Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto Study Guide

Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto by Vine Deloria, Jr.

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

This collection of essays, written by Indian activist Vine Deloria Jr., explores how Indians have been treated by white agencies (including churches and the government), documenting the effects of such treatment and proposing options for future action by Indian leaders. The relationship between whites and blacks is, in fact, the collection's central thematic perspective as well, placing his observations and commentary within two similarly thematic/narrative contexts - his portrayal of America as an essentially corrupt society, and the struggle of a similarly oppressed race, Black Americans, for similar respect and recognition.

The book is subtitled "An Indian Manifesto" and can be seen as serving the same essential purpose as other manifestos (proposals for action) - to awaken a particular segment of society (in this case, the American Indian) to the true nature of the circumstances in which it functions, and to options for transforming those circumstances.

Following a one-chapter introduction (in which he discusses both the myths and the facts of contemporary Indian culture and historical Indian circumstances), the first five chapters explore ways in which whites, whom the author defines as the Indians' principal oppressors, have attempted to destroy Indian culture and assimilate Indian individuals into white society. The first topic examined is the history and nature of termination (defined as the cessation of government financial support) which, the author suggests, has been the unspoken agenda of governmental agencies and the church alike for as long as they've been active in Indian affairs. The second and third focus on the activities of two interest groups, anthropologists and missionaries, who claim to be acting in the best interests of the Indian tribes with whom they work but who are, the author suggests, more self interested and self-perpetuating than anything else. Finally, he discusses how specific government agencies were first formed and then structured with the ultimate goal of ending Indian self-culture, essentially a more specific and detailed examination of the principles and purposes explored in the first chapter of this section.

The book's second five chapters explore different ways in which Indians have responded to whites' sometimes active, sometimes passive aggressive, efforts at cultural obliteration. The first point of focus is Indian humor, in particular its focus on self-deprecation, satire and irony. All three, the author says, serve to point up the seriousness of the issues facing Indians and their culture while at the same time make Indians and whites alike aware of both how serious and how dangerous the situation is on both sides. The second chapter in this section focuses on the parallels and differences in the situations of Indians and Black Americans, both of whom (as the author points out) have been oppressed by whites but in very different ways. This chapter also explores the author's suggestions for approaches that activist Indians should take compared with those taken by activist Blacks.

The third chapter in this section explores the nature and function of Indian leadership - its reasons for being what it is, how Indians and whites differ in their perspectives on how leadership should function and/or be perceived, and how Indians sometimes sabotage themselves and their own best intentions. This, in turn, leads to consideration and examination of how Indians function within the boundaries and definitions of modern society, which in turn leads to this section's final chapter - a consideration of how Indian affairs, both as a term and as a situation, should be re-defined.

The book's final chapter is an epilogue of sorts. Here the author explains his biographical and personal reasons for writing what he has, the repercussions he expects to face, and his hopes for the future of the Indian rights movement.

Part 1

Part 1 Summary and Analysis

"Indians Today, the Real and the Unreal"

In the first section of this essay, the author comments ironically on white people's contemporary (to 1969) perceptions of Indians - for example, how many white people claim the glamor of a female Indian ancestor and how easily whites come to know Indians (see "Quotes," Part 1, p. 5). He also points out some interesting facts about Indian history (i.e., scalping was invented by whites - see "Quotes," p. 7), and how whites came to regard Indians as people (rather than savages) once it was realized that Indians were in control of much valuable land. Finally, for the first of several times in the book, he contrasts the experiences of Blacks and Indians in America (see Themes - Parallels and Differences between Indians and Blacks" and "Quotes," p. 8).

The author then defines the nature of the political relationship between government and Indians in America as essentially paternalistic, and then narrates a specific history of the contemporary development of that relationship, which he suggests began in 1934 with the Indian Reorganization Act. He then outlines some of the Indian-centered political and social organizations active at the time of the book's publication (1969), and projects both positive and negative outcomes for some of the more politically active ones. He also discusses the value of bringing college education into traditional Indian tribes, the successes of integrating this education with traditional teaching and practices, and the parallel failures of tribes who fail to take advantage of such opportunities.

The essay draws to a close with the suggestion that more and more tribes are becoming more politically astute and active, raising the possibility that "Indian tribes will be able to become economically independent of the federal government in the next generation," with the author concluding that what Indians really need more than anything is to be left alone.

This essay introduces the author's overall thesis - that whites see Indians the way they (whites) want to see them, behave towards them in a way that reflects that perception rather than any experience of reality, and have in fact systematically made social, political and religious choices designed to entrench that vision into law, culture, and the public consciousness. Secondary themes are also introduced here - the differences and/or similarities between the experiences of Black Americans and those of the Indians and the portrayal of America as an essentially fearful and corrupt society. Finally, the author concludes this essay with an expression of hope and optimism similar to the sort with which he closes most, if not all, the essays in this collection. In other words, structure echoes content echoes purpose - the purpose of a manifesto, any manifesto ... to awaken readers to a new perspective and to urge them to action in order to create a NEW perspective.

Part 2

Part 2 Summary and Analysis

"Laws and Treaties"

This essay begins with commentary on the irony of America's determination to honoring commitments (such as that espoused by President Lyndon Johnson in Vietnam) and its parallel condemnation of countries perceived as not doing so (such as President Richard Nixon's comments on Russia) while breaking every commitment made to Indians (see "Quotes," p. 28). He describes how even the very first treaties, between Indians and the Revolutionary Government, were broken by the government, and how that action resulted in decades-old bitterness. He cites several documented examples of this, including an early decision by the US Supreme Court that set a lasting precedent for government's taking of Indian land.

The author then claims that the principle of self-interest that motivated government's abuse and abandonment of treaties also motivated laws passed by Congress, laws that enabled white encroachment onto reserve lands, as well as the transport of Indians to less hospitable and/or productive territory. He draws clear lines of connection between such actions and the Christian churches (see "Quotes," p. 45), but points out that in the "race" for white control of Indian land and souls, the church (economically at least), came second.

The author does recognize that in the 1930s there was positive movement in the government/Indian relationship; specifically, an agreement that proposed Indian self government on reservations. He adds, however, that "shortly after World War II", the policy changed radically, suggesting that that story would be told later in the book. He goes on to say that "in looking back at the centuries of broken treaties, it is clear that the United States never intended to keep any of its promises..." leading to a general sense (principle?) of Indian mistrust of government (see "Quotes," p. 50) and of the churches. He likens American treatment of Indians to American treatment of other countries (see "Quotes," p. 51), but suggests that even now there are ways that the imbalances and resentments created by decades of treaty abuse can be redressed by new laws.

In this section the author introduces the second of his major themes - the portrayal of America as corrupt, manipulative, and self interested. For additional consideration of this aspect of the book see "Themes - America as a Corrupt Society" and "Quotes," pages 2, 28, 76, 93, 98, 247, and 255.

Meanwhile, although the influence of the church receives less thematic and narrative emphasis than the influence of government, there is the sense here and throughout the narrative that in its way, it was as destructively subversive, or subversively destructive, as government. Both, in the author's narrative and thematic perspective, manipulated

Indians and lied to them, promising rewards (earthly in the case of one, heavenly in the case of the other) if they behaved in the way they were asked and/or told.

Finally, in the author's comments about the brief surge of genuine Indian empathy in the 1930's (associated with Franklin Delano Roosevelt's so-called "New [Economic] Deal"), there is a sense of simultaneous regret (that it never went further) and betrayal (that white culture, which seemed to have made a step forward actually turned around and took several destructive steps back.

Part 3

Part 3 Summary and Analysis

"The Disastrous Policy of Termination"

In this chapter, the author describes the development of the policy of termination (see "Objects/Places"). He traces the policy's beginnings to the well intentioned proposals of William Zimmerman (see "Important People"), who created a reasoned but longer-term policy of evaluation and eventual termination, a policy which (according to the author) was abandoned because it didn't save the government enough money. He then discusses the attitudes and actions of Arthur Watkins (see "Important People"), who (according to the author) embarked on a ruthless program of destruction aimed at Indians first in his home state of Utah, and later across the country. The author recounts in detail the experience of the Wisconsin Menominee Tribe (see "Important People") at the hands of Watkins, describing how the well being of the tribe eventually came to an end as the result of Watkins' actions and attitudes and how other tribes faced similar fates at the hands of other, similarly motivated, politicians. He also points out the irony that termination was undertaken in the name of saving money but in fact resulted in millions of dollars in extra expenditures (to pay for health care, welfare, education, etc.), and suggests that the policy continues to be "the single most important problem of the American Indian people at the present time."

The author concludes this essay with a repetition of his contention that America is essentially corrupt (see "Quotes," p. 76) and the warning that unless the country's government changes its attitudes and actions, it will become ultimately untrustworthy, and face repercussions on the world stage.

This chapter offers a vivid and specific example of one of the author's central themes, the idea that America is self-interested, corrupt, ultimately destructive, and perhaps even foolish (considering the eventual cost of government's terminating activities). Some activists and commentators with a pro-Indian bent might look at both the policy and its manifestations and interpret "termination" as a polite, political term for cultural genocide. However, whether or not the term is an overstatement, it seems clear that it sums up the author's perspective on what has happened, and is continuing to happen, to his people.

Meanwhile, the author's concluding (statement? warning?) about how America may be perceived in the future (remember, this book was published in 1969) carries with it chilling echoes of comments made by several observers, American and non-American alike, in the wake of recent acts of terrorism perpetrated against the US and its allies. For further consideration of this, see "Topics for Discussion - Consider the point of the quote..."

Part 4

Part 4 Summary and Analysis

"Anthropologists and Other Friends"

In a return to the heavily ironic style of "Indians Today..." the author describes the influence of anthropologists on Indian culture and its evolution, essentially mocking them for their well-intentioned but misguided and ultimately pointless efforts at understanding Indian people and their circumstances. The author describes how Indians themselves have both manipulated and been manipulated by anthropologists, and suggests that young Indians in particular have come to accept anthropological perceptions as truths and therefore absorbed them into their understanding of themselves as individual Indians and of Indians as a group. The author points out that other ethnic (e.g., Irish) and racial (e.g., Black) groups would never be expected to behave, in contemporary society, according to anthropological understanding of who they were in the past, and adds that anthropologists are like government in their efforts at self-perpetuation over problem solving (see "Quotes," p. 93).

The final section of this essay is taken up with an analysis of a book with the lengthy title of "Man's Rise to Civilization as Shown by the Indians of North America from Primeval Times to the Coming of the Industrial State." The author (of "Custer Died ...") analyzes and comments on the book's many failings - theoretical (its flawed analysis of rebellion), attitudinal (its thematic premise that Indian tribes and societies are "test tubes" or "laboratories") and factual (in its suggestion that the killing of a famous Indian chief was accidental rather than an assassination). Finally, the author likens the work and philosophies of anthropologists to those of missionaries and churches, suggesting both are "forerunners of destruction. "Like the missionaries," the author goes on to say, "anthropologists have become intolerably certain that they represent ultimate truth." This leads directly into the following essay.

"Missionaries and the Religious Vacuum"

The author begins this essay with the suggestion that "tribes that resisted the ... missionaries seemed to survive. Tribes that converted were never heard of again." The author contrasts ancient Indian religion and practices ("a living, undefined religion, where man is a comfortable part of his world ...") with Christianity, a practice of what he calls "regurgitation of creeds", or magic words. He describes how missionaries frequently manipulated Indian tribes into faith, how the various churches divided the tribes up between them (even though each church publicly claimed the others were blasphemous), and how some successful churches integrated Indian spirituality and tradition. The first part of the essay concludes, however, with two examples (taken from the author's personal experience) of how the church's work with Indians is both self-perpetuating and self-deluding.

The author then suggests that Indians are returning to their traditional spirituality, some having successfully integrated Christian teaching and practices, but points out that there is also an increasing sense of desperation about Christian churches about what to do next. The author comments on the relative lack of training in those who minister to Indians, and also on the continued transfer of "incompetents" from position to position, taking place because the church is more interested in protecting "the good name of the church" rather than doing a good job. The author then, in an anecdote based on personal experience, portrays Christianity as terrified of reality, sticking to its barren beliefs and philosophies in the face of unanswerable, and ultimately unknowable, reality. After contrasting Indian religion (characterized as essentially "sharing" with everyone) and Christianity (characterized as "giving" - to the church, so the church can decide who is worthy of being given to), the author proposes the creation of an Indian Christian Church. "Such a church," the author suggests, would have Indian clergy and incorporate aspects of both Indian and Christian faith in an effort to make "the white man's religion real."

There are several points to note about these two essays. The first is their shared focus on the attitudes and behavior of groups of individuals, anthropologists (interested in how cultures and societies evolve and behave) and missionaries (interested in reshaping that evolution and behavior to reflect Christian and/or Biblical teaching and perspective). The second notable point is related - the idea that both sets of individuals, well meaning as they are, ultimately destroy the spirits of the people that they (anthropologists and missionaries) are trying to save. Here more than anywhere else in the book, tonal irony and humor (see "Style - Tone") indicate a deep, deep cynicism about whites, barely (if at all) tempered by respect for the original, sometimes ongoing, good intentions of the individuals involved.

Meanwhile, when the author's comments on the church's practice of moving missionaries from posting to posting to protect its good name, astute readers may be unable to ignore the echoes of a similar contemporary situation - specifically, the moving of known pedophilic priests from posting to posting in order to avoid the scandal of their sexual practices becoming known. In the same vein, when the author portrays Christianity as frightened of reality, there are echoes of contemporary analysis of spirituality in general, which suggests that any sort of belief system is, in fact, humanity's attempts at self comfort. In other words, spiritual beliefs of any sort are all an essentially fearful rationalizing of why humanity exists, why we're here at all, in a universe which in so many ways manifests unknowability, randomness, and no reason whatsoever for anything.

Perhaps the most important point to note about this section is that the commentary on missionaries is one of the more personal aspects of the book. As the author himself points out in his Afterword (see Part 8), he is not only the son and grandson of Christian missionaries, but he himself studied Christian theology. Thus he makes his statements about Christianity not only from a place of personal knowledge but of personal betrayal.

Part 5

Part 5 Summary and Analysis

"Government Agencies" At the beginning of this chapter, the author describes the origins of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (see "Objects/Places"), how it breaks down its responsibilities into area offices, and details where those offices are, the tribes they cover, and how they fail to do so effectively (the office in Alaska being the exception). He says there are benefits to this structure - "...tribes," he writes, "are recognized as legal entities of equivalent rank by the office regardless of what level the office is on. Thus a tribe is able to exercise its fundamental sovereignty at all levels of government." He points out, however, that there is nevertheless a strong feeling of ambivalence among Indians in general about their relationship with the Bureau (see "Quotes," p. 125), citing several examples of political maneuvering that worked to the benefits of the politicians and civil servants, rather than Indians. He also comments that the Bureau and its officers often resort to threats of termination (see "Objects/Places") in order to get tribes to work according to Bureau rules.

The second part of the chapter is taken up with the author's proposals on how to change the Bureau and its operations so that Indians become better served. These include creating and/or defining programming according to the size of a tribe, making funds available in lump sums to address individual needs (rather than earmarking them for specific projects), employing tribe members in government positions related to Indian affairs, reorganizing the Bureau (making it focused on financial rather than social matters), and dispersing Bureau authority among individual tribes.

The essay concludes with a plea for sovereignty and independence for Indian tribes.

Without actually coming out and saying so, this essay ties bureaucrats and other government officials to individuals like the anthropologists and missionaries, individuals who put a good face on their activities (e.g., professing to help the Indians) but who are, in fact, intent upon devaluing them as individuals and as a society. There is a second implication here as well. Because government is essentially a manifestation of the will of the people, and because the will of the people at the time the book was written (the late-1960s) was essentially the will of middle aged white men, government and its agencies were (are?) manifestations of the core, barely hidden white desire to obliterate Indian cultural and social autonomy. Finally, there is a sense here that Indians' reaction to government is similar, if not the same, as their reaction to anthropologists and missionaries ... and, in fact, anyone who professes the intent and/or desire to help. This is a deep, ingrained sense of wariness and mistrust, a sense that those making those professions don't really know what's going on, don't really want to help, and don't really want to do anything except preserve their own white scalps, both literal and metaphoric.

Part 6

Part 6 Summary and Analysis

"Indian Humor"

This essay begins with discussion of how humor, particularly satire and irony (see "Objects/Places") can both ease tension (not just between Indians and whites but in general) and point out its sources. He discusses how humor was used for centuries to defuse tense situations within Indian tribes and between tribe members, and how many jokes made by Indians have their origins in their historical relationships with figures like Christopher Columbus and General Custer (see "Important People"). An example of a Columbus joke: "...Columbus didn't know where he was going, didn't know where he had been, and did it all on someone else's money. The white man has been following Columbus ever since." An example of a Custer joke: "Custer was well dressed for ... battle - he had on an Arrow shirt" (for this to be funny, the hearer has to know that Custer was killed by an arrow shot by an Indian).

The author then sets down several jokes told by Indians told in several circumstances, all of which make pointed commentary about those circumstances (such as tribal relationships with politicians and bureaucrats, and relationships between tribes, between Indians and the law, Indians and blacks, and Indians and whites). He concludes this essay with the suggestion that "When a people can laugh at themselves and laugh at others and hold all aspects of life together without letting anybody drive them to extremes, then it seems to me that people can survive."

This chapter marks a shift in the book's focus from the wrongs done to the Indians to the ways Indians cope with those wrongs. The most important point to note here is that while the chapter consists almost entirely of various Indian jokes and/or descriptions of Indian humor, said humor is by far not exclusively confined TO this chapter. In other words, the rest of the book exemplifies and manifests the principles and attitudes commented upon here, frequently making its points through humor. For further consideration of the power/role of humor in social change and/or activism, see "Topics for Discussion - In what ways do satire and irony..."

Part 7

Part 7 Summary and Analysis

"The Red and the Black"

Here the author develops and deepens his analysis of the relationships between Indians and blacks (for an initial, metaphoric comparison of the two see "Quotes," p. 8). Initially, the author suggests that white powers (both liberal and conservative) have lumped blacks and Indians together without a real perception of how different they actually are. He points out that while blacks were being excluded from white society, Indians were being forcibly assimilated (see "Quotes," p. 172), adding that both blacks and Indians need to have a clear understanding of their individual, societal relationship with whites and that the responsibility for resolving various racial questions lies with the so-called white man (see "Quotes," p. 174-175).

The author then traces the development of white authority through history (the Roman Empire, feudalism, the Reformation, the colonization of America), pointing out that in era after era and conquest after conquest, whites reacted out of fear, confusion, and socio-cultural security. He points out that most, if not all, struggles for rights and dignity are centered in a desire for land, specifically a home-land, a function of "man's desire for self-respect, not of his desire for equality."

As the author examines the growing Black Civil Rights movement in the early 1960's, he describes reason why most Indian groups stayed away - there was no way, he suggests, that Indians wanted to be more like whites (i.e., their oppressors) the way blacks did. He also suggests that Indian leadership in the Sixties came to realize that their concerns were more economic than social, and began moving Indian activism towards fighting on that particular front. He asserts that Indian struggles for rights were aided by the realization of the necessity for cultural unity (see "Quotes," p. 185) and that such unity already exists (the implication being that it doesn't in blacks - see "Quotes," p. 188). He also says that the struggles of both racial groups are made more difficult by the white man's (tendency? determination?) to "define groups according to their most superficial aspect." Finally, he proposes that the principle of welfare is based on the idea that people are to be compensated for not being "a white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant, healthy, ambitious, earnest and honest, a man whom the Lord smiles upon by increasing the fruits of his labor."

The author concludes this essay with an analysis of the relative positive and negative values of the Republican and Democratic parties, saying the former is the party of a near-religious economic philosophy (faith?) and the latter is a coalition of special interest groups. As he does so, he comments on the basic perspectives of the three major racial groups discussed in this section (see "Quotes," p. 195), and suggests that all three must come to a full understanding of both each other and their own needs before true racial peace and respect can come into fruitful being.

It would probably be difficult for many readers, particularly African Americans, to read this chapter (and perhaps even the book as a whole) and not have at least the suspicion that the author is something of a racist. His perceptions and/or portrayals of black activism and/or leadership tend to be negative, albeit compassionate and understanding. It must be pointed out, however, that nowhere in the book does the author suggest that black Americans should not have more rights. Nor does he suggest anywhere that the oppression that black Americans receive / have received / continue to receive is deserved. On the contrary - there is the clear sense that the author, on a basic level, empathizes with the so-called black struggle. There is also, however, an undeniable whiff of irony about the fact that he clearly seems to be viewing all black activists, and by extension all blacks, through the same generalized lenses as he condemns white oppressors for using.

All that said, the author does make a number of interesting points in this section. These include his commentary on the specific differences between how blacks and whites were/are treated, between the socio-cultural origins of their desire for more respect (particularly the idea that blacks don't have an American homeland, while Indians do), and his ideas on the nature/philosophy of welfare.

Finally, there are again echoes (foreshadowing?) of the contemporary American political landscape in his observations about Republicans and Democrats. Contemporary readers, in fact, might suggest that the divisions outlined by the author here are in fact more entrenched and more pervasive than they were even at the time the book was written.

Part 8

Part 8 Summary and Analysis

"The Problem of Indian Leadership"

In the first part of this chapter, the author comments that there have been times when Indian leaders (christened "Chiefs" by the white men who wanted to deal with the same sort of patriarchal hierarchy they were accustomed to) were respected by whites for their spirit, determination, and independence. He also describes how some Indian leaders conformed to white stereotypes/expectations of how Indians should behave in order to achieve that respect and a degree of success in white society (for an example of those stereotypes/expectations see "Important People - Tonto"). However, the author points out that traditionally, tribal politics and/or government didn't follow the white, one-individual one-authority model, but instead governed by a form of consensus that at times aligned with respect for the leadership capabilities of an individual.

The author also describes ways in which white governments manipulated Indians into those political molds and how the Indians themselves sometimes fall prey to self-expectation (i.e., Indian leaders wanting to have both the reputation and the respect of Indian leaders of the past). Finally, he writes about how contemporary Indian politics of leadership are always focused, to one degree or another, on the question of unity - presenting a unified Indian front to the faces and/or agents of white power (which, he adds, has a vested interest in keeping Indians in their place). Indians, he then writes, are also not concerned with the future (see "Quotes," p. 221) - and politics, he asserts is concerned with the future far more than with the past or the present. The essay concludes with the author's contention that even without external unity, Indians in America will be united in spirit, a unity "that has carried us through four centuries of persecution ... we are a people unified by our humanity ... we shall endure"

"Indians and Modern Society" Here the author comments that most Indians are bewildered when asked to comment on modern society - the question, he suggests, is posed as if the Indian is at that second emerging from his tipi. He then comments on how most Indians see contemporary society as having strong resemblances to traditional tribal culture - specifically, the similarities of corporate operation and philosophy (see "Quotes," p. 229). "Totems," he writes, "have been replaced by trade marks, powwows by conventions, and beads by gray flannels. War songs have been replaced by advertising slogans. As in the tribe, so in the corporation the "chief" reigns supreme." He implies, however, that corporations are unable (unwilling?) to see the tribal nature of their existence. He then discusses another sort of tribalization - the hippie movement of the 1960s, a movement that had increased social and communal awareness but lacked the willingness to embrace ritual and custom (see "Objects/Places") in the way Indian tribes did. As an example of the way contemporary culture has developed and embraced the custom of customs, the author writes that the existence of the two main political parties in the US arose because of custom (and/or

habit) rather than any form of law or constitutional edict. The author concludes his essay with an advocacy of Indians adopting corporate structure and practice to their process of self-government, but advises against militancy (acting solely out of reaction to white authority) and nationalism (resorting to violence as a component of that reaction).

As is the case throughout the book, the author here raises both some interesting historical points (such as the revelation that the term "chief" to describe Indian tribal leaders was coined by white men) and some very interesting ideas (the similarities between corporate and tribal mentality). This last is particularly intriguing, giving the contemporary socio-cultural emphasis on business and corporate centering of money, politics and power, an apparent corruption of traditional tribal mentality which was focused less on material glory and more on the necessities of simple survival.

There is also development in this section of an idea that in the book is never really discussed fully and/or in all its implications, but yet is present on a sub-textual level throughout. This is the idea that a key component of the American socio-political-cultural psyche is a respect, almost reverence, for the rebel. The most overt expression of this idea in the entire book occurs early in this section, in the author's commentary on how early Indian leaders were respected, by Indians and perhaps surprisingly by whites, for their determined independence and struggle for freedom. There is a clear echo here of the quote from p. 98, which clearly implies that throughout American history, people (mostly white males) who have actively and/or deliberately rebelled against the status quo in a spirit of individualism and/or in the name of personal integrity have been revered and idolized. What's important to note, however, is the irony in the juxtaposition of this idea with the author's comments on tribalism in the following chapter - tribalism is, after all, about the group rather than the individual. There is the sense here, in fact, that part of the reason American whites are so anti-Indian is that very fact - Indians historically have been all about the tribe, rather than the individual. For white Americans, exactly the opposite has been the case. Yes, there have been powerful, respected leaders in Indian culture. Their actions, however, as the author suggests, have been manifestations of the will of the tribe, not the will of the individual. In short, the author conveys the sense here and throughout the book that for many whites, Indians, in their beliefs and practices, social and political and spiritual, are simply un-American.

Finally, the author raises the question here of national Indian unity, without which he suggests the struggle for Indian rights will never reach a successful, affirming conclusion (in spite of the visionary expressions of hope with which he closes each chapter). Voices together, he seems to be suggesting, are more powerful than voices apart - the implication being that the old saying/practice of "divide and conquer" has been, and continues to be, a key component of white governmental and/or social efforts to keep Indians from achieving independence, autonomy, and a return to the ancient freedom they so valued and celebrated.

Part 9

Part 9 Summary and Analysis

"A Redefinition of Indian Affairs"

This essay begins with the story of the Tiguas (see "Important People") whose discovery, the author contends, woke Indians in the rest of America to the possibility that Indian culture did not have to be assimilated into white culture, but could continue to exist with independence and cultural integrity (see "Quotes," p. 245). The discovery of the Tiguas, the author adds, awakened national Indian consciousness, a process that, as he points out, has expanded on several fronts, particularly into eastern Indian communities and those composed of what he calls "urban Indians."

These sorts of Indians, the author writes, consider themselves to be merely visiting the cities, returning "home" to their reservations whenever they have the chance. This suggests, he adds, that reservations are the socio-cultural center of a tribe, while employment and political opportunities can be found in the cities. If so-called "Indianists" (those who study, and advocate for, Indians) would recognize and act on this principle, he says, Indian culture would be more secure. He then warns against adopting the militancy and outspoken activism of other minorities, particularly "the black power movement", in that such movements differ in both tactics and needs from the Indians, again commenting on how white America's treatment of Indians is a manifestation of general American attitudes (see "Themes - America as a Corrupt Society" and "Quotes," p. 255).

The author summarizes the point of this essay by saying "A redefinition of Indian affairs, then, would concentrate its attention on the coordination among the non-reservation peoples and the reservation programs on a regional or area basis." This, he continues, would involve an evolution in both attitude and action within the Department of Indian Affairs, and suggests several ways in which that could/should happen, most of which are anchored in rejection of the principles of consumerism and integration and an active acceptance of the principles of tribalism (see "Objects/Places" and "Quotes," p. 265). He warns against too much publicity, suggesting that getting publicity results in wanting more and publicity becoming the end rather than the means. "Hopefully," he concludes, "enough Indian people will take the time to reflect on ... the things going on around them both in the cities and on the reservations, and will choose the proper points of leverage by which Indian renewal can be fully realized."

"An Afterword"

In the book's concluding essay, the author writes first of his belief that the book will be controversial, and then describes his background (as the aspiring lawyer son and grandson of a pair of Indian Christian missionaries) and how it contributed to his desire to make a difference. He describes his involvement in the NCAI (see "Objects/Places")

and his beliefs in its potential, and indeed in the potential of the entire Indian community. He also describes his concern for the Indian rights movement, concern grounded in what he perceives as the desire in young Indian activists for publicity, a desire that overpowers awareness of the necessity for hard work and perseverance. He concludes by saying he makes "no claim that this book represents what all Indian people are really thinking. Or that Indian people should follow the ideas presented ..." He does, however, suggest that his ideas are deeply and carefully considered, and expresses his hope that rival socio-political factions within the Indian rights movement can come to a means of working for the same goals together.

"A Redefinition ..." is essentially an expansion and/or an elaboration on the author's statements advocating Indian unity, with the anecdote about the Tiguas serving not only as a powerful example of perseverance in its own right but also as a metaphorical summing up of what the author repeatedly states throughout the book. Literally surrounded by white influence, the Tigua maintained their tribal, social, and cultural integrity. In short, and as the author repeatedly states, with faith, courage, vision and self support, transcendence of white oppression is possible. Meanwhile, there is almost the sense of Gandhi-esque near pacifism in the author's evocations of peaceful, productive negotiations rather than aggressive confrontations. While there is again a whiff of the previously discussed almost racism in the author's comments about blacks, there is also a sense of respect for what black activists are accomplishing, even while there is uncertainty about both the end they are trying to achieve and the means they are using to achieve it. Finally, in the author's comments about rejecting consumerism and other powerful white American forces of cultural definition, there are again echoes and/or foreshadowing of contemporary movements (the so-called New Age movement) towards a broader consciousness, a deeper sense of inter-connectedness, and a richer sense of individual, tribal and universal humanity.

In the Afterword, everything the author has previously discussed all becomes clearly and undeniably personal. While there have been occasional diversions into anecdote, in the rest of the book he has for the most part been as objective as someone with that self-described quirky Indian sense of humor can be. The writing in this section changes all that, with the author's biography opening up new levels of understanding and perspective on what he has previously written. Because of his father and grandfather and his own theological studies, he has personal experiences of what Christianity has done and can do. Because of his work with the NCAI, he has personal experience of what government has done and can do. Because of his academic studies, particularly his interest in law, he knows how law and words work, how they've combined to shape both oppression and the struggle for freedom. In short, while the first eleven essays in the book have indeed read like a manifesto, the final chapter gives what has gone before a certain sense of the autobiography, of both an individual and a race.

Characters

The Author

During the 1950s and '60s, the author (Vine Deloria Jr.) was a well known activist for Indian rights. He was born into a family of Christianized Indians, and for a time studied Christian theology himself. At the time of the book's writing, he was also studying law and actively involved in the Indian rights movement, having become elected (almost by default) into the directorship of The National Congress of American Indians (see "Objects/Places"). In short, the author has a clearly defined academic, spiritual and lived experience of what he was writing about (see "Style - Point of View").

Throughout the book, the author's writing is humorous but intense, pointedly witty but wise, well researched but not overly dry or intellectualized. It's both possible and reasonable to infer the nature of the author's character from the style in which he writes, but a brief consideration of the author's later life and activities suggests there was/is more to the man than what he lets the reader glimpse here. As he grew older and become more involved in Indian activism, he became firmer (some might say more extreme) in his rejection of Christianity and non-Indian culture, becoming an advocate for such beliefs and traditions as Indian-centric Creationism. There are glimpses of those beliefs in "Custer Died for Your Sins," glimpses that in context suggest wishful thinking more than actual belief. However, when combined with his evident faith (expressed several times in the book) in the power of the Indian individual spirit, these glimpses suggest that the writer was, at the time of writing the book, at the beginning of a journey towards what some might call soul-truth and others might call eccentricity.

Indians

At the time of the book's writing, "Indians" was the generally accepted term for the people now referred to as Native Americans. Indians are portrayed throughout the book in often contradictory ways - simultaneously heroic and passive, naïve and insightful (particularly when it comes to the pointed irony of their humor), curious and complacent, trouble making (when it comes to politics) but ultimately inert. Interestingly, they are portrayed as victimized, mostly of white fear (manifest, according to the author, in the policies of government and church), but not as victims - that is, not as people beaten down by what they've faced. In other words, while the author pulls no punches when it comes to referring to Indian poverty and homelessness, he also portrays the collective Indian spirit as ultimately strong, watchful and waiting for the time when their true identity will reassert itself. There is almost the sense that the author believes that Indians, as a people, are in a phase of dormancy or hibernation, waiting for the storm of white power lust to abate so they (the Indians) can reemerge into a land and life of clarity and freedom.

Whites

Throughout the book, and almost without exception, white people (particularly white men - there are no direct references to white women) are referred to as oppressors and conquerors, a race reacting to fear of the unknown rather than responding openly and compassionately to evident truths around them. White male power is portrayed as most obviously manifest in government and Christianity, with the author suggesting that white men did (and continue to do) everything in their power to prevent erosion of their military, financial and cultural authority. The few white men who are portrayed as allies in the Indian cause come across as well-meaning but reluctant and/or under-informed. In other words, when it comes to the relationship between whites and Indians, as far as the author is concerned ignorance and fear go hand in hand into battle.

Blacks

Throughout the book, the author frequently uses the actions, attitudes and goals of black people (the book was written in an era before "African-American" became the commonly used term) as examples of how Indians should not pursue their goals. While he is at careful pains to point out the similarities in the situations of blacks and Indians (similarities that boil down to having been oppressed by whites), he is equally careful, almost to the point of insistence, to point out the differences in reaction, in perspective, and in means of struggle. For examples of the author's perspective on the differences between the two races see "Part 5 Summary and Analysis - The Red and the Black" and "Themes - Parallels and Differences between Indians and Blacks."

William Zimmerman

Zimmerman was the "Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs" for the Republican Government in America after World War II. "The Disastrous Policy ..." describes in detail the proposals, laws and contracts Zimmerman put into place that, in the author's mind, were "basically sound" but which were never implemented because they didn't and/or wouldn't reduce the budget in the way the government wished.

Arthur Watkins

Watkins was "a Mormon from Utah" and head of the Indian Subcommittee in the Senate in 1954. The author describes, in considerable detail, Watkins' determination to remove any responsibility for Indian affairs from the government, in particular his "outrage" at legal decisions decided in the Indians' favor.

The Wisconsin Menominee Tribe

Description

Anthropologists

Anthropology is the study of human behavior. For the author, anthropologists whose studies focus on Indians and their behavior are (perhaps cynically, perhaps realistically) viewed as motivated either by the desire to conduct research for its own sake, or in making and/or preserving their own reputations. He does say that on some level some are motivated by a genuine interest in Indians, their culture, and the preservation of that culture, but also makes the pointed observation that in spite of their better intentions, that genuine interest evolves, perhaps even out of necessity, into an interest in self-preservation/perpetuation. For further insight into the author's attitudes towards anthropologists see Part 3 "Anthropologists and Other Friends."

Missionaries

Throughout the book, the author repeatedly contends that Christian missionaries were, and continue to be, among the most insidious of the white man's agents of Indian destruction, manipulative of and insensitive to the vulnerabilities and naïvetes of the Indian people with whom they worked/work. For further consideration of the author's attitudes towards Christianity and those who preach it, see Part 3 - "Missionaries and the Religious Vacuum."

Christopher Columbus and General Custer

These two famous figures, according to the author, played key roles in defining the relationship between Indians and Whites - Columbus as the "discoverer" of America, Custer as the foolish, defeated leader of a military campaign against Indians. In "Indian Humor," the author writes of how jokes about Columbus and Custer (see "Objects / Places") point out the suffering triggered by the actions of those two men in an ironic, comic way. Custer, the author writes, "binds together implacable foes because he represented the Ugly American of the last century and he got what was coming to him."

Tonto

Tonto is the name of a well-known Indian figure in American popular culture, the companion of the equally well known Lone Ranger (a heroic white cowboy). The author uses Tonto as a prime example of the way the Indian character, in general, came to be perceived and/or reacted to in the 20th Century (see "Quotes," p. 200).

The Tiguas

In Part 8 "A Redefinition of Indian Affairs", the author describes the history of this tribe - abandoned by the Spanish in the middle of Texas in the late 1600's, ignored and/or forgotten by various levels of government, rediscovered centuries later in the heart of El

Paso with their cultural identity intact. "The thought of a tribe being able to maintain traditions, socio-political structure, and basic identity within an expanding modern American city ... would have been laughed out of the room." The Tiguas, according to the author, proved it was possible to do just that (see "Quotes," p. 245).

Objects/Places

The Indian Question

This term is essentially shorthand, most often used in white socio-political circles, for the question of what to do with/about Indians - where/how to settle them, where/how to resolve issues related to treaties, where/how to integrate them into white society, etc. Without actually saying so, the author puts a negative, ironic spin on his use of the term, suggesting while doing so that it is both patronizing and simplistic.

Treaties and Contracts

Throughout the book, the author suggests that many (most?) of the current problems of American Indians have to do with the treaties and/or contracts they signed with American white powers, military and/or economic and/or political. The self-serving terms of these treaties and contracts, he repeatedly contends, along with the fact that most (if not all) were broken, represent the manipulative attitudes of those white powers, and their determination to ultimately destroy Indian power, influence and socio-cultural integrity.

The Christian Church

Throughout the book, the Church is portrayed as being almost as corruptible and destructive an influence as government - there is the clear indication throughout, in fact, that since both are essentially run by white men, both essentially serve the same purpose and have the same goals ... ultimate destruction of Indian culture and identity. At one point, the author comments that the church "has always been torn between being good and being real and generally chosen to be good."

Termination

This term is an umbrella term for the "releasing [of] some of the tribes from federal supervision", which basically means being set free from political oversight and being left to their own financial resources without support from government granting programs. In principle and to the public, the process was defined as enabling of Indian tribes to self-fund and self-govern. In reality and in private termination was, according to the author, central to the policy of systematic but covert destruction of the Indian people. Originally well intentioned (see "Important People - William Zimmerman"), later governments used the policy and principle to, according to the author, completely undermine Indians and remove them from governmental responsibility.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs

Originally a division of the War Department ("because he early relations between the tribes and the government were more those of war than peace," the Bureau of Indian affairs is the agency within the United States government responsible for developing and implementing policy relating to Indians and their treatment. It now functions under the control of the Department of the Interior.

Columbus Jokes / Custer Jokes

In "Indian Humor," the author writes that jokes about Christopher Columbus (the legendary "discoverer" of America) and General Custer (defeated and killed at the famous Battle of Little Big Horn), are common among Indians, used to satirize and ironically comment on the relationship between Indians and Whites.

The Custer Bumper Sticker

In "Indian Humor," the author describes a bumper sticker that was popular among Indian tribes in the Sixties - "Custer Died for your Sins." The slogan is an ironic comment on how Custer was perceived by government and the military as their savior in the same way as Christ (who died for man's sins) was perceived as the savior of humanity, and who died in the service of his "lord" in the same way as Christ.

The National Congress of American Indians

The activities and purposes of this organization (known in shorthand as the NCAI) are described in detail in Part 6, "The Problem of Indian Leadership." The author portrays the congress as striving towards unity of all the various Indian tribes in the United States with the aim of presenting a united front when dealing with government, but points out that unity for most Indians represents an opportunity for social, rather than political and/or economic, activity. In the Afterword (Part 7), he describes his involvement in the NCAI and his frustration at its evident inability to move the cause of the Indians forward.

Customs

In "Indians and Modern Society" (Part 6), the author writes of the importance and history of custom, rather than law, as applied to Indian government and identity. He suggests that it was the influence of and respect for custom through which Indian tribes defined both identity and sustainability.

Tribalism

Throughout the book, tribalism is referred to as both the strength of the Indians of the past and the hope of the Indians of the future. Tribalism is grounded in beliefs and practices aimed at promoting the interests of the group rather than the individual, group being defined under the umbrella term "tribe." There is an interesting comparison in "Indians and Modern Society" (Part 6 - also see "Quotes," p. 229) likening the corporate mentality to that of the tribe. See also "Quotes," p. 265.

Themes

The Abuse of Indians by Whites

This is the book's central theme, with each of the essays it contains developing it from a particular perspective. The first half of the book (which includes the essays "Laws and Treaties", "...Termination", "Anthropologists ...", "Missionaries ..." and "Government Agencies") explores and documents various manifestations of that abuse and the reasons it came into being. The second half (which includes the essays "Indian Humor," "Red and the Black," "...Indian Leadership," "...Modern Society" and "Redefinition ...") explores and theorizes what Indians have done and can continue to do in response to that abuse.

At the core of the author's comments on both the manifestation of and response to abuse is his assertion that white men act and react out of fear of the unknown. Manifestations of abuse, he contends, come into being because the white man doesn't understand Indians and doesn't want to understand because his (the white man's) sense of identity is so fragile and so insecure that anything other than what it has come to believe about itself is seen and felt as a threat.

(At this point, it's important to note that the term "white man" is used here not only as a reflection of the terminology used in the book, which exclusively uses the term to refer to the white race, but also as a reflection of the book's perspective. The authority and fear of white males is, the author contends, at the core of white attitudes towards non-whites.)

Meanwhile, the author's descriptions of and commentary on Indian reactions to white oppression are tinged with what seems to be the author's sense of compassion towards the fear and ignorance of the white man. In other words, he seems aware that the white man is afraid, and while not letting that excuse their actions, he does allow it as an explanation. For Indians to come out from under white oppression, he suggests, that fear must be eased rather than conquered.

America as a Corrupt Society

Within the author's broader perspective on white power/fear in general, he makes specific (and repeated) mention of the United States of America - specifically, the attitudes, perspectives and beliefs at work in American society and culture that led/lead it to its anti-Indian viewpoints and activities. For examples of the author's comments on this aspect of the Indian experience see particularly Part 2 "Laws and Treaties" and "Quotes," pages 2, 28, 51, 76, 93, 98, 247, 255.

He also suggests that American attitudes toward Indians (in other words, American beliefs and actions at home) are manifestations and/or reflections of an overall socio-cultural-economic perspective that manifests around the world. "The United States," the

author writes, "...has never made a successful peace because peace requires exchanging ideas, concepts, thoughts, and recognizing the fact that two distinct systems of life can exist together without conflict..." The implication here is that the US is essentially imperialist in perspective - in other words, that as a culture the US believes there is no perspective as or more valid than its own. This principle is illuminated by a second quote: "The United States ... fails to understand the nature of the world and so does not develop policies that can hold the allegiance of people. It then alienates everyone who does not automatically love it. It worries about its reputation and prestige but daily becomes more vulnerable to ideologies more realistic than its own." For further consideration of this aspect of the book's perspective, see "Topics for Discussion - Discuss the contemporary resonances or parallels ..."

It's important to note, meanwhile, that there is no mention made throughout the book of the positive aspects of American life, what in other writings might be referred to as "The American Dream." This dream, to paraphrase the words of the American Constitution, is related to the idea that all men are created equal and have the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness. Without actually quoting these principles, the author's implication is that the dream and ideal exists only for those who fit within the self-definition of those who run America - "a white, Anglo-Saxon Protestant, healthy, ambitious, earnest and honest, a man whom the Lord smiles upon by increasing the fruits of his labor..." (Part 5, "The Red and the Black").

Parallels between Indians and Blacks

America, the author suggests throughout the book, has been just as destructive towards both individual blacks and black identity as it has towards Indian identity and those individuals who struggle and/or have struggled to define and/or maintain it. He also suggests, however, that the specific white perspectives on the races are substantially different (for a definition of those differences see "Quotes," p. 8), as are the different races' reactions to those perspectives. He portrays blacks as more militant and active, more prone to violence, and above all desirous of the identity they feel has been denied them. While not specifically condemning blacks for having those desires, he does suggest (through implication) that desire for equality is a bit hypocritical - why would an oppressed people, he wonders, want to be like those who oppressed them?

Indians, the author suggests, want something different from whites than blacks to. The Indians want to be left in peace, he says, desiring respect for the identity they have built up over centuries. He also warns Indians repeatedly against not only pursuing the same goals as blacks but against pursuing their different goals in the same way - through militancy, confrontation, and active protest. This, he contends, is a manifestation of the Indian's true way, a manifestation of the spiritual attitudes and practices followed for centuries - development of respect, understanding and wisdom through the employment of patience, compassion and dialogue.

For a detailed examination of the author's perspective on the parallels/differences between blacks and Indians, see Part 5, "The Red and the Black."

Style

Perspective

As noted in the section on the author in "Important People," the author was a noted Indian rights activist with both an academic and lived perspective on the centuries-old relationship between Indians and whites that forms the core of this book and the individual essays it contains. In short, he knows what he's talking / writing about ... he's lived it and he's thought about it.

Meanwhile, there is the sense throughout the book that in terms of both his reasons for writing and his intended audience, he is speaking with one purpose (education) but with the intent of reaching two different factions - whites and blacks. While he clearly intends to broaden the perspectives of both, those intentions manifest in different ways. His apparent intention towards whites is to divert them from fear-driven action towards understanding-driven consideration. Towards Indians, his intention is to divert them from resentment-driven reaction to compassion-driven action.

In this context, it's interesting to consider the potential impact on both intended audiences. It could be argued, for example, that in the case of white reaction it is, in fact, only human for someone to react to being told s/he is scared with resentment, anger, denial, and retribution. Does the author therefore serve his own purpose by pointing out what he sees as the emotion at the core of the whites' situation? Not necessarily, although as he himself suggests he is ultimately optimistic. It could also be argued, on the Indian side of the equation, that Indian readers might well react with resentment of their own - they might well see the author as advocating passivity.

Ultimately, though, and as the author himself points out, all he wants is for both sides to come to a peaceful, compassionate recognition of the other side's essential humanity. In that sense, his perspective transcends that of an Indian caught in a centuries-old religious conflict and becomes that of a man advocating for simple, mutual, universal compassion.

Tone

The book's tonal quality is easily one of its most engaging elements. First, there is an effective blend of objective and subjective here, with the author presenting historically documented facts within a context of how the particular events he described affected particular Indian tribes and the individuals within them. In other words, he makes the political, social and cultural personal, in a blend of experiences both academic and lived.

Second, there is a certain matter-of-factness about both its objective and subjective content. While the author at times gets passionate and intense about what he's saying, there is little or no sense that he's manipulating his readers into a certain emotional

reaction. The facts, he seems to be saying, speak for themselves - there is virtually no self-pity here.

At the same time, the book contains frequent, at times lengthy, interjections of humor. There is, in fact, an entire chapter/essay devoted to it because, as the author points out in that same chapter (Part 6, "Indian Humor"), Indians as a society and culture respond to trouble, concern and debate with humor. The two forms of humor he specifically refers to are satire (pointing out the ridiculousness of an attitude, perspective or action by exaggerating it) and irony (implying one truth by pointed expression of its opposite), both of which are employed extensively in "Custer Died..." Several of the author's most telling points, particularly those noting the complexities of the relationship between Indians and whites, are made within a humorous context, and arguably made with deeper and/or more lasting impact as a result. This perspective also relaxes the reader, enabling him/her to respond and/or accept the author's more academic and potentially more contentious points in a less confrontational way.

Structure

As noted in "Themes - The Abuse ..." the book is structured in two distinct sections. Within the bookends of the first and twelfth essays (an introduction and afterword respectively), essays two through six explore what the author contends white people have done to the Indians, while essays seven through eleven explore Indian reactions to those actions. Absolutely there is a degree of overlap between the two sections - while exploring action, the author comments on reaction, and vice versa.

Within each essay, there is a sense that structure is present but not dominant. There is a certain degree of academic format - presentation of the essay's theme (generally in anecdotal form and often humorous), development of that thesis, and either a summary of the author's attitudes towards that specific thesis or a statement of his beliefs about how the more general Indian/white situation might change. Within the main body of each essay, however, there is at times almost a sense of stream of consciousness, that the author is exploring ideas as they come to him in a chain reaction of thought and image. In short, structurally the book contains an effective, engaging blend of the formal and the random, the considered and the impulsive.

The point is not made to suggest that the book comes across as slapdash or unfocused. On the contrary, the ideas and themes it explores and develops are presented in an evidently considered manner. However, as is the case with many forms of writing (and perhaps even many ways of living), the author has allowed structure to create room for freedom and feeling, which is perhaps an evocation of his central thematic contention. This is the idea that within the structure of life in America, Indians must be allowed the freedom to live as they have lived, peacefully and productively and often laughingly, for centuries.

Quotes

"... if you count on the unpredictability of Indian people, you will never be sorry." Indians Today, the Real and the Unreal, p. 1.

"To be an Indian in modern American society is in a very real sense to be unreal and ahistorical." Ibid, p. 2

"All it takes [to understand Indians] is a trip through Arizona or New Mexico, watching a documentary on TV, having known one in the service, or having read a popular book on them." Ibid, p. 5.

"Scalping, introduced prior to the French and Indian war by the English, confirmed the suspicion that Indians were wild animals to be hunted and skinned ... an Indian scalp became more valuable than beaver, otter, marten, and other animal pelts..." Ibid, p. 7

"Because the Negro labored, he was considered a draft animal. Because the Indian occupied large areas of land, he was considered a wild animal." Ibid, p. 8

"The western hemisphere produced wisdom, Western Europe produced knowledge." Ibid, p. 11

"America has yet to keep one Indian treaty or agreement despite the fact that the United States government signed over four hundred such treaties and agreements with Indian tribes. It would take Russia another century to make and break as many treaties as the United States has already violated." Laws and Treaties, p. 28

"Christianity thus endorsed and advocated the rape of the North American continent, and her representatives have done their utmost to contribute to this process ever since." Ibid, p. 30.

"When Indian people remember how weak and helpless the United States once was, how much it needed the good graces of the tribes for its very existence ... they burn with resentment at the treatment they have since received from the United States government." Ibid, p. 35

"... practically the only thing the white men ever gave the Indian was disease and poverty. To imply that Indians were given land is to completely reverse the facts of history ... rather, the Indian tribe[s] gave the United States land in consideration for having Indian title to the remaining land confirmed." Ibid, p. 35 (2)

"Implicit in the ideology behind the law[s] was the idea of the basic sameness of humanity. Just leaving tribal society was, to the originators of the law, comparable to achieving a status equal with whites." Ibid, p. 46

"...these were the days when J.P. Morgan used to take entire trainloads to the Episcopal conventions and John D. Rockefeller had his Baptist advisor helping him distribute his wealth. Wealth was an index of sainthood." Ibid, p. 47

"The betrayal of treaty promises has in this generation created a greater feeling of unity among Indian people than any other subject. There is not a single tribe that does not burn with resentment over the treatment it has received at the hands of an avowedly CHRISTIAN nation." Ibid, p. 50.

"America has always been a militantly imperialistic world power eagerly grasping for economic control over weaker nations ... there has not been a time since the founding of the republic when the motives of this country were innocent. Is it any wonder that other nations are extremely skeptical about its real motives in the world today?" Ibid, p. 51.

"When the Kennedys [John F., Bobby] and [Martin Luther] King were assassinated ... most people took the assassinations as a symptom of a deep inner rot that had suddenly set in. They needn't have been shocked. America has been sick for some time. It got sick when the first Indian treaty was broken. It has never recovered." The Disastrous Policy of Termination, p. 76.

"...anthropologists ... are the most prominent members of the scholarly community that infests the land of the free, and in the summer time, the home of the braves." Anthropologists and Other Friends, p. 78.

"Where the younger black students were the trigger to the Civil rights movements ... young Indians have become unwitting missionaries spreading ancient anthropological doctrines which hardly relate to either anthropology or to Indians." Ibid, p. 83.

"...Indians have come to believe that through education a new generation of leaders will arise to solve the pressing contemporary problems. Tribal leaders have been taught to accept this thesis by the scholarly community in its annual invasion of the reservations ... wherever authority raises its head in Indian country, this thesis is its message." Ibid, p. 84

"There is an undefined expectation in American society that once a problem is defined, no matter how, and understood by a significant number of people who have some relation to the problem, there is no problem any more." Ibid, p. 93

"...to achieve relevance in American society, a person must always be the pioneer, the innovator, against the establishment." Ibid, p. 98

"Democratic society is always absolutely sure of itself. It could not be otherwise, for to be unsure would call into question the very basis of the political institutions which gave it existence. Even more horrifying would be an examination of the economic realities underlying the society." Ibid, p. 98 (2)

"...missionaries on the North American continent came to preach and stayed to rule. Or at least prepared the way for others to conquer and exploit." Missionaries and the Religious Vaccum, p. 101-102

"No missionary ever realized that it was less the reality of his religion and more the threat of extinction that brought converts to him. Or if he did realize it, he never acknowledged it." Ibid, p. 107.

"Religion ... in Indian tribal life ... integrated the functions of tribal society so that life was experienced as a unity. Christianity has proved to be a disintegrating force by confining its influence to the field of formula recitation and allowing the important movements of living to go their separate ways until life has become separated into a number of unrelated categories." Ibid, p. 119

"...Indians...fully realize that with no funds for investment in social services they are dependent upon the federal government for services which the ordinary citizen proves for himself and which other poor do not receive except under demeaning circumstances." Government Agencies, p. 125.

"Indians have found a humorous side of nearly every problem and the experiences of life have generally been so well defined through jokes and stories that they have become a thing in themselves ... the more desperate the problem, the more humor is directed to describe it." Indian Humor, p. 147

"To the Indian people it has seemed quite unfair that churches and government agencies concentrated their efforts primarily on the blacks. By defining the problem as one of race and making race refer solely to black, Indians were systematically excluded from consideration." The Red and the Black, p. 168.

"Never did the white man systematically exclude Indians from his schools and meeting places. Nor did the white man ever kidnap black children from their homes and take them off to a government boarding school to be educated as whites. The white man signed no treaties with the black. Nor did he pass any amendments to the Constitution to guarantee the treaties of the Indian." Ibid, p. 172

"...the white man ... must examine his past. He must face the problems he has created within himself and within others ... must no longer project his fears and insecurities onto other groups, races and countries ... must forgo the pleasure of defining them ... must learn to stop viewing history as a plot against himself ..." Ibid, p. 174-175.

"...black power, as many Indian people began to understand it, was not so much an affirmation of black people as it was an anti-white reaction." Ibid, p. 182.

"When one is an integral part of the Indian world view, his values are oriented according to the social values inherent in the culture itself. Social relations become not merely patterns of behavior but customs which dominate behavior so that the culture becomes self-perpetuating. Once the cultural values take hold, crises do not cause disorientation. Ibid, p. 185

"The black needs time to develop his roots, to create his sacred places, to understand the mystery of himself and his history, to understand his own purpose. These things the Indian has and is able to maintain through his tribal life. The Indian now needs to create techniques to provide the economic strength needed to guarantee the survival of what he has." Ibid, p. 188.

"What the white cannot understand he destroys lest it prove harmful. What the Indian cannot understand he withdraws from. But the black tries everything and fears nothing. He is therefore at liberty to build or destroy both what he knows and what he does not know or understand." Ibid, p. 195

"Tonto was everything that the white man had always wanted the Indian to be ... a little slower, a little dumber, had much less vocabulary, and rode a darker horse ... like the Negro butler and the Oriental gardener, Tonto represented a silent subservient subspecies of Anglo-Saxon whose duty was to do the bidding of the all-wise white hero." The Problem of Indian Leadership, p. 200

"Indians welcome the future but don't worry about it. Traditionally the tribes had pretty much what they wanted. There was no reason to get uptight about wealth and its creation. The land had plenty for everyone. Piling up gigantic surpluses implied a mistrust of the Great Spirit and a futile desire to control the future." Ibid, p. 221.

"It appears to many Indians that someday soon the modern world will be ready to understand itself and, perhaps, the Indian people." Indians and Modern Society, p. 226

"...corporate life since the last world war has structured itself along the lines taken a couple of centuries earlier by Indian tribes as they developed their customs and traditions of social existence." Ibid, p. 229

"Intensity turns easily to violence when it has no traditions and customs to channel it into constructive paths of behavior." Ibid, p. 241.

"The basic operating assumption of tribes changed from that of preserving the tribal estate for an eventual distribution to the idea that tribes would always manage to survive, that present difficulties were not insurmountable, and that perhaps the Indian community was nationally much larger than people imagined." Ibid, p. 245.

"The mechanized concepts of image, relevancy, feasibility and efficiency are now being seen as gimmicks by which white America fools itself into believing it has created a culture. In reality, it has used these plastic devices to avoid the necessity of having a real culture." Ibid, p. 247.

"...American society ... was founded in violence. It worships violence and it will continue to live violently. Anyone who tries to meet violence with love is crushed, but violence used to meet violence also ends abruptly with meaningless destruction." Ibid, p. 255

"Tribalism looks at life as an undifferentiated whole. Distinctions are not made between social and psychological, educational and historical, political and legal. The tribe is an all-purpose entity which is expected to serve all areas of life." Ibid, p. 265.

Topics for Discussion

Research the history of other aboriginal and/or indigenous peoples - Canadian Natives, Australian Aborigines, Indians at the time of British rule in India, etc. What are the similarities in the way they were treated and the treatment of Indians as described here? What are the differences? What are the philosophical / social similarities in attitudes between the various governing races? What are the differences?

Consider the quote from p. 51 in both an historical and contemporary contexts. Debate whether the statement is valid or a misconception. Has the situation changed at all since the time in which the book was written (the late-1960s)? Explain your answer.

Research current government and/or political handling of Indian policy, and relate it to the policies and practices outlined in Part 5, "Government Agencies." What is different? What is the same? How do Indians react and/or relate to the contemporary system? In what ways are their reactions similar and/or different?

In what ways do satire and irony play a role in contemporary, non-Indian communities (White, African-American, Gay/Lesbian, etc.) similar to that described by the author in "Indian Humor?"

Consider the author's discussion of race relations in Part 5 and the various quotes from "The Red and the Black." Do you agree or disagree with his perspectives and statements? Why or why not?

In what ways do the civil rights struggles of Indians and Blacks parallel those of (women? Gays and lesbians? Non-Christians?) in America? Do you perceive the origins of these other struggles as coming from the same source as the origins suggested by the author? Why or why not?

In "Indians and Modern Society" (Part 6), the author suggests that custom and habit have played substantial roles in the shaping of modern society - the example he uses is the formation of the two main American political parties. Explore and discuss ways in which custom and/or tradition have shaped behavior - social, political, financial, spiritual, etc.

Consider the quote found on p. 247 relating to the nature of white American culture. Do you agree or disagree? Why? What defines culture, if not the characteristics referred to in the quote?

Discuss the contemporary resonances or parallels between the author's comments about America (see "Themes") and the way America is viewed in the contemporary world. Do you agree or disagree with these comments? Why or why not?