amanda and the women barricade themselves in the house, only opening the door when it's dark and Tsali comes scratching at the door like a mouse. He leads Amanda and the women into a nearby forest hoping that the white men will become tired of looking and waiting and leave. They remain in hiding for several days, but are discovered when one of the soldiers brings out his hunting dog. Tsali and his family are rounded up and taken back to the house, where they discover that the place has been plundered. As they grieve over what's been done, Tsali and his family are told that they have no choice-they will be resettled. Tsali refuses to go, saying the land was his father's and his father's before that and he cannot leave. The soldiers threaten to shoot him, but Tsali doesn't change his mind. As the soldiers prepare to fire, Amanda stands with him, saying she and Tsali have been together too long for them to be separated now. Their oldest sons also join them, telling their wives and children to leave and start new lives. Tsali requests that his youngest son also be allowed to start a new life (see "Quotes", p. 153). The soldiers agree to his request, and the women (all but Amanda) and children are herded down the hill, without being allowed to say goodbye or look back. As they go, they hear gunshots.

There are three notable aspects to these stories. The first is that they both center around variations of the Hero character-Saynday, who is a Hero/Trickster, and Tsali, who is a human hero but who behaves with the courage, strength and integrity of the more super-natural heroes such as the young hunter in "Thunder and his Helpers" (Part 1, Section 2). This particular aspect to Tsali's story offers the suggestion that even in everyday life, everyday people have within them the strength and power of nature, and by extension the Creator. In addition, in this context, both stories suggest that even with the ever-present power of the white man and the trouble he brings to the Indian people, there are still possibilities for hope and for triumph. It's interesting to note that Amanda and the other women in the family are just as heroic as the men-their way is perhaps quieter and more watchful, but their courage is no less admirable. Here is an example of the way that the characteristics of traditional male archetypes like the Hero can be found in the opposite gender.

The second notable aspect to these stories is that they both contain missionary figures-Smallpox wears what seems to be deliberately described as clothes, while Tsali encounters a missionary who behaves in a greedy, worldly, decidedly un-missionary like way (or perhaps he's all *too* missionary-like). These figures symbolize the hypocrisy and destructive power of the church. There is the sense that for the Indians, attempts to Christianize them and their culture are as deadly and destructive as Smallpox, while the missionary who encounters Tsali is portrayed as being just as concerned with personal gain and power as the Shopkeeper, the Soldiers, and by extension, every other white man.

The third notable aspect of these stories is referred to near the end of the Tsali story, but is in fact embedded in all the stories. Specifically, Tsali's reference to his son passing on his seed (see "Quotes", p. 153) can be seen as not only a literal reference to the biological passing on of a family's genes, or "seed", but can also be seen as a metaphorical reference to the narrative passing on of Indian stories, the way storytellers have done to the authors/editors of this book. In other words, in the same way as ova and sperm carry genetic truth, the Indians' stories pass on spiritual truth from generation to generation. Also in this context, the Quote taken from page 106, which refers to how a seed must die to allow for a new plant to grow, takes on additional resonance-Tsali in this story is himself a seed, dying so the "plant" of his family (his son) can grow and flourish. This, according to many stories in this book (particularly the third "Coming of Corn" story in Part 2 Section 3), is a key component of the nature of life.

Part 3 Section 2

Part 3 Section 2 Summary and Analysis

The second section of "The World We Live in Now" consists of a single story, that of the Indians' greatest military victory over the White Man.

"Yellow Hair: George Armstrong Custer" (Cheyenne and Arapaho) The introduction tells how no one, Indian or white, knows exactly what happened at the famous Battle of Little Big Horn, at which General Custer led his armies against "the greatest, and almost the only, confederation of Plains Indian tribes in their history."

Narration recounts how, after the signing of a peace treaty between the white men in 1871, the Indian Chief Black Kettle invited Yellow Hair (General Custer) to agree to the treaty in the Indian way-by smoking a pipe of peace together. Narration also recounts how Custer had a Cheyenne wife and a half-Cheyenne son, as well as a white wife back east. Black Kettle welcomes Custer into his tipi, prepares his ritual pipe, and is the first to smoke. Custer, who apparently never smokes with Indians, reluctantly takes his turn and is then allowed to leave. Black Kettle takes the ashes from the pipe and drops them in each of Custer's footprints, saying that if he (Custer) ever breaks his word, he will die a coward's death. Two years later, Custer and his men attack Black Kettle's camp and a camp of Arapahoe further down the river. Black Kettle is killed and ends his life clutching the United States flag he received at the treaty signing ceremony in 1871. Custer is unhappy to discover, however, that the Arapahoe have slaughtered the men who attacked their camp and have disappeared. He's punished for his failure to reinforce his men during the attack by being kept in Washington for another year. Because of this punishment, his Cheyenne wife and child are abandoned. Meanwhile, as a result of the attack on Black Kettle, several Indian tribes who had been rivals until now, begin negotiations to form a unified force to attack the white men. The white men receive word of the impending attack and make plans of their own. The Indians, meanwhile, become aware of the white men's plans and revise *their* plans. The night before the attack, Custer and his fellow commanders shave their heads in a bid to avoid being recognized by the Indians. The next day the battle of Little Big Horn begins, and the white men are all soundly defeated. Custer himself is killed-stabbed to the heart by a woman's dagger. "he was dead before the Cheyenne woman struck him, so they say." The implication here is that he was stabbed, if not killed, by his abandoned Cheyenne wife.

Aside from looking at the extensively documented and analyzed battle of Little Big Horn from the Indian perspective, this story offers a thematic message of hope similar to that of the stories in Part 3, Section 1: that one way or another, Indians and their culture and their spiritual truths will triumph. In this story, the triumph is military in nature and occurs on a nation-sized scale-the Indian nation over the white nation. According to this take on the story, however, it's also a personal triumph-that of the discarded Cheyenne wife over the unfaithful, disrespectful husband. Granted, the storyteller never explicitly concludes

that the Cheyenne woman at the end of the story is the *same* Cheyenne woman Custer apparently married, but the implication is very strong.

That being said, the implication of many of the other stories in the book is that the triumph of Indian culture not only comes at a considerable cost (see "Tsali of the Cherokees, Part 3 Section 1), but also is a relatively quiet one, with Indian culture and spirituality surviving *within* the context of white culture. In other words, there is a slightly subversive sensibility to many of the stories following this one, the sense that in continuing their beliefs and traditions Indians are, as a culture, putting one over on the whites in a rather Trickster-ish fashion-the whites may think they've won, and in many ways it looks like they have. However, the people are still the people, and always will be.

Part 3 Section 3

Part 3 Section 3 Summary and Analysis

The third section of "The World We Live In Now" narrates two legends that have survived the White Man's socio-cultural influence and continue to play an important role in contemporary Indian culture.

"The Deer Woman" (Ponca) The introduction to this story describes the cultural sophistication of the Ponca people, the belief that Deer Woman still exists, and also the belief that until Deer Woman is captured, "no Indian woman will be really safe away from her family."

The first part of the story describes how, in the time before the White Men came, the Deer Woman would insinuate herself into the annual ritual dances of the Ponca people. She always looks the same: long black hair, a white buckskin dress, and with deer hooves instead of feet. Men, it's told, would be unable to look away from her dark, mysterious eyes and her strange beauty. At the close of the dancing Deer Woman takes one young man into the woods and spends the night with him. The next morning the young man's body is found, naked and with his genitals mutilated. The story then shifts to contemporary society, describing how the Ponca have continued their traditions, but with some variations-their dancing, for example, is free to any Indian who wants to participate or to watch, but admission is charged for non-Indians to sit in bleachers and observe. The story then tells how Deer Woman continues to appear at these dances-she still has dark hair and deer feet, but wears a buckskin shawl instead of a dress. Another difference is that at the close of the dancing she now takes young women with her into the woods. They are neither murdered nor sexually assaulted, but they are mutilated, both physically and mentally-they have no recollection of what happened to them after Deer Woman leads them from the dance. Narration describes how several of the women lured away by Deer Woman enter lives of prostitution in the city, and how many Ponca men have tried to capture and/or kill Deer Woman, but without success.

"The Dancing Feather (Intertribal) The introduction here describes how inter-tribal pow-wows are great opportunities for an exchange of customs and knowledge between tribes, but adds that ancient rivalries between tribes, as well as differences in spirituality, ritual and tradition, continue to exist.

"A few years ago the war-dance contest was held at the Tulsa pow-wow," begins the story. Two excellent dancers, Jimmy and Danny, develop a rivalry as both dance extremely well and without much difference between them. On the morning of the final competition, Jimmy's mother fetches two buckets of water, one at a time, from the communal well. The first is fine and clear, and as she's walking home with it, she spies Danny's grandmother sitting outside her trailer, combing her hair. Carrie calls out a greeting, but the grandmother doesn't respond. On her second trip to the well, Carrie notices that its water is now muddy, but thinks that if she gives it time to settle it will be

fine. On her way back to her trailer, she notices that Danny's grandmother is gone. At breakfast, Carrie notices that Jimmy drinks out of the second bucket and is concerned for a moment, but thinks that the water will have settled and everything will be fine. Later, however, Jimmy tells both her and his father that he's got a cramp in his calf. Danny's father massages it out, Jimmy says he feels better, and then his mother and father leave so he can prepare for the dancing. The audience for the final competition is huge and very excited. As Jimmy and Danny begin to dance they're still evenly matched, but Carrie becomes nervous when she notices that Jimmy is slowing down. Finally, as he's about to begin the war dance, his leg stiffens completely. No one can do anything to help him, and Danny is declared the winner of the competition. Trips to the doctor and to the emergency room aren't able to solve Jimmy's problem. In angry frustration, his father decides to take him to a medicine man, taking with him several forms of ritual payment, including an eagle feather. The medicine man examines Jimmy, discovers through the mystical use of the eagle feather that he's been poisoned, and slices into his calf in the same place as he had the cramp. He discovers a ball of hair, just as might be taken from a woman's comb. Carrie cries out that Danny's grandmother must have poisoned the water she took from the well. The medicine man tells her now that he's cured Jimmy, if the grandmother did indeed poison him she'll soon die. Four months later, the story recounts, Jimmy and his family find out that the grandmother has indeed died.

These two stories focus, like "Bird of Power" (Part 3, Section 4) on the darker sides of Indian spirituality; specifically, the malevolent, destructive, energy that exists alongside the loving, nurturing energy of the creator. Both Deer Woman and the Grandmother can be seen as manifestations of the more negative sides of Trickster, in that both create chaos, difficulty, and pain-in the case of the former for its own sake, in the case of the latter for the advantage of her family. It's noteworthy that in both stories, the "evil" of the women involved (Deer Woman and the Grandmother) manifests during dancing. In many Indian cultures and sub-cultures, dancing serves as a means of releasing and/or connecting with spirits at work in nature. Most of these spirits are associated with the Creator and are generally positive in perspective. The attacks of Deer Woman and the Grandmother perhaps suggest that dancing can also release darker, more evil spirits.

An intriguing aspect of the Deer Woman story is the difference between the sexuality of the Deer Woman of the past and the Deer Woman of the present. The story offers no explanations or even hints as to why her focus switched from men to women, or even of why she attacked/attacks either. Is she warning of the dangers of irresponsible sexual behavior, or of the perils of allowing sexual desire to be manipulated? Is her very being a dangerous manifestation of sexual greed and power? Why are the men attacked by Deer Woman physically mutilated while the women are, to coin a phrase, spiritually mutilated? Is there a comment here on the nature of gender attitudes towards sex-men are more interested in physical sensation while women are more interested in spiritual connection? As mentioned, the story offers no answers-here, perhaps, is its ultimate meaning ... that the dark side of nature has *no* reasons, and therefore cannot be understood. It just is.

The intent behind the Grandmother's actions in "The Dancing Feather" is perhaps a little clearer and perhaps smaller in scope (Deer Woman ruins people's lives while the Grandmother ruins one man's chance at victory in dancing). For all that, however, the Grandmother's intent is no less malevolent. Here the evil can perhaps be more easily understood, but again the question is why is the Grandmother's spirit so dark-why can she not be generous enough of spirit to see that there's plenty of room for more than one talented dancer? Here again, the lesson might be that evil is as evil does-it simply exists, for its own sake, and must be watched for and guarded against.

Part 3 Section 4

Part 3 Section 4 Summary and Analysis

The fourth section of "The World We Live in Now" includes two narratives involving beliefs and rituals related to peyote, a cactus with allegedly hallucinogenic properties.

"A World of Beauty: The Peyote Religion" (Comanche and Kiowa) The introduction to this story suggests that it contains a blend of historical fact and mythic symbolism similar to that found in the story of Tsali.

This story begins with a brief recounting of the life of Cynthia Parker, a white woman captured as a girl in Texas by Comanches on a raid, and who was raised like a Comanche and eventually became the wife of a great chief. Her favorite child was her oldest, Quanah, who grew up to be a powerful warrior and defender of his people. Over the years, the white men become more and more dominant in spite of the efforts of Quanah and other warriors. Finally, Quanah realizes that the Indians have to change their ways of life and become farmers, rather than hunters. His people, a proud and violent race, object. He insists, revealing his plans to go to Texas, find his mother's family, and learn to farm from them. After a long search, he finds his white relatives, who agree to teach him what they can as long as he brings his mother back to them. Cynthia reluctantly agrees to go, knowing that if she does, it will mean her early death. Within a year of her return to Texas Cynthia dies, and shortly afterwards Quanah falls ill, partly as a result of grief and loneliness, partly as a result of tuberculosis. His white grandparents bring in white doctors, but they are unable to help him. Finally, his (white) grandmother realizes she needs to bring in some native medicine men, but is only able to find with a Mexican healer-woman, a Curandera. Since Quanah appears to be losing the will to live, the grandmother hurries to fetch the Curandera, who as soon as she arrives, tells Quanah's grandfather to build an open shelter for him outdoors. Quanah is moved into the shelter, and for four days, the Curandera treats him. On the night of the fourth day, she tells him to drink a very bitter liquid, which he does. As he's falling asleep, she presses something hard and round into his hand. That night, Quanah's sleep is filled with bright colors and mysterious shadows. He wakes the following morning feeling stronger and more alive than he has in months, and discovers that what the Curandera placed into his hand was a string of black beads with a cross hanging from one end. This can be understood to be a rosary, used in the Roman Catholic Church as a focus of prayer and meditation.

Eight days later he's able to get up and move about, and it's at that time that the Curandera tells him what was in the liquid she gave him-a distillate of the juice of a cactus. She tells him the legend of Morning Star Woman, left behind by her tribe after giving birth. Alone and frightened, she received a vision telling her to drink the juice of a nearby cactus (which can be understood to be peyote). She did, was rejuvenated, and received another vision telling her to take word of the cactus and its healing, nourishing powers back to her people. The Curandera tells how the Mexican people have a

ceremony honoring Morning Star Woman "because it is one of God's good gifts to man." She describes the ritual in similar terms to the rituals in the priest's church, and says that's the reason she also gave him the rosary-the implication here is that both the peyote and the rosary are ways in which the user can draw closer to God. The Curandera promises to take Quanah to both ceremonies so he can learn from them, return to his people, and teach them the ways of the spirit. Narration reveals that Quanah did exactly that, and that his teachings spread through other Indian peoples.

"Bird of Power" (Intertribal) The introduction to this story suggests that it is a tale of the dark side of the peyote religion, describes at length the importance of birds to Indian spirituality and ritual (see "Quotes", p. 177), and describes at equal length the particular importance and special power of the speedy, aggressive, scissor-tailed flycatcher.

A "big, hard" Indian woman named Helen is very ill and is determined to die at home rather than be placed in a white man's hospital. She begs to see the peyote doctor, threatens her four sons with curses if they disobey her. One night as she lies unconscious the sons discuss what to do, arguing over whether her beliefs are just superstition or whether they should be respected. They eventually decide to take her to the hospital while she's unconscious and can't resist. It's a struggle because she's a big woman, but they manage it, enduring her curses when she wakes up in the car and realizes where she's being taken. In spite of the white doctors' treatments, which ease her pain, Helen is still angry. As she issues orders to her son Ernest about what she wants done with her body and belongings after she dies, she again threatens to curse him and his brothers if her wishes aren't obeyed. She is particularly insistent on two points-that her two ritual fans, made of rare flycatcher feathers, be given to her brother, and that her white tipi be burned. Shortly afterwards Helen dies, and her friends and relatives gather for her funeral-although she wasn't much liked, she was definitely respected.

Ernest passes out Helen's belongings, including the flycatcher fans, in the way that Helen demanded. However, when he announces what she wanted done with the tipi, his uncle's wife objects, saying she wants it. Ernest tries to argue with her, but she insists. Finally, her husband (Ernest's uncle) says they will hold the funeral peyote ritual in the tipi, and decide what to do with it afterwards. Everyone agrees, and plans are made for the ritual. The narrative then describes, in considerable detail, the peyote ritual-it lasts for an entire night, and ends with the appearance of a young woman bearing a bucket of clean water with which the celebrants of the ritual cleanse themselves. The young woman assigned to bring the bucket of water is nervous and becomes particularly fearful when she feels the brush of a bird's wings across her face. Her mother (the aunt who wanted Helen's tipi) angrily tells her to calm down, but the girl becomes more nervous when she sees a flycatcher swooping around the tipi and poking through it, with its long beak, at where Ernest is sitting. Her mother pushes her into completing the ritual, but she herself becomes frightened when she realizes that the flycatcher has perched on Ernest's shoulder and is pecking him. The ritual concludes, the participants emerge from the tipi, and prepare to join in the ceremonial feast prepared by the women. Ernest, however, rubs his shoulder, saying that all night long he felt as though someone was hitting him there. The women look at his back, and see a large black-and-

blue bruise running all the way from his shoulder down his back. Meanwhile, the flycatcher is circling the tipi, but soon leaves without causing anyone any more damage. The family believes that it was Helen's spirit, but that she's now satisfied and won't be back. However, while the feast is underway, the young woman who participated in the ritual is shocked and frightened to notice that the tipi has caught on fire. Before anyone can put it out, it burns to the ground. As they gather around its smoking ashes, they see the flycatcher shoot upwards from the middle of the ashes and shoot into the sky.

According to scientific evidence cited in the introduction to this section, the chemical with hallucinogenic properties found in peyote is the same chemical that, in much more concentrated form, makes LSD the powerful hallucinogenic that it is. If used properly, the chemical seems to have healing properties. If used in correctly (such as in LSD), it can cause serious side effects. Here again the stories, and the book as a whole, make the core thematic point that nature must be treated with respect and not abused.

As is the case with many of the stories in this book, women are a powerful presence-both for good, in the case of Quanah's grandmother and the Curandera in the first story, and for what isn't exactly evil, but is still Helen's selfishness in the second. In terms of the major character archetypes in both the book and the mythology in general, these women are combinations of Grandmother Spider and Hero-Trickster. Even Quanah's grandmother, in spite of her being white, has enough of Grandmother Spider's wisdom to realize that something other than the "normal" has to be done for her grandson in order to bring him back to fuller life and to fulfill his destiny. Is there that much difference, in essence, between her and the Grandmothers in "How the Half Boys Came to Be" (Part 2 Section 2) and the third "Coming of Corn" story (Part 2 Section 3)? Meanwhile, the Curandera is almost literally a Grandmother Spider archetype, but it's interesting to note that she originates from a Mexican tribe, rather than a strictly North American Indian culture. There are two key points to note here. The first is that, like traditional North American Grandmother Spiders, she not only carries with her mysterious knowledge, but she also passes that on to the Indian people. The fact that she does it through the medium of the story's Hero character, Quanah, which is something *different* from the other Grandmother Spiders (who do it more directly) doesn't lessen her impact. The second point about the Curandera is that she both embodies and demonstrates the way in which Indian culture integrates with white culture. For once, white religious teachings are viewed in a positive light (as opposed to the portrayal of the "missionaries" in the two stories in Part 3 Section 1). Here again, the point discussed in relation to the story of General Custer (Part 3, Section 2) arises-that Indian culture and experience and understanding survive, and indeed thrive, in an almost subversive way.

That being said, the belief systems and connection to nature that appear in Helen's story are anything *but* subversive-they manifest in an aggressive, almost angry way that's completely the opposite of the way they manifest in Quanah's story. Nevertheless, they do make a powerful point-that if ignored and disrespected, Nature will come back and make its presence powerfully felt. The warning here is similar to that in the stories of Deer Woman and the Grandmother in Part 3 Section 3: there is a dark side to the

Indian relationship with nature, and nature must be viewed with respect. The warning in both these stories is "don't forget".

Part 4 Section 1

Part 4 Section 1 Summary and Analysis

This section of the book is entitled "The World We Go To", and contains stories relating to death and the afterlife. The first two stories recount how death became an unavoidable part of human experience.

"How Death Came Into the World" (Kiowa) The introduction to this story comments that every Indian tribe has an explanation of death, often told as "a caution against questioning life and its problems." It also comments that this first story, with variations, can be found in every tribe across the country.

Saynday encounters a busy red ant, and makes himself small so they can talk. Their conversation reveals that Saynday has been wondering about death-why it's necessary, and whether it would be a good idea for him to fix things so that people can come back to life after four days of being dead. Ant argues vehemently against the idea. She says that many old people want to die, and that the world would be too crowded if everybody lived. Saynday asks her about children or young people, but Ant insists. Saynday tells her that if that's the way she wants it, then that's the way it will be, and he goes away. A few days later Saynday is passing along the same path, and hears weeping. He makes himself small again, and discovers the same Ant, weeping because her son has been stepped on and squashed. Saynday speaks sternly to her, saying she's got nobody to blame but herself-this is the way she wanted it. Ant takes out her knife and starts to kill herself, saying she's got nothing left to live for. Saynday stops her, saying there's been enough dying for one day. He goes on to decree that from that moment on, whenever Kiowa females experience death, they are to punish themselves for the female Ant's decision to bring death forever into the world - they are to cut themselves, but never to kill themselves. "And that's the way it was and that's the way it is, to this good day."

"How Death Came Into the World" (Modoc) The introduction to this story comments on two points. The first is that despite the story's similarities with the Kiowa story, the two originating tribes made their homes a continent apart. The second comments on the resemblance *this* story has to the classical Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice (discussed in the Analysis for this section).

Kumokums, lonely in his life on the banks of the river, called the animals together and invited them to build a village with him where they could all live together. After a long and respectful argument over where the village should be built, Kumokums decides the question-they will all live in the winter in one village, and in the summer in another. The animals agree, the villages are built, and everyone is happy for several years. But then one day Porcupine visits Kumokums, tells him there are too many people, and suggests that because the Land of the Dead is a happy place and the chief there is a good man, happy people in the village who wish to should be allowed to go there and live there permanently, to make room for the living. Kumokums agrees, and Porcupine goes away.

A few days later, however, Kumokums returns home to find his beloved daughter has gone to the Land of the Dead. He and his wives try everything they can to bring her back to life, but to no avail. Finally, Porcupine tells Kumokums that the only way he can bring his daughter back is to go to the Land of the Dead and fetch her himself. Kumokums undertakes the long and hazardous journey, finally coming face to face with the Chief of the Land of the Dead, who tells him that he can indeed take his daughter back to the Land of the Living, but only under certain conditions. He tells Kumokums that he must lead his daughter by her hand, squeeze her hand four times to bring flesh back to her bones, and under no circumstances is he to look back at her, or else she will be lost forever. Kumokums agrees and leads his daughter to the surface, squeezing her hand four times as he was told. However, when they get close enough to the surface of the Land of the Living to see light, Kumokums believes he's safe and turns around to see his daughter. It's too soon-the flesh on his daughter's bones disappears, her bones collapse into a pile, and soon that too disappears. As Kumokums grieves, Porcupine tells him that because of what he's done, there will always be death in the world.

The commonality in these two stories is that they both portray the difference between a theoretical understanding and/or acceptance of death and the emotional impact of its reality. Ant and the Creator-archetype Kumokums both experience the very human and very natural emotions of grief over the loss of their loved ones in spite of both having convinced themselves, and attempted to convince others, that death is a perfectly natural thing to happen and must be accepted/viewed as such. The question that arises is whether Kumokums, like Ant, is "punished" for not accepting the ways of nature-in other words, does Kumokums' daughter die a second time because of his attempts to circumvent the natural process? Yes, it's his mistake that leads him to look back, his love for his daughter-but is the story suggesting that the nature of death is more powerful than natural love? Meanwhile, Ant's punishment by Saynday, and the subsequent punishment of all women, does come across as somewhat harsh-the question might be asked why men, who through their warring and fighting are so often the bringers of death, not punished? The point, however, is ultimately moot-the moral of both stories is essentially that death, as a force and manifestation of the natural order, cannot and will not be denied.

The Greek myth of Orpheus and Eurydice, echoed in the story of Kumokums and his daughter, is a complex one, but the relevant portion is this-Orpheus journeyed to the underworld to retrieve Eurydice, his beloved. The lord of the underworld decreed that she could go back to the world of the living but only if Orpheus, as he led her back to life, did not look back at her until they were both on the surface. Orpheus, like Kumokums, agrees, but also like Kumokums he looks back too soon and loses his beloved forever. The similarities between the two myths once again make the suggestion, made throughout the book, that there are similarities in the belief systems and mythologies of all societies that transcend geographical and cultural differences. If one looks hard enough, for example, one might be able to see hints of a parallel between the "resurrections" of Eurydice and Kumokums' daughter to that of Christ. All three figures die, all three figures come close to returning to life, and though Christ is fully resurrected while the two women are not, all three essentially remain physically out of reach of those who love them and miss them (when Christ ascends into heaven).

There are many other such resurrection stories in many other cultures-all of which, again, bears out the theory that there are core values and experiences and dreams in all of humanity. The only differences lie in the details.

Part 4 Section 2

Part 4 Section 2 Summary and Analysis

Part 4, "The World We Go To", contains stories relating to the sometimes frightening, sometimes peaceful relationship between "The World We Live In" and the world beyond.

"Over the Hill" (Arapaho) The brief introduction to this story recounts how in ancient times most Indian people didn't really have a concept of life after death, and suggests that this story is a version of what many did believe.

For the beginning of the story, see "Quotes, p. 194". The narrator then describes the journey up the hill as being difficult, especially if his loved ones in the World of the Living are calling back the person making the journey. On the other side of the hill is an Indian village. Those who have gone before live in that village, and call out to the person making the journey to come join them. Whether he does or whether he goes back depends on the strength and the will of those calling him to stay in the World of the Living. The story concludes with the suggestion that men and women alike have the same experience, and the same is said of those who live good lives and those who do evil. "It is the Arapaho way not to judge people".

"The World Beyond" (Hopi) The introduction refers to the complexities of the Hopi religion, to the Hopi reluctance to reveal too many secrets to non-Hopis, and to the multiple meanings of the word "kachina" (see "Objects/Places).

The story begins with detailed descriptions of the beautiful valley land where the good kachina spirits live, and also of the barren, desert-like land where the evil, selfish ka-Hopi spirits are banished after they die. After a brief description of ka-Hopi ways among the living, which include the way the family members of someone with a dark ka-Hopi soul keep dying off, the story then becomes that of a young husband with a beautiful wife, both of whom are frustrated because they can't have children. They're also unhappy because the members of the wife's family keep dying, for no apparent reason. One night the wife's mother goes missing, and the wife sends the husband out to look for her. While he's looking, the husband is captured by a ka-Hopi, who tells him that he is to be taken to a meeting of the ka-Hopi and made one of them. The husband protests, saying he's a priest of the kachina, but the ka-Hopi overpowers him and takes him to the meeting. Along the way, the husband prays fervently to the kachinas for aid. When he arrives at the meeting, he sees his wife's mother-and the greatest and brightest of the kachina, who says he can go home and that he will always be safe. When he returns, the husband tells his wife he didn't see her mother and goes to bed. Later, however, he hears the mother coming home, but resolves to say nothing to his wife about what he saw. Over the next few months, the mother becomes sick and dies.

"A Glass of Water, Please" (Sauk) The introduction describes the simple Sauk belief about the afterlife-that when a person dies, his soul simply leaves. The family to whom the soul belonged must adopt another person of the same age and gender to fill the place in the family. There is also the suggestion that unsatisfied souls return to earth, usually in the form of an owl, which is regarded throughout Indian mythology as a mysterious messenger from the other world, and often a bad omen.

A young couple named Joe and Nina tends to Joe's aging, failing father, who lives on a nearby farm. One night as they're returning home, Nina sees an owl swooping by, and becomes concerned that something bad is going to happen. The next day when they're visiting Joe's father, he becomes upset and croaks in a voice that sounds like an owl's and says that he wants water. Nina feeds him water drop by drop, and continues to do so for several days. At one point, Joe sees that she's about to drop from exhaustion and sends her home to rest, promising to give his father water in the same way she did. Nina goes home, has a restless night, and returns the following day to find Joe's father near death and Joe protesting that he tried to give him water the same way she did, but sometimes it didn't work. Despite Nina and Joe's efforts, Joe's father dies. The funeral rituals continue for several days, and are haunted by the presence of a quarrelsome group of owls nearby. After the rituals are completed, Joe and Nina are lying in bed when an owl on their windowsill disturbs them, croaking in a voice similar to that of Joe's father. Nina urges Joe to get out of bed and give the owl some water, out of fear that if he doesn't something bad will happen. Joe, half-asleep, says his father is dead and doesn't need water any more. The owl returns for four nights, and each night Nina urges Joe to give it water and each night Joe refuses. Finally, Nina puts a glass of water outside for the owl. For the first night in ages, the owl is silent. The next day, Joe has an accident with a piece of farm equipment. As Nina frees him, she reminds him that she *told* him if he didn't feed the owl, something bad would happen.

"The Womb of the Earth" (Hopi) The introduction to this very brief writing reveals that it's not a story, but a statement of warning against trespassing on sacred places (see "Quotes", p. 206).

The narrative describes a path around a series of mesas in the desert, and how anyone who travels the path must present an offering to Grandmother Spider, who can sometimes be glimpsed in passing-glimpsed, but never spoken to. Anyone who has not been initiated into the spiritual ways of the Hopi, Hopi children or non-Hopi, are in great danger from the War Twins, who wait on the path for passers by. The elder twin will attempt to warn the traveler away, but the younger will attempt to lure the traveler to Grandmother Spider's lair. If the traveler chooses that path, he has no choice but to complete the journey-down into "the womb of our mother, the earth". If children are playing on any path around the mesas, the path is safe for anyone to travel.

In three of these four stories, death is simply a fact of life-perhaps more accurately, a fact of existence. It's neither good nor bad, and the place to which the spirit goes after death is neither a place of bliss (heaven) or a place of torment (hell). The value of death, rather, lies in the judgment and feelings of those still living. In the first story, whether a person passes into the next world depends on the feelings of those who want

him/her to stay. In the third story, the way in which Joe's father passes into the next world depends upon the actions of his son and daughter-in-law: he (Joe's father) is unhappy because Joe, as the result of his laziness and neglect, has made him so. In the fourth story, Grandmother Spider's guardianship of the land of the dead is neither good nor evil-she's there, she will never move. It is only fear of what she represents that brings darkness into the story, and into the experience of those moving along the path. Once her way is accepted it's inevitable-which means, the story is suggesting, that death is inevitable. The story also says that anyone foolish enough to not be true to his own wisdom and understanding (in other words, anyone who listens to anything but his own true soul) may very well find him/herself on the road to that inevitability sooner rather than later. The warning here, therefore, is of self trust-trust in nature. The warning in all three stories, however, is that death is a part of that nature, and that anyone under-taking the transition must be respected for following the natural course of existence-but as the fourth story hints, there's no need to rush.

The second story, however, paints a slightly different picture. In this narrative, there is very clearly a difference between good and evil, a powerful pull between the two forces for the souls of the living. Here can be seen another echo of Christianity, whether the result of integration of white and/or Christian elements into Indian philosophy or the result of cross cultural, psychological and spiritual commonalities. Whatever the source of the similarities, the kachinas are clearly a kind of angel, while the ka-Hopi are just as clearly a kind of demon or devil. How the presence of the ka-Hopi manifests seems to have a specific resonance within Indian culture, given that that culture is much more oriented towards the extended family than white/Christian culture. That being said, however, the essential characteristics of angel/devil are present, clear, and powerful. The point must also be made that nowhere in the story is it mentioned, or even suggested, that the ka-Hopi (demons) are agents of the devil, or the kachina (angels) are agents of the Creator/God. Yes, they live in what seem to be variations of heaven and hell, but the overall sense is that both the ka-Hopi and the kachina are manifestations of opposing natural forces.

The owl, like the flycatcher in Helen's story ("Bird of Power, Part 3 Section 4) is a symbol of the spiritual power with which Indians endowed animals in general, and birds in particular. The owl was, in general, an omen of death. In addition, because it flies silently, it represented the dangerous and often deadly power of secrets. All this means that the owl in the story of Joe and Nina represents both death and the secret at the heart of the death of Joe's father-if he's not treated well he will die unhappy, and come back to Joe and Nina until they're able to make him happy.

Ultimately, these final stories in the book bring the reader back to its beginning-Grandmother Spider, at the gateway between the world of light and the world of darkness. She leads people out, she shows people in, in the endless cycle of birth and death, wisdom and ignorance, light and dark, faith and non-belief, courage and fear.

Characters

The Hero

The Trickster

The Trickster-Hero

Grandmother Spider

The Twin War Gods

The Creator

Jesus

Gambler

Tsali and Amanda

Chief Quanah

General Custer

Objects/Places

Medicine Bundle

Medicine bundles were collections of sacred objects such as bones, feathers, masks, or tools, collected by individuals and/or tribes and preserved in bundles of some kind of hide, such as buffalo or deer. They were often used in various rituals, and were thought to bring good fortune, establish and maintain connections with ancestors and spirits, and bring emotional and spiritual health.

Mississippi River

The Mississippi River, like many other naturally occurring phenomena (mountains, lakes, plains, the sky, etc) was/is the focus of a number of mythic stories. These stories often told of how these phenomena came to be, but the story in this collection featuring the Mississippi River ("The Great River Monster, Part 1 Section 3) takes a slightly different tack as it tells why the river has the character it does.

The World Above

This might be described in Christian terms as "heaven", the world of higher, more intelligent, more loving, more spiritual beings-the world of beauty and eternal life, and the home of the Creator.

The Underworld

Where The World Above has a parallel in "heaven", the Underworld doesn't necessarily have a parallel in the Christian "hell". Nowhere in the stories is there the sense that the underworld is a place of punishment. It is, however, described in various terms-in stories where it is the place where people go after death, it's described as a place of eternal rest, or eternal happiness, or eternal beauty. In several creation stories, on the other hand, it's described as a world of darkness from which the people and all other living things emerge. Herein lies the ultimate meaning and narrative value of the Underworld-all things come from it, and to it, all things return.

Buffalo

To many Indian cultures, the buffalo was the most important animal. Its meat was a source of food, its coat was a source of clothing, its hide was a source of material for tents and packaging, and its bones were a source of digging tools and weapons. Its eradication by the White Man is symbolic of the eradication of Indian culture and society.

Corn

In general, there were two types of Indian societies. There was the nomadic type, communities that hunted, that relied on the buffalo as their chief source of food, and that traveled from place to place in search of that food. Then there was the settled type, the farming culture whose main source of food was food plants, and whose main focus of occupation was the growing and tending of those plants. Of all the food plants these types of communities grew, corn was the most important and the most versatile, as dramatized in the several stories about the coming of corn in Part 2, Section 3.

Smallpox

Smallpox is an often deadly, always disfiguring disease brought to North America by European White Men. Some might say that what White Man's guns didn't kill, White Man's disease did. Mostly eradicated in the contemporary world due to the invention of an effective vaccine and/or antibiotic treatment, it spread rapidly throughout the continent wide-Indian community, decimating entire tribes.

Peyote

As described in two stories in Part 3 Section 3, peyote is a cactus found in the southwest which contains the same hallucinogenic chemical as is found in LSD. It's often used in Indian rituals to create a sense of spiritual and/or emotional transcendence, of a spiritual experience not possible through less assisted means.

Little Big Horn

This is the site of a historically documented battle between white military forces led by General Custer and the legendary, never-to-be-duplicated alliance of several previously warring Indian tribes. Custer's defeat in this battle is legendary, and as discussed in reference to the appearance in these pages of Custer himself, can be seen as symbolic of the ultimate transcendence of Indian spirituality over white domination.

Kachina

"A kachina may be one of the forces of nature ... the spirit of a much beloved ancestor ... a man dancing to impersonate one of those spirits ... or a doll carved and painted to represent such a spirit...". This last is the most common use of the term "kachina", with the dolls often being given to children as a combination plaything and means of learning about faith and religion.

Themes

Darkness/Light ... the Underworld Life/the Surface Life

This theme manifests in two ways in many stories in this book. The first is relatively literal; the second is more metaphorical. In terms of the first, there are a number of stories in the book in which Indian people (and animals) literally emerge from darkness into light, leaving an existence in the dark underground to come into a new life on the well-lit surface. For an example, see the first stories in Part 1 Section 2 ("How the Sun Came") and Part 2, Section 1 ("How the People Came to the Middle Place"). These are both examples of creation myths; descriptions of how both natural and living elements came into their living, harmonious relationship. It's important to note that this literal movement, this actual emergence from darkness into light, also carries with it the second, more metaphorical meaning-the emergence from ignorance into knowledge. This second manifestation of this core theme appears as much in the more contemporary stories and legends as it does in the more mythic stories arising from the deep dark past. It is essentially the theme of mystery stories like that of "The Dancing Feather" in Part 3, Section 3. It's also important to note that additionally in many stories individuals take the reverse journey-from light into darkness-which may be beneath the surface of water as well as beneath the surface of the land. The reasons for taking this journey are many: for safety, as punishment, or as the inevitable result of death. The ultimate thematic point here is that no matter what direction the journey is taken, and no matter what the reason for making the journey, darkness and light/the underworld and the surface are both manifestations of existence, present within footsteps and/or breaths of each other, each as much a fact of life as the other.

Humanity's Relationship with Nature

Relationships between human beings and plants, animals, land, water, sky, weather-in fact, all the natural elements-lie at the heart of almost all the stories in this book. For the most part, the relationships are positive and mutually beneficial, even when nature, in the form of the Creator or animal representatives of the Creator, teaches an unwary human being a lesson. Many stories, in fact, contain elements of human beings learning and improving themselves through nature-for examples, see the various "Coming of Corn" stories in Part 2, Section 3. Even the Creator, manifested as Kumokums in "How the World was Made" (Part 1, Section 1), learns from the life he created. The core theme here is that when human beings, in perception and action, respect nature, understand nature, and live in harmony with nature, life is peaceful and well lived. This is dramatized with particular effectiveness in stories like "Fifty Young Men and a Turtle", in which several foolish young men learn a fatal lesson after disobeying nature's laws and acting disrespectfully towards an obviously powerful animal. Finally, this theme also manifests in stories that teach respect for humanity's own nature. Stories about male/female rivalry, for example, "The River of Separation" (Part 2 Section 2), contain references to how men and women should respect each other's strengths and

differences. The dark side of this theme, and one that relates to the third major theme in the book (discussed immediately following) is dramatized in the frequent, at times almost offhand and at other times quite blatant, references to the way the White Man disrespects nature. Throughout the stories, the White Man acts with aggression and greed to subdue and control the more naturally connected lives of the Indians, with the result that Indian people suffer greatly, both physically and in terms of their dignity. Their relationship, their spirituality, and their faith are forced to go into hiding and/or to integrate white spirituality. In other words, the presence of the White Man is a metaphorical subduing of nature, a powerful thematic contrast to the Indian's determination to live and work in harmony with it.

The White Man's Destructive Dominance

As previously discussed, the aggressive and powerful presence of the White Man has a significant thematic presence throughout the book. The nature and history of this presence is discussed at length in the introduction, where it's defined on varying terms depending on which European culture was doing the invading-the French tended toward integration, the Spanish toward eradication, and the English toward simply moving them out of the way. Once America was formed, the Americans tended toward conquest and control. The introduction also discusses how all four cultures believed that land was something to be owned, which meant that the Indians, with their respect and relative nonchalance about land ownership (some tribes were both territorial and acquisitive) had to be gotten rid of. In the stories, the presence of the White Man and "his" philosophies reflects these variations in white perspective and relationship. The appearance of Jesus in the story of "The Painted Turtle" (Part 2 Section 5) and the reference to the Catholic Church and the Rosary in "The Peyote Religion" (Part 3 Section 3) are examples of this kind of integration. They dramatize the way in which white traditions and belief systems seemed to blend smoothly with Indian beliefs, and perhaps even reinforce and strengthen them. Then there are the more negative stories. These include those in which Indian characters encounter human incarnations of smallpox ("The White Man's Gift", Part 3, Section 1, and "The Underwater Village", Part 1, Section 3). These stories metaphorically dramatize the way the white man brought disease and death into Indian society. Finally, there are the direct, vividly defined stories of White Man's violence, in which the negative influence they brought to Indian society are quite powerfully portrayed. These include two stories in Part 3: "Tsali of the Cherokees" in Section 1, and "Yellow Hair: George Armstrong Custer" in Section 2. All that being said, however, there are references in the introductions to the various stories to the way Indian culture have transcended the White Man's influence, offering clues to what was once a complex, deeply felt, and ultimately transcendent spirituality.

Style

Perspective

There are two main points of view taken in this book-that of the authors and that of the storytellers. As described in the section on "Language" that follows, the authors seem to have a mostly academic, objective perspective on the stories they're presenting. In particular, the historical context within which each story developed and recounted is defined in generally unemotional terms. For example, almost no opinions are expressed one way or another about the way in which White Men treated the Indians-they are described at times as being aggressive and determined, but there is little or no expression of deeper emotional attitude toward their behavior. What's important to note, however, is that the language the authors use in their introductory notes at times indicates their profound respect, bordering on awe, for the culture from which these myths and stories come and for the individuals recounting them. In terms of those individuals, it is at times difficult to discover and/or interpret their points of view in telling these stories. Their language is frequently casual, and while there are occasions when their stories conclude with warnings that the listener might suffer the same fate as that of some of the more foolish characters in the stories, there is little or no sense that the stories are in fact rules, or even guidelines. What's interesting and important to note, in fact, is that the casualness of the language blends with an evident easy acceptance of spiritual depth in the stories they're telling to suggest that the storytellers are, perhaps paradoxically, unconcerned about the deeply ingrained personal and cultural importance of the stories they're telling. In other words, faith is a fact to them-they're not evangelical, they're not preaching, they're just stating things the way they are. This point of view is perhaps the reason why the authors have the respectful point of view that they do.

Tone

The overall tone of this book is one of respect bordering on reverence - perhaps an appropriate enough tone given that the stories included in the book are of a spiritual nature. There seems to be at least some attempt being made on the part of the authors to write with a sense of academic objectivity, particularly in the introductions - in other words, there is a sense that the authors have attempted to be impartial and somewhat detached in their reporting of what they've heard. But even in the introductions, there are interjections of almost poetic language, words and phrases that seem to echo the spiritually evocative themes of the stories. This combines with occasional comments actually made by the authors to create the sense that the various stories are being presented out of a sense of profound respect not only for their original tellers, but also for the culture in which these stories came into being. This stylistic approach would seem to have the goal of awakening similar reverence and respect in the reader. Interestingly, however, there is at the same time an informality about the way in which these stories are written, stories, a casualness which juxtaposes interestingly with the

constant spiritual and occasionally deep psychological understandings they evoke. This may be the result of an attempt on the author's part to present the stories as transcriptions-word for word recordings of words spoken by the speakers. This tonal blend, of informality and respect, both reinforces and is reinforced by the hypothesis, referred to by the authors at several points throughout the book, that native spirituality was fully and thoroughly integrated into the day-to-day life, expressions and experiences of Indians. All that being said, tone is not consistent throughout the book. Later stories (particularly those in Part 3, "The World We Live In Now"), while still both respectful and informal, take on an additional tonal layer which can perhaps best be described as an edge. There are hints of anger in these stories, of warning, of aggressiveness. There is little peace in these stories, which is perhaps a tonal indicator of the relative lack of peace in Indian culture as a whole following the military and cultural incursions of the White Man.

Structure

The book begins with an introduction, in which the authors make observations on the differences between "myth", "legend", and "folklore" (see "Quotes", p.1), and trace the anthropological origins of North American Indians, highlighting the various ways their ancestors migrated to North America, developed their languages and societies, and survived various military and cultural assaults by the White Man. The introduction also contains descriptions of certain commonalities found within the various Indian cultures that have been studied, and the various stories that have been recorded. Commonalities found within the various Indian cultures and their various stories are described. Most relevant to the rest of the book, these similarities include several common character types, the universal presence of a Creator spirit, and the presence of that spirit in all existence (the non-living as well as the living). The rest of the book is divided into four parts, each containing several stories exploring the theme of each part. These can roughly be categorized as creation myths, myths of the early days of Indian culture, contemporary stories that incorporate mythological elements into historical circumstances, and myths about life after death. Each story is prefaced by an introduction in which the social and historical context of each myth is outlined. The stories within each part vary in length, with the more contemporary stories generally being longer and written with more detail. At the end of each story is a brief footnote naming the individual who recounted the story to the authors, although in some cases (usually involving stories about dark spirits or sacred rituals) these footnotes indicate that the teller(s) of the story wished to remain anonymous. The book concludes with a bibliography, which the authors in an introductory note describe as being incomplete, since there are many more reference books about Indian mythology, and additional books that were consulted, but not listed. The book also contains several photographic plates of Indian artifacts.

Quotes

"Myth" ... applies to the actions and counteractions of supernatural beings ..."legend" is the recording of the deeds and doings of earthy heroes, whether or not they trod the ground with historic feet ... "folklore" applies to everyday happenings ..." Introduction, p.1.

"From reconstructed fragments of auditory archaeology, then, the myths and legends that appear in this book ... recorded in hospital wards, beside country kitchen wood stoves, in the swamps while gathering rushes to be plaited into mats, in our own living rooms, and at pow-wows [have been compiled]..." p. 14

"The world is a dangerous place / For the Indians to live / Come with me, my people / And I will lead you to safety / There, under the water, there / is a magical place / It is a place created / to keep the Indians safe." The Song of the Underwater Village, p. 50

"The people lived underground, in the blackness. These people did not know that their world was dark ... because they had never seen the light." p. 66

"I want you people always to remember this, and to stop whenever you are tempted to quarrel with one another. Never make yourselves weapons, because if you do you will be tempted to use them. And if you ever give in to that temptation, and do hurt to one another, then you will learn what sorrow is." Grandmother Spider to the People, p. 67

"The death-and-resurrection theme is recurrent ... in every corn origin myth known. Only through the death of the parent seed can the living plant come into being. Whether the theme be stressed or not, it is omnipresent, as it is in ... mythologies ... the world over." p. 106

"'No one person can ever live long enough to take all the good gifts that corn has for mankind.'" Grandmother to the two hunter-brothers, p. 109

"Long, long ago, when Maheo had made the world and set the men and animals upon it, everybody was equal. Men and animals alike lived on Maheo's earth, and all enjoyed it." p.120

"Only ten men, the bravest of the brave, could be Hawk Soldiers, and it was their honor to stake themselves to the ground in battle and to fight to the death unless their brothers released them." The Race Between Buffalo and Man, p. 123

"And because nobody won the game, the day and night took turns from that time on. Everybody had the same time to come out and live his life the way he wanted to as everybody else." Why the Bear Waddles ... p. 130

"And now we come to the end of a world. The end of the buffalo was the end of Plains Indian life. And before the white man's superior technology, the buffalo succumbed." p 138

"Saynday thought to himself ... the East is the place of birth and of new life. The things that come from the East come quickly; they come dancing and alive. This thing comes as slowly as death to an old man. I wonder what it is?" Saynday and Smallpox, p. 144

"This is the way that legends are made. The true story of a real person becomes a symbol for the history of his people. So George Washington stands for the courage and virtue of the Revolutionaries ... in the same way, Tsali stands as a symbol of the courage, loyalty and devotion of all the Cherokees." p. 147

"'Let this boy go ...' Tsali said to the white men ... 'A man grows, and plants his seed, and his seed goes on. This is my seed ... my older sons and I have had our chances. They will leave children, and their names will never be forgotten. But this boy is too young. His seed has not ripened ... let him go, to care for his sisters, on the way to the west.'" p. 153

"In the intricate ritual symbolism of the Native American Church, birds have a place of particular importance. Like the incense smoke of the cedar fire in the ceremonial tipi, birds and their feathers are believed to carry man's prayers directly to God." p.177

"There are the affairs of the world that was, the world that came into being with the creation. There are the affairs of the world that is, the world of the men and women who have become the heroes and heroines of legend, the world of the joking and experience of contemporary human beings. And then there are the affairs of the afterlife-of the world that lies beyond what we call death, and of how that death came into existence." p. 187

"When people die, they must go over a hill. There is a dividing line between the world we live in and the world of those who have gone before us. That line is the crest of a hill. In the old days, when all the country was open ... there was just the line of rocks on the crest of the hill. Nowadays, when all the country is fenced, there is a line of barbed wire there to mark the boundary." p. 194

"the end is in the beginning-Grandmother [Spider] and the [War] Twins are the guardians of life and death, and must be respected as such by everybody." p. 206

Topics for Discussion

Search through the stories described above and identify characters, other than those listed in the "Characters" section, who fit the outlines of the five basic character types: Hero, Trickster, Trickster-Hero, Grandmother Spider, and the War Twins. Explain how and why each fits the description within their individual story. Keep in mind that characters fitting in with these types can be *either* gender, male or female-Tricksters, for example, can be women, while men can have attributes of Grandmother Spider.

Consider contemporary culture-movies, television, literature, etc. Examine characters and situations for similarities to the five basic character types. What, for example, are the Trickster-Hero aspects of Harry Potter? What female characters in these various cultural and/or literary works go beyond the traditional female attributes of Grandmother Spider and embody more traditional male Hero and/or Trickster characteristics? Conversely, what male characters take on the traits of Grandmother Spider and offer advice and guidance? Obi-Wan Kenobi in the *Star Wars* tradition is one such character. Who are others?

Compare belief systems explored in these myths with other belief systems: Christian, Judaic, Islamic, Ancient Greek/Egyptian/Scandinavian. What are common themes, story lines, character types, and experiences? Suggest reasons for these commonalities, and consider their implications-what is the significance of the fact that there are so many similarities?

Given that early Indian myths arose because of that culture's profound relationship with the environment and with nature, discuss what contemporary myths might arise to explain the relationship contemporary society has with its environment-the urban, the mechanized, and the computerized. How can we mythologize, for example, the relationship that modern individuals have with the Internet in the same way that Indians of the past mythologized their relationship with, for example, Grandmother Spider's clay bowl (Part 1, Section 2, "How The Sun Came").

Consider the story of Chief Quanah ("A World of Beauty", Part 3 Section 3). While the perspective of the story is clearly that he is a hero, there might be those who would argue that in leading his people to accept and assimilate, at least to a point, the White Man's ways (spiritual and material) he is acting like a traitor. Debate this question. Is he a traitor to his culture and his faith, or in doing what he did in the way that he did it, did he enable his people to survive? Who is the greater hero, Tsali ("Tsali of the Cherokees", Part 3, Section 1) or Quanah?

Both the white General Custer ("Yellow Hair" - Part 3 Section 2) and Tsali ("Tsali of the Cherokees", Part 3 Section 1) die and leave their Indian sons fatherless (or, in Custer's case, his half-Indian son). Custer dies a defeated coward, and Tsali dies a hero. Custer's son is presumably not present, while Tsali's son is nearby when his father is shot. Consider, discuss, and contrast the ways that both sons might have been affected by the deaths of their respective fathers. How might they have viewed the white man?

The Indians? What action might they have taken as adults based on their memories of their fathers and their feelings about their deaths?

Consider the way that aspects of Indian religion are fully integrated into everyday life. What aspects of contemporary religion are integrated into contemporary society? Consider not only the Christian religion, but also the Jewish, and the belief systems of other world cultures: Islam in the Middle East, Buddhism and/or Taoism and/or Confucianism in the Far East.