

Dance Hall of the Dead Study Guide

Dance Hall of the Dead by Tony Hillerman

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Plot Summary

Dance Hall of the Dead is a detective story that takes place on Native American land. In order to find the murderer of a young Zuni boy, Navajo detective Joe Leaphorn will need to call upon his knowledge of Navajo and Zuni tradition and upon his incredible skills as a tracker. The investigation takes Lieutenant Leaphorn from the Navajo hogan of the dead boy's missing friend, George Bowlegs, to a nearby hippie commune, to an archaeological dig site and finally to a sacred lake that in Zuni tradition is called the Dance Hall of the Dead. Leaphorn's quest is to save the Bowlegs boy, who the prejudiced Zuni assume is the killer. Leaphorn believes that young Bowlegs is innocent and is also in danger of being murdered, just like his Zuni friend Ernesto Cata. Due to local prejudices against the Navajos, Leaphorn quickly realizes that he is young George's only defender. George has no one else to care for him when Ernesto's murderer kills George's alcoholic father.

Leaphorn's quest to save and exonerate the boy will challenge Leaphorn's logical mind. Leaphorn credits his unusually savvy detective skills to the Navajo wisdom he was fortunate to learn from his grandfather. As the story progresses, Leaphorn teaches some valuable lessons about a man's character. He teaches the Navajo way through his example. This is the way of The People, or the Dinee as they are called in Navajo. The Navajo judge worldly success by a man's character as opposed to judging success financially, which Leaphorn believes is the white man's way. By the time the killer's identity is discovered, Leaphorn has shown that the way in which people react to evil determines their character. Ultimately, the character of the individuals who are caught up in the murder investigation is more important to Leaphorn than solving the case.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Sunday, November 30, 5:18 p.m. A young boy, nearing manhood, runs along the route he takes daily in his quest to get in shape. He has been selected by his people, the Zuni tribe, to play the role of Shulawitsi, the Little Fire God, during the upcoming festival of Shalako. Eight days from today, the Shalako will come from the Dance Hall of the Dead to bless the Zuni people. The Fire God must be in shape. If a young man portraying a God becomes too tired, the Salamobia will embarrass and beat him with their yucca wands. The boy reminds himself that he must avoid anger, too, so near the festival. Thinking about his friend George makes him angry. George's nosy questions about secret, sacred Zuni spiritual practices have caused the Fire God to break a taboo by telling George too much. The Fire God is also angry at George for angering their friend the anthropologist by encouraging the Fire God to steal arrowheads. Now the anthropologist, Isaacs, won't let them hang around the dig site anymore. Nevertheless, with Shalako so close, the Fire God shakes off his anger. George is his friend, and even now he is waiting for the boy at the end of his route with their bicycles. Except it is not George that the Fire God finds waiting; it is a Salamobia, the ancestor spirit who is seen only when one is about to die. The Salamobia raises his wand, and the Little Fire God sees that it is not made of yucca. The wand gleams in the sunlight.

Chapter 1 Analysis

The first chapter of *Dance Hall of the Dead* is the author's only opportunity to involve the Little Fire God in the narrative. The reader will soon learn that the boy who plays the Fire God is Ernesto Cata and that this first scene describes his murder. All of the events of the plot spin out from this initial event. From Chapter 2 forward, the book is narrated from the point of view of Joe Leaphorn, the Navajo police lieutenant. The only deviation in the narrative point of view is this first chapter. The switch in point of view from Ernesto's to Leaphorn's helps define the importance of Ernesto's murder as a central event in the novel. It also, on a subtler level, suggests that Leaphorn the detective will become the voice for the dead boy. As the story unfolds, this suggestion proves to be true, as Leaphorn will be the only man between six law enforcement agencies who cares about Ernesto and his friend, George Bowlegs.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Monday, December 1, 12:20 p.m. Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn sits in the office of Ed Pasquaanti, the Zuni Chief of Police. Joining them for this meeting are Cipriano "Orange" Naranjo from the County Sheriff's Office and J.D. Highsmith of the State Police. Pasquaanti explains to all of them that since the apparent murder took place on Zuni land, the Zuni Police have jurisdiction. Pasquaanti tells the men that there are two missing boys. George Bowlegs is a fourteen-year-old Navajo boy. Because he is Navajo, it is Leaphorn's job to find him. Bowlegs has implicated himself in the potential murder by disappearing from school this morning. The other boy, twelve-year-old Ernesto Cata, has been missing since yesterday and is presumed dead. A large quantity of blood was found at the end of Cata's running trail, and his bicycle is missing. Leaphorn asks if Cata was a runner for the school track team. Pasquaanti hesitantly divulges that Cata was to be the Little Fire God at the upcoming Shalako festival. Pasquaanti informs Leaphorn that the Zuni police were not able to get any information from George's father, Shorty Bowlegs, because when they went out to the house, Shorty was drunk. Pasquaanti hands out yearbook photos of the two boys and sends the men off to do their jobs.

Chapter 2 Analysis

This inter-agency meeting allows the author to set up the various local cultural differences that will affect the book's outcome. Not only are there four distinct police agencies involved in the murder of Ernesto Cata, but there are also four distinct ethnic cultures as well. Lieutenant Leaphorn is a Navajo, and Chief of Police Pasquaanti is Zuni. The author divulges that there is an ancient blood feud between the Zuni and the Navajo. As the murder takes place on Zuni territory and involves both a Zuni and a Navajo boy, this rivalry between the two cultures is of preeminent concern. The author does not state the ethnicities of Highsmith and Naranjo, but gauging from their names they, two, are from distinct ethnicities. This point is not relevant to the story. It is, however, interesting to note that the author makes no distinctions between the various ethnicities of the "white man," only of the Native American. Prejudice is an important theme in the story. Primarily the theme speaks of prejudice amongst and against Native Americans. However, the story's underlying prejudice against the white man should be kept in mind as well.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Monday, December 1, 3:50 p.m. Leaphorn blows a tire on the rough backcountry terrain after leaving Shorty Bowlegs' hogan. He was concentrating on what little he'd learned from Bowlegs instead of on his driving. As Leaphorn changes the tire, he sees George Bowlegs looking on. Realizing the face is younger than the yearbook photo, Leaphorn realizes he is looking at George's little brother, Cecil. They greet each other with a Native American greeting, ya-ta-hey. The boy notices that Leaphorn is a Navajo policeman, not Zusi. Leaphorn tells him he works for the Dinee, which is the Navajo word for people. Leaphorn stresses their common bond, suggesting that it would be to George's benefit to speak to a Dinee policeman. Cecil is skeptical. He knows the police are hunting George. Leaphorn explains that whether or not George killed anyone, he will be better off to turn himself in to the authorities. Cecil tells him that George didn't run because he was afraid of the Zuni police. George is running from a kachina.

Cecil explains that George and Ernesto did something to offend the kachina, which is a Zuni spirit. At first Leaphorn thinks Cecil is lying, but as he gradually wins the boy's trust, Leaphorn realizes that Cecil is telling him what George believes happened. George was scared away from meeting Ernesto at the end of the trail because a kachina appeared to him. This morning, when George discovered that Ernesto was missing and possibly dead, he ran away from school. Cecil says that Ernesto Cata was not a real friend to George because he was Zusi. The boys both attend a Zuni school and are shunned by most of the students because they are Navajo. Cecil complains that George lost his friend the anthropologist because Ernesto stole something from the dig site. He also tells Leaphorn that George is friends with a blond girl who lives in a hippie commune behind Hoski Butte. Leaphorn sends Cecil home to his father. Cecil is embarrassed that his father is drunk again.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Author Tony Hillerman develops his characters in this chapter. As Leaphorn begins to care about the Bowlegs boys' welfare, the reader does too. The picture which the author paints of a desolate hogan peopled by a drunken father, an absent mother and two little boys is heartbreaking. Cecil's description of the prejudice the boys face at the Zuni school adds to the portrait of their lonely existence. Cecil, having been let down by authority figures all his life, is hesitant to talk to Leaphorn. Leaphorn, however, treats him with respect and establishes some basic trust between them. Leaphorn's style of interrogating the Bowlegs boy speaks well of both his personal character and his professional abilities.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Monday, December 1, 4:18 p.m. Ted Isaacs sorts artifacts he has just discovered in a layer of earth called the Folsom floor. He puts the important artifacts in an envelope and labels it with the geographical grid where they were unearthed. A police truck pulls up slowly, careful not to create clouds of dust near the dig site. Leaphorn introduces himself and tells Isaacs that the police are searching for two boys. Isaacs tells him the boys used to hang out at the dig site, but Isaacs and his employer, Dr. Reynolds, ran them off after Reynolds caught the boys in the back of his truck. Isaacs claims the boys didn't steal anything. He tracks every discovery and keeps each artifact locked up in his own camper.

Isaacs is working on a Folsom, or an Early Man archaeological dig. Leaphorn studied some anthropology in college and listens interestedly while Isaacs explains that the goal of the dig is to prove that Folsom man did not die out as academics believe. Isaacs seeks to prove his employer's theory that the Folsom man adapted his distinctive, artistic arrowhead style to a more efficient style which has been credited to other cultures in error. The improved arrowhead technique would circumstantially prove that Folsom man had the imagination and vision to adapt. If Folsom man could adapt his arrowhead style, then the current belief that he died out as a result of stubbornly clinging to time-consuming tradition is incorrect. This is Reynolds' theory. Reynolds is a respected researcher, but this theory has been laughed out of academic circles. Isaacs has found some strong evidence that Reynolds is correct. At the very same spot where Isaacs has located distinctive Folsom arrowheads, he has also found a more advanced, efficient arrowhead created from the same type of stone.

Isaacs suggests Leaphorn check out the hippie commune, Jason's Fleece, and speak to George's friend Susanne. Isaacs says George has fasted and taken peyote buttons to have visions. George seeks spiritual enlightenment in several ways. He is even studying to be a Zusi, although no one who is not a Zuni has ever been accepted into the religion. Reynolds arrives and reviews the evidence Isaacs has uncovered from today's dig. He warns Isaacs that nothing can interfere with the integrity of the dig site. Leaphorn says he heard the boys had stolen something from Reynolds' truck. Reynolds denies that anything was stolen. Every artifact is accounted for. He says he ran the boys off because the dig site is critically important to proving his theory, and he doesn't want kids around tampering with things. Reynolds and Leaphorn agree it is strange that George's little brother would say the boys had stolen something.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The story of the Folsom man is not only central to the plot, but it symbolizes one of the author's recurrent themes, as well. In this chapter, as Isaacs explains the Reynolds



theory, it reminds Leaphorn of a plaque on the wall of his Bureau of Indian Affairs high school. The plaque read "'Tradition is the Enemy of Progress.'" (pg. 43) Leaphorn is surprised at his own bitterness when recounting the saying. In the book, the Zuni have managed to cling to their old ways despite the triumph of the white man, and the area Navajos feel somewhat jealous at the Zusis' success in maintaining tradition. Leaphorn learned the Navajo way from his wise old grandfather and turns often to those early teachings to help him solve crimes. However, Leaphorn sees the state of the Navajo Nation today, as evidenced by the plight of Cecil and George Bowlegs. George desperately wants to find some spiritual guidance, but the Navajo way is blocked to him now because the old ways have changed and gone. Still, some of the old ways, such as the former Zuni tradition of scalping Navajos, are better off changed. Nonetheless, Leaphorn mourns the totality of the change. He believes, and demonstrates through his actions, that some of the old ways had great value, a value that is missing from the world he sees around him.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

Monday, December 1, 8:37 p.m. Leaphorn stakes out Jason's Fleece from a comfortable vantage point along the rimrock. Leaphorn reveals his methodical nature as he patiently studies the commune before entering. Four men and three women currently inhabit the Navajo hogan that once belonged to Frank Bob Madman. When Madman's wife, Alice, died, according to Navajo custom Frank abandoned the hogan after first knocking a hole in the wall so that his wife's ghost can come and go. Leaphorn is by now conversant with the history of the commune, once numbering some forty people. This number declined during the cold winter and is now down to seven. Leaphorn has watched as four people left in a van. He saw one man and Susanne enter the hogan. He assumes the final man is already inside the hogan, and so he is surprised to see a pair of men's legs standing outside. The male figure watches the hogan and then presses up to the window. Leaphorn is further surprised to see the man wearing the mask of a Zuni kachina. He recalls his college roommate telling him that kachinas are invisible. "But you can see them if you're about to die." (pg. 57)

Chapter 5 Analysis

Again in the fifth chapter, religious and cultural symbolism is employed. Jason's Fleece is named after the story of Jason and the Golden Fleece. The Navajo neighbor couple that Leaphorn interviews about the commune likens the story of Jason's Fleece to the Navajo myth of two twin adventurers called Monster Slayer and Born of Water. The Navajo couple believes that the fleece symbolizes either money or whatever it is that people have to find in order to live happily. This larger perspective allows them to note the universal symbolism employed in story-telling throughout all the cultures of the world.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Monday, December 1, 4:18 p.m. Susanne speaks with a slight stammer. She tells Leaphorn that George is probably just ditching school. Leaphorn watches Halsey, the leader of the commune, from the corner of his eye as he talks to Susanne. Another man, Otis, cries out in a drug-induced delirium. Leaphorn asks what the man has taken, but Halsey makes it clear that he won't talk to "the fuzz" (pg. 65). Leaphorn makes the point that he is here only to find out about George. Susanne swears that George would never have hurt his friend Ernesto. She tells Leaphorn that George's dad is always drunk and that George has been providing the food for his family. Susanne indicates that George came by and asked for food, specifically the deer in the shed that George gave to the commune in the first place. George asked questions about how to obtain absolution from a Zuni kachina. Halsey interrupts to say that he did not allow George to take any food. Halsey didn't want to attract law enforcement attention to his commune by aiding a fugitive. Susanne tells Leaphorn that George went to find the kachinas.

After midnight, Leaphorn approaches his police station in Ramah. He wonders where George and Ernesto are now. He tells himself that the whole thing was some childish prank and that both boys are safe somewhere. After all, the only evidence of foul play is the blood found at the end of Ernesto's running trail. Perhaps the blood is not even human. Perhaps it is from a sheep slaughtered for the Shalako feast. Leaphorn is too tired to make sense of the kachina he thinks he saw at the commune. At Ramah, he checks his messages. Ernesto Cata's body has been found.

Chapter 6 Analysis

This chapter marks a turning point in the story. Ernesto Cata is now a confirmed homicide. The author foreshadows this grim turn with the disturbing scene at the commune. This is no peace and love hippie commune. The man who runs the commune, Halsey, intimidates Susanne and refuses to share food with the young boy who provided the food in the first place. Halsey's lack of concern for these children concerns Leaphorn. Otis' bad trip and Halsey's expensive boots allude to a possible narcotics operation, making it clear to Leaphorn that this is not a healthy place for Susanne to be. Now that Leaphorn has found a third child in trouble, Susanne, the death of Ernesto Cata hits him particularly hard. Susanne and George's plight will spur him on to protect the children by catching the murderer.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Tuesday, December 2, 7:22 a.m. Leaphorn enjoys the rising sun and the beauty of the morning as he waits for the Zuni men to finish unearthing Ernesto's buried body. Leaphorn has offered to help, but the Zuni men will take care of the Zuni dead. Leaphorn looks up at Zuni Village. It is called Halona Itawana, the Middle Ant Hill of the World, and houses nearly all of the 6,000 Zusi. Unlike his own people, the Navajo, the Zuni live clustered together, multiple generations housed together, with sometimes up to thirty people in a house. Leaphorn wonders if this close-knit approach has helped the Zuni stay so strong in their native traditions, unlike his own people who number 130,000 but can boast no town sizeable enough to rival Zuni Village. Finally, Leaphorn breaks the silence and asks where Ernesto's bicycle was found.

Leaphorn backtracks the bike trail all the way back to the spot where Ernesto Cata bled to death. He spends another three hours studying the dusty ground in this vicinity, finding the tracks of the various men who have passed here: Cata's uncle, who discovered the body, Pasquaanti, George's cowboy boots, Cata's track shoes and moccasin tracks made by whoever carried Ernesto's body away on the bicycle. The fact that the killer wore moccasins makes Leaphorn doubt the murder was completely premeditated. Even Native Americans only wear moccasins for ceremonial purposes. For traveling in rough terrain, they are harder on the feet than boots or tennis shoes. The tracks also indicate that Ernesto and his killer stood face to face, staring at one another for a long moment. Then, Ernesto took three large steps away before being struck with the murder weapon. Leaphorn doubts the killer could have known that Ernesto's bike would be available to carry off the corpse with. Only George Bowlegs knew he was bringing the bike, and it's doubtful Bowlegs showed up in cowboy boots then switched to moccasins.

Leaphorn is irritated by the lack of harmony or pattern in his thinking and in the evidence. Leaphorn's grandfather, Nashibitti, taught him the way of the Navajo people. Nashibitti, meaning He Who Asks Questions, was venerated by his people as a very wise man. He was born to a dying mother as she and her people were hunted by Kit Carson, traitor to the Navajo people. Nashibitti taught Leaphorn that "the only goal for man was beauty, and that beauty was found only in harmony, and that this harmony of nature was a matter of dazzling complexity." (pp. 76-77) Every animal and insect in nature affects everything else. Nashibitti taught Leaphorn the interdependency of nature and the beautiful patterns made by cause and effect and by action and reaction. "In all things a pattern, and in this pattern, the beauty of harmony. Thus one learned to live with evil, by understanding it, by reading its cause. And thus one learned, gradually and methodically, if one was lucky, to always 'go in beauty,' to always look for the pattern, and to find it." (pg. 77) Now Leaphorn's mind reviews the incongruities in the case. First George did not run after the killing. He ran the next day, which only makes him look suspicious. Why would Cecil lie and say that the boys stole artifacts if they had not? Is



George running from a kachina as Cecil thinks or hunting a kachina as Susanne says? What is a man in a kachina mask doing outside the hippie commune? Leaphorn decides that his first priority is to get Shorty Bowlegs sober enough to talk coherently.

Chapter 7 Analysis

The central tenets of the Navajo way are revealed in this chapter as Leaphorn recalls his grandfather's teachings. Leaphorn turns to the way of his people for help in solving the case and in dealing with the complex emotions involved in the case. If the death of the little boy is not enough to sadden Leaphorn, he must also confront the spiritual decay of his own people and the uncaring attitudes of the white men. The spiritually successful Zuni tribe looks down on Navajos like Leaphorn, and he must swallow his pride in the face of the envy he feels for the Zuni, who have managed to maintain their rich, cultural tradition. Their children are not neglected and alone like the Navajo and white children in the story. Leaphorn is grateful to have learned the Navajo traditions, although he feels like the last of a dying breed. Yet the Navajo way even in these modern times is as valuable as ever. Leaphorn's integrity and open heart speak well of his people, and his ability to "go in beauty" as the Navajos teach makes him an excellent detective. The Navajos believe that everything is interdependent. The interdependent world creates intricately beautiful patterns. If one can see the beauty, one can understand the pattern. This Navajo spirituality enables Leaphorn to cope with evil, for he has the ability to ascertain its cause and thus solve the crime by understanding the pattern.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Tuesday, December 2, 6:11 p.m. Leaphorn drives carefully through the falling snow to Bowlegs' hogan. Shorty Bowlegs is the last lead Leaphorn has. If this turns up nothing, Leaphorn will be facing the unthinkable conclusion that Ernesto was killed for no reason. "Not even the grasshopper took wing without reason." (pg. 80) His truck headlights illuminate the hogan, and he can see Shorty Bowlegs in the doorway. Leaphorn is relieved that Bowlegs is awake and alert enough to have heard the truck drive up. Navajo good manners require Leaphorn to wait until Bowlegs has prepared himself for a visitor. Only when Bowlegs appears in the door again will Leaphorn approach the door. In rural areas this tradition is considered respectful of people's privacy. As he waits, he recalls Ernesto's autopsy and then the funeral, held quickly according to Zuni tradition.

Bowlegs is taking too long, and Leaphorn abandons his truck and heads for the door. He realizes that the hogan is dark and wonders if there were lights inside when he drove up. He only recalls seeing the figure, wearing a blue shirt, in the doorway in his headlights. He calls out to Shorty Bowlegs but gets no reply. The wind blows the door against its latch. Inside, his flashlight sweeps the litter of meager possessions, all in disarray. He finds Shorty Bowlegs' dead body on the floor, wearing a khaki, not a blue, shirt. Leaphorn is furious with himself for sitting in his truck while the killer got away.

Bowlegs has been killed from behind by a sharp, heavy murder weapon, perhaps the same one used to kill Ernesto. From the state of the blood on Bowlegs' body, Leaphorn estimates that the death occurred at least thirty minutes before he drove up to the hogan. The killer has clearly searched the premises, and Leaphorn wonders what he could possibly want in this poor hogan. "By whiteman's standards, Leaphorn thought, Bowlegs had a net worth of maybe one hundred dollars. The white world's measure of his life. And what would the Navajo measure be? The Dinee made a harder demand - that man find his place in the harmony of things. There, too, Shorty Bowlegs had failed." (pp. 86-87)

Leaphorn searches the property in widening circles to pick up the killer's trail. In the horse pen, he finds no horses, but tracks indicate that the Bowlegs have two horses. One horse left tracks a few hours ago. The other horse has not been here for at least a day. In the distance, he hears a sound in the wind. He waits as one of the horses returns to the Bowlegs' property. Young Cecil rides the horse, returning home.

Chapter 8 Analysis

In the eighth chapter, Leaphorn again has the opportunity to showcase his tracking skills. Ironically, in a subsequent chapter FBI Agent O'Malley will treat Leaphorn like an



amateur for daring to search the crime scene. O'Malley believes such searches should be left up to the experts. It is an indication of O'Malley's prejudice and ignorance of local customs that he fails to recognize that Leaphorn is the most expert searcher available for such a task. Leaphorn's tracking abilities can ascertain, from an empty corral, how many horses the Bowlegs own and how long ago each horse left. This discovery will be critical in Leaphorn's attempts to track George Bowlegs. Although Leaphorn has been delegated the job of finding George, it seems none of the other officers appreciate the skill which goes into the job, despite the fact that they wouldn't know how to begin finding George themselves.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Tuesday, December 2, 10:15 p.m. Leaphorn leaves Cecil with a Franciscan brother at Saint Anthony's school. He broke the news to Cecil as kindly as possible and then radioed the New Mexico State Police. He left Cecil in the truck with the heater running while he gathered Cecil's things so the boy would not be confronted with the body of his dead father. The boy asked him to go back in for George's things and Cecil's lunchbox. George had already taken his few earthly possessions. Leaphorn realizes that the boy must have come back for his things and the horse shortly after Leaphorn interviewed Shorty Bowlegs the day before. Shorty has no relatives nearby, and Leaphorn wonders who will punch a hole in the hogan wall to release Shorty's ghost and arrange for a Singer to cure the negativity surrounding the murder. Leaphorn realizes that the people at the Ramah chapter house will have information about Bowlegs' family, who will need to take in Cecil and George.

Leaphorn finds Cecil's lunchbox, but Cecil cannot find the goodbye note that George left him inside the box, where he thought he put it. Leaphorn, furious at the plight Cecil and George are now in, convinces Cecil that under the circumstances he needs to trust Leaphorn. George must be found, and Leaphorn promises to take Cecil and George to their father's people. Cecil tells Leaphorn that George came by for the horse last night after Cecil talked to Leaphorn. Cecil reveals the contents of the note. George was going to find the kachinas. The name of the place he was going is a long word that begins with a K. Cecil cannot remember it. George was going to be gone several days taking care of his business with the kachinas. If George was unable to solve things with the kachinas, he told Cecil he would go to Shalako at the Zuni Village and then come home afterward. Finally, says Cecil with tears in his eyes, George admonished Cecil to take care of their father.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Chapter 9 deals with the aftermath of Shorty Bowlegs' death. Leaphorn shows his compassion in the way he takes care of Cecil. As a Navajo and the only available responsible adult, Leaphorn makes the decision to send Cecil to his father's people, after checking with Cecil to see if Cecil is agreeable. The Ramah chapter house keeps records of the local Navajo population, and Leaphorn knows the people at Ramah will find Cecil's family. Not once does it occur to Leaphorn or Cecil that the family may not want to take in the two orphans. Family is important to the Navajos, and it goes without saying that the family will take care of the Bowlegs boys. This strikes an interesting counterpoint to Susanne's situation, which the reader will learn of shortly. When Leaphorn learns that her parent is unfit, he assumes Susanne should go live with her grandparent. Leaphorn will be stunned by the white man's approach to family when he learns that the grandparent and parent do not speak and that living with her grandparent



is not an option for Susanne. Leaphorn will be disgusted to learn that she has no family to "engulf a child with the love of uncles and aunts and cousins, to give [...] the security of a new hogan and a new family," which is the Navajo way. (pg. 91)



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Wednesday, December 3, 10 a.m. Leaphorn considers the pattern involved in the double homicide. A single murder is a unit, but two murders involve a more complex sequence of events. Leaphorn wonders if the sequence is complete with the two murders or if they are part of a larger pattern. He considers Ernesto Cata, the Little Fire God. Ernesto was also an altar boy at Saint Anthony's Church, a baptized Christian, and born into the Badger Clan of a Zuni kiva, meaning that he would most likely have "become one of the 'valuable men' of the Zuni religion." (pg. 97)

Leaphorn is distracted from his thoughts by FBI Agent O'Malley, who instructs the men to question everyone in the area. Perhaps someone saw something unusual, like a light plane landing in the area. Leaphorn recognizes the man O'Malley introduced only as Agent Baker as a narcotics agent. O'Malley clearly doesn't want Leaphorn and his colleagues Pasquaanti, Highsmith and Naranjo to realize that there is a narcotics agent involved in the investigation. O'Malley has made it clear that Leaphorn should not have examined the Bowlegs crime scene himself. O'Malley thinks of Leaphorn as an amateur who has disturbed the crime scene. O'Malley pressures Leaphorn to find George Bowlegs. After O'Malley leaves, the local lawmen joke amongst each other. They have all recognized Baker as a narc. The men set out in different directions. Leaphorn has told the FBI and Pasquaanti about the note George left for Cecil, which is now missing from the hogan. None of the men are concerned about this except Leaphorn. Leaphorn thinks that even as George hunts for his kachina, the killer is hunting him too. He hurries towards Jason's Fleece, hoping to get more information from Susanne.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Chapter 10 focuses on the anti-Navajo prejudice and highlights the vast socioeconomic disparities between George Bowlegs, the Navajo boy, and Ernesto Cata, the Zuni. Having been born into the tight-knit Zuni Badger Clan, Ernesto's future was all but assured. Had the tragic murder not ended his life in such an untimely fashion, Ernesto would have been accepted, appreciated and respected by his Zuni brethren as he approached adulthood. As a man he would have been included in the top ranks of village community leaders, by virtue not only of his character but also of his birth family. This is obviously a sharp contrast to George Bowlegs' dismal future. George is as accomplished a Native American as Ernesto. He has developed tremendous hunting skills for a boy his age because he has been forced to provide food for his younger brother and shiftless father since he was a small child. The Navajo are a scattered people, loners almost, and so George has lacked the comforting presence and security of an extended family. His educational options are limited, at least as far as George can see. Perhaps George's manic quest for spiritual enlightenment stems from his desire to find a way out of poverty and loneliness. George does not choose to medicate himself



with alcohol as his father has done. Instead, his motives are pure, if slightly desperate. His desire to join the Zuni can be viewed as a desire to have the all-encompassing love of family, community and God that Ernesto has by birthright.

Thus the Navajos are in much worse straits as a community than the Zuni. This leads to considerable jealousy on Leaphorn's part and also fuels his desire to help George. The Zuni police and the white man assume George is involved either with the murder or at least with the drug trade. They write him off as a Navajo troublemaker, a boy without a future. Leaphorn suffers the indignities of this same prejudice when the FBI agent fails to acknowledge Leaphorn's superior tracking skills. Agent O'Malley assumes Leaphorn is an ignorant, bumbling Indian. The only consolation Leaphorn can take is that O'Malley feels the same way about the Zuni Chief of Police, Ed Pasquaanti. In his prejudice, the white man does not distinguish between the various Native American ethnicities, any more than the Native Americans distinguish between the various types of "white men."



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Wednesday, December 3, 12:15 p.m. Leaphorn talks to a young man with his blond hair put up in a bun. Hair in a Bun is welding something in the commune's school bus. He is clearly startled to be interrupted by a cop. Leaphorn asks him what he's welding, but Halsey interrupts and answers for him. Halsey tells Leaphorn that Susanne has nothing else to say. Leaphorn informs Halsey and Hair in a Bun that if he can't talk to Susanne, he might have to kill some time examining the school bus. Pressured in this way, Halsey agrees to take Leaphorn to Susanne, who is over near the windmill some hundred and fifty yards from the commune. At the windmill, Halsey stands behind Leaphorn as he questions Susanne. Susanne refuses to say much until Leaphorn drives Halsey away.

Susanne tells Leaphorn that he's wrong to believe that George can't survive on his own and needs Leaphorn's help. She says George is an accomplished deer hunter and has been providing food for his family for some time. Leaphorn asks what George has told Susanne about deer hunting. From her answers, Leaphorn realizes that George is a skilled hunter and knows both the Navajo and Zuni ways of hunting. As Susanne talks, Leaphorn studies her young, fatigued face. He pegs her as being in her late teens and wonders why white people don't take care of their children. Then he remembers Bowlegs and wonders why Navajos don't take care of their children. Susanne tells him about a hunting prayer the Zuni use to ensure harmony in the hunt and to convince the deer that their deaths will take them to a higher place. She thinks the Zuni traditions are beautiful and mourns Ernesto's death. Leaphorn says the Navajos believe death should only be for very old people who want some rest. As Leaphorn wonders where Susanne's family is, she tells him he should just wait for George to come home.

Leaphorn reveals that George no longer has a home to which he can return, telling Susanne about Shorty Bowlegs' death. Susanne tells him about her sister, who still lives with her parent. Leaphorn notices the burn scar on Susanne's hand as she tells him that she wants to rescue her sister from her parent. Leaphorn suggests that whoever killed Ernesto may be hunting George and Susanne. Susanne admits that George told her he was hunting a kachina at a dance hall. Leaphorn persuades her to leave the commune. He doesn't mention that narcotics agents are in the vicinity, but he expects the commune will be caught up in any potential raids. Leaphorn is also concerned with Halsey's domination of Susanne. He learns she has to sleep with Halsey to earn her keep. Susanne, however, is penniless and has nowhere to go. She confides to Leaphorn that someday Ted Isaacs is going to marry her. Ted has to finish his project, which will earn him a faculty appointment and finally put his impoverished upbringing behind him. Leaphorn suggests that she stay in Ted's camper if that's the case, but Susanne says Ted's boss doesn't want her around. Leaphorn says that was before the double homicide. Things have changed, he tells her, and he insists they return to the commune to pack up her things.



Chapter 11 Analysis

In Chapter 11, Susanne's plight is revealed to the reader. She apparently comes from an abusive home and has run away to escape the abuse. Sadly, the penniless girl has sought shelter in the opportunistic arms of the controlling Halsey. Now with drug busts looming over Halsey, it seems certain that the innocent girl will be caught up in the prosecutions. Leaphorn sets aside his prejudice against white people when he realizes that Susanne and George Bowlegs have a great deal in common. Leaphorn again shows through his example the integrity of the Navajo way as he becomes the only character in the novel to care about these lost children, regardless of their ethnicity.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Wednesday, December 3, 3:48 p.m. At the Isaacs dig, Susanne waits in the truck while Leaphorn talks to Ted Isaacs. Isaacs becomes angry when Leaphorn tells him that Susanne is in danger and needs to stay with him. Isaacs denies that Susanne is in danger and suggests that the murders are some sort of tribal feud. Unlikely as this sounds to Leaphorn, he considers it. Homicide is virtually non-existent in Zuni society. In the distant past, when a murder occurred, the Zuni sent gifts to the victim's family and arranged to initiate the killer into a spiritual medicine society to cure him. Leaphorn considers checking on new Zuni initiates but doubts he can learn much from the secretive Zusi. Isaacs asks Leaphorn to post a guard at the commune. Leaphorn pointedly replies that Susanne is not his responsibility. Leaphorn warns Isaacs about the potential narcotics arrests currently threatening the commune.

Leaphorn suggests that Isaacs marry Susanne, as he plans and take her in at the dig site. Isaacs furiously defends his feelings for Susanne, whom he claims to love. However, he has found the evidence he needs to prove Reynolds' theory. In the same grid of earth, Isaacs has found two broken arrowheads made from the same piece of flint. That means the same prehistoric man attempted to carve them, one after another, but both broke in the process and were dropped to the ground. One of the arrowheads is known as a Yuma point, and the other is the distinctive Folsom point. This arguably proves the Folsom man evolved from his time-consuming, artistic Folsom points to making more efficient arrowheads which have been credited to other peoples. Isaacs explains that he must keep the dig site pristine in order to prove Reynolds' theory and receive all the accolades he expects from such a large find. Isaacs explains that he comes from "Tennessee white trash" (pg. 135) and that he has made immense sacrifices to pay for school and this dig site. When Isaacs makes his fortune, he intends to have his teeth fixed, if it's not too late.

Leaphorn shakes his head and walks back to his truck. Susanne is gone. Leaphorn reasons that she could have seen from Isaacs' reaction that he wasn't about to take her in. "He thought about how the whiteman mind of Ted Isaacs sorted things out so that Susanne was on one side of the scale and everything else he wanted on the other, and about the weighting of values that would cause Susanne to be rejected." (pg. 137) Then Leaphorn's thoughts return to Isaacs' idea of a Folsom man breaking two arrowheads in a row and dropping them at his feet. Leaphorn imagines the Folsom man getting angry after breaking the second arrowhead and tossing it way down the hill, not calmly dropping it at his feet.



Chapter 12 Analysis

Although Leaphorn cares about Susanne's welfare, he pointedly remarks to Ted Isaacs that Susanne is not his responsibility. Leaphorn is not trying to wash his hands of the girl. He is trying to get Isaacs to accept his responsibility to Susanne. Apparently the Navajo do not believe in shotgun weddings. Leaphorn will not force Isaacs to marry the girl or even take her in. However, Leaphorn attempts to show Isaacs the consequences if he does not help Susanne. Isaacs, unfortunately, turns out to be self-centered and selfish. Isaacs' reasoning for rejecting Susanne does not mesh with Leaphorn's code of ethics. Leaphorn apparently feels that there are responsibilities more important than seeking fame and fortune. Isaacs, however, is only irritated that this trouble should come up at such an inopportune time. The Navajo measure of a man finds Isaacs wanting.

In comparison to George Bowlegs, Isaacs appears, on the surface, to be the more successful young man. He has worked hard to put himself through college, struggling with poverty all the while. Yet his refusal to take responsibility for the people he cares about shows that, by the Navajo measure at least, George Bowlegs is the better man. George has responded to his poverty quite differently. From a young age, George began hunting for food to make sure his brother and incapacitated father get enough to eat. George also provides food for the hippie commune and therefore takes better care of Susanne than Isaacs.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Wednesday, December 3, 5 p.m. Leaphorn speaks to Father Ingles of the Order of Saint Francis. Father Ingles has worked for Saint Michael's Catholic Mission for years near Window Rock. The Navajos at Window Rock call him Narrowbutt. Father Ingles has mastered the Navajo language to the level where he can make puns by intentionally mispronouncing his vowels as the Navajos like to do. Leaphorn, always a good listener, listens to Father Ingles describe George as a mystical child, destined either to be a crazy man or a saint. Ingles hoped to convert George to Catholicism and encouraged him in his saintly ways. Ingles describes George's drive to learn about spirituality. George has studied Catholicism, the Navajo origin myth, witchcraft and sorcery, general mysticism and the Zuni religion. Leaphorn has noticed a connection between witch talk and trouble and pays close attention to Ingles. Ingles has had many discussions with George about the differences between Zuni kachinas and Catholic saints. Ingles notes that Zuni believe that after death, their spirits join the kachinas, and they become kachinas themselves. Leaphorn asks where George might go to find a kachina. He mentions Susanne's comment about the dance hall. Ingles tells him that the place is called Kothluwalawa, the Dance Hall of the Dead.

Some Zuni believe Kothluwalawa exists only in the spiritual realm, but others believe it is a real place - a lake northeast of Zuni territory. Leaphorn mentally compares his Navajo beliefs with the Zuni beliefs Father Ingles is explaining. The Navajos believe there is "no pleasant life after death. If one was lucky, there was oblivion. But for most, there was the unhappy malevolent ghost, the chindi, wailing away the eons in the darkness, spreading sickness and evil." (pg. 147) Leaphorn and Ingles agree that if George asked around for the location of Kothluwalawa, the locals would have sent him to the lake. Ingles tells Leaphorn that George would never have killed Cata or his father. Leaphorn asks what motive anyone might have to kill Ernesto. Discreetly, he is asking the priest to break the silence of the confessional and share any pertinent information the dead boy may have given him. The priest admits to hearing Ernesto's confession the day before he died, but he says Ernesto did not steal anything of value and committed no major transgression. Ernesto was afraid he'd violated a Zuni taboo by telling George that he was going to represent the Little Fire God at Shalako. Leaphorn notices a mural on the wall of the Zuni Dancing Gods. One of the figures looks like the mask of Salamobia that Leaphorn saw outside the commune. Father Ingles explains that Salamobia is sent to punish those who offend the kachinas. Most Zuni myths are gentle, but there is one story, relates Ingles, in which a boy violates the secret taboo and has his head chopped off by the Salamobia. Leaphorn informs Ingles that Ernesto's head was chopped off.



Chapter 13 Analysis

The spiritual theme is developed in this chapter as the knowledgeable Father Ingles shares the Zuni creation myth with Leaphorn. The author paints a rich portrait of the colorful Zuni heritage. The author intends to educate and add value to the "whiteman" perception of rituals like Shalako. Upon the arrival of the whiteman in America, the Native American was written off as a savage, and Native American festivals were considered heretical and primitive, despite the Founding Fathers' premise of freedom of religion. Author Tony Hillerman educates his readers about the meaning underlying the Shalako festival and explains the importance of these traditions to the Zuni people. The men and boys who wear the masks and act the part of kachinas are not primitives or savages. They are respected community leaders who have been given the honor and sacred responsibility of continuing the Zuni spiritual traditions. However, George's quest to find Kothluwalawa is also put in its proper context. It is akin to someone setting out to find Shambala or the Garden of Eden. George's desire to find spirituality leads him on an improbable quest. Could the secretive Zuni be setting George up because he has offended them by trying to join their religion? Perhaps George really has offended a kachina and now has a rendezvous with a ghost. Regardless, it is clear that George is a true believer, and if he is a little too credulous, his heart is certainly in the right place.



Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

Thursday, December 4, 10:30 a.m. Leaphorn has been on the case since dawn. He has re-visited the Bowlegs hogan and memorized the hoofprints of the horse George is riding. He wonders if O'Malley has solved the case yet. Six law-enforcement agencies are interested in the case, and Leaphorn knows he won't be notified if one of them solves it. Following the directions Father Ingles gave him, Leaphorn heads northeast in his truck. His plan is to track George Bowlegs once he reaches the lake that is sometimes referred to as the Dance Hall of the Dead. He stops to pick up Susanne, whom he finds hitchhiking along the highway. She informs him that Halsey has kicked her out because she was drawing too much police attention. Leaphorn feeds the hungry girl and then asks her to come along on his search for George. He tells her that the search will involve a great deal of walking on rough terrain, but he points out that George is more likely to come out and talk to Leaphorn if Susanne is with him. Susanne believes George needs a friend and is willing to help.

Leaphorn and Susanne park the truck and hike to the lake. When she sees the lake, Susanne is doubtful that the dried up bed could house spirits. Leaphorn reminds her that it doesn't matter if this is the real Dance Hall of the Dead; what matters is that George thinks it is. Leaphorn considers George's most likely chain of logic and decides that George may hope to meet Ernesto's spirit when it joins the kachinas. According to Zuni tradition, it takes a spirit five days of travel to arrive at the Dance Hall of the Dead after dying. Ernesto would be due the following dawn. Leaphorn believes George, having left home with nothing but a loaf of bread, will go deer hunting while he's waiting in the area of the lakebed for the kachinas. Leaphorn begins searching for George's horse's hoofprints. As usual, he begins in small circles and works his way methodically outward in larger circles. Hours later, after two in the afternoon, he finds the hoofprints. Now that he knows George has been on the lakebed, Leaphorn intends to find the nearest deer trail and intercept George, who is likely to be holed up near the deer supply. As he watches the penniless, homeless Susanne keep up the grueling search pace in order to help George, Leaphorn again wonders why Ted Isaacs would have chosen to reject her.

Chapter 14 Analysis

By teaming up Susanne and Leaphorn, the author communicates the point that they are both outsiders. Susanne perceptively realizes that Navajos are loners and thinks that it must be hard for the lonely George to be a Navajo. Leaphorn, on the other hand, has come to terms with being an outsider. Even within his profession he is kept out of the loop. He feels surprisingly little rancor over the knowledge that the other police will not even bother to tell him if they crack the case. This fits Leaphorn's personality well, as he is best suited for the lonely work of tracking, at which he excels. Susanne, however,



does not embrace her status as an outcast. Instead, it has been thrust upon her. She is so desperate for love and acceptance that she stayed with Halsey despite his poor treatment of her and others. Leaphorn notices that her heart is large and that she is willing to go to great lengths to help her friend George despite the fact that Susanne could use a little help herself. This, Leaphorn believes, is what keeps her from being a loser. Although her impoverished condition and lack of education conspire to keep her from being appreciated in the white man's world, by the Navajo measuring stick, Susanne definitely measures up.



Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

Thursday, December 4, 2:17 p.m. When Susanne and Leaphorn find George's tracks on the very slope Leaphorn predicted they would, Susanne realizes what a talented tracker he is. Leaphorn considers the possibility that Susanne or George committed the murders, but he can't take the idea seriously. Something startles a jay bird, which makes Leaphorn nervous. They follow George's trail to a deer carcass. Leaphorn is surprised to see that George has begun the job of neatly butchering the deer but has abandoned the carcass without taking any meat from it. Oddly, however, George has taken a slice of fat, the deer's heart, liver and gall bladder. Navajo tradition uses gall bladders to fend off witches. Leaphorn cannot recall if the Zuni have some other ritual use for these organs and the fat. Leaphorn sees a moccasin print in the earth and freezes. Afraid that George has been ambushed and killed, Leaphorn methodically tracks George to see how and if he left the area. To his relief, Leaphorn finds proof that George left on his own power. Something, or someone, frightened him away from his food, though. Leaphorn respects George's skills and believes if the attack happened yesterday, as the prints and carcass all indicate, that George would be smart enough to find a good hiding place. George is most likely still in the area. Is the killer still around too? Susanne finds a moccasin print covering Leaphorn's own footprint. Leaphorn realizes, startled, that the Man Who Wore Moccasins is still here. He must find a hiding place and food for him and Susanne. He gets no further than three steps, however.

Chapter 15 Analysis

As a testament to Leaphorn's methodical, logical approach, he is still willing to consider Susanne and George as possible suspects. His heart tells him that they are both innocent, but as a cop he relies on logic to make his case. Therefore, he takes the time to logically consider all suspects and ultimately rules out Susanne and George only because logic dictates he do so. Witchcraft is again mentioned in this chapter as Leaphorn puzzles out all the possible solutions to the problem. In any good detective story, there are red herrings, and the witchcraft references are thrown in only to confuse the issue. The Zuni become another possible suspect in the murders since, despite the fact that they are a peaceful people, they do take sacrilege very seriously - possibly even seriously enough to kill. Yet this solution would be too obvious given the fact that the murderer makes no attempt to hide his Salamobia mask. The witchcraft suggestion seems a possible solution to the murders, and Leaphorn cannot rule it out.

Ritual and ceremony, as well as sacred symbolism, play a large part in the Native American culture. The author includes various references which are not explained, but which the reader presumes hold symbolic meaning. The fact that Leaphorn takes only three steps at the end of this chapter before confronting the peril that is revealed in the very next chapter parallels the three steps which Ernesto Cata took after seeing his



murderer and before being cut down. The number three carries holy significance in the Christian religion, but author Hillerman does not explain what if any significance it may hold for the Zuni or Navajos. However, in light of Hillerman's previous explanation about the Navajo's love for beauty and patterns, this three-step dance does provide a certain symmetry between Ernesto's death and Leaphorn's current situation. If nothing else, the pattern indicates that Leaphorn is at last close to finding the killer.



Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Thursday, December 4, 6:08 p.m. Leaphorn is hit in mid-stride. He hears a loud shot, feels terrible pain in his abdomen and smells burned powder. Susanne screams. In reflex, Leaphorn fumbles for his holster. He looks to the rock face before him, from where he saw the shot coming. He looks down and realizes, incredulously, that there is a tube of metal projecting from his abdomen. Leaphorn pulls it out and realizes that the tube has a hypodermic needle attached to it. The needle has punctured his stomach. Leaphorn tells Susanne that he has tripped a booby trap. He believes the substance injected into his body will only temporarily paralyze him. It appears to be the type of sedative used on large animals, but Leaphorn warns Susanne that it could have been filled with something more toxic. They must find shelter immediately before Leaphorn succumbs to the drug. In the short time he has, Leaphorn is not able to find them an ideal hiding spot. The indentation in the rock wall will only protect their back and sides. Quickly, he shows Susanne how to fire his pistol. He tells her to slip away and find the highway if he dies.

Leaphorn becomes totally paralyzed, but he is able to think, hear and see clearly. His involuntary muscles continue to function, enabling him to breathe and blink his eyes. Leaphorn's hearing also becomes very powerful, and he can actually hear the footsteps of the man who stalks them in the distance. Leaphorn, unable to warn Susanne, watches the man approach. He wears the birdlike kachina mask. Susanne fires the pistol, and the figure retreats. Later, he hears her fire again. She tells him that he is freezing and that she must make him a fire. He tries to will his body to tell her no, but no words come. Susanne risks her safety to build the fire, and Leaphorn decides to enjoy its warmth and accept that he cannot control the situation. He considers the kachina mask. It is the mask of the Salamobia. Leaphorn remembers his college roommate talking about Zuni hunting traditions. The Zuni first breathe in the dying breath of the deer, which they call the Sacred Wind of Life. Then the Zuni hunters take fat, gall and blood and roll it up into a ball. This fetish offering is buried beside the deer to thank the gods. He slips into nightmares about vengeful gods. When he wakes in the morning, his paralysis is wearing off. He leads Susanne back to the deer carcass, takes some meat for breakfast and finds, buried in the earth, a fetish offering. It contains the missing deer parts, a bead, a broken arrowhead point and a shell.

Chapter 16 Analysis

Chapter 16 takes on a surreal feel thanks to the author's choice to present the events as if they were occurring to the reader. The author does not simply state that Leaphorn has been hit with an animal tranquilizer. Instead the scene is brought vividly to life as Hillerman demonstrates the human thought process that would be involved in such an event. Leaphorn simultaneously sees movement by the rock face and a projectile



headed in his direction. The events happen faster than the human mind can consciously process, and anyone not expecting to find a tranquilizer canister embedded in his stomach would not immediately recognize the metal tube even if he had seen one previously. The author does a fantastic job of communicating the horror one feels when the sensory input with which one is confronted does not match one's mental expectation. It is similar to the disgusted visceral reaction an unsuspecting person might feel upon taking a drink of water from a soda can. The mind expects soda, and the water tastes repulsive because it does not match the expectation. Leaphorn looks down and sees something alien sticking out of his stomach. In the moment before his mind can piece it all together, he simply feels a gut-level revulsion and the knowledge that something is terribly wrong.



Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

Friday, December 5, 2 p.m. O'Malley reminds Leaphorn that he still needs to talk to George. O'Malley believes George is the link between the narcotics in the commune and Ernesto's death. O'Malley believes that someone else is hunting George. He claims to be sorry about the syringe which paralyzed Leaphorn, but O'Malley makes it clear that in the scheme of things, assaulting an officer charges are too small to bother filing against the perpetrator once they catch him. Leaphorn presses for information about the commune and possible drug busts, but O'Malley declines to answer. He only wants Leaphorn to bring in George, but since tomorrow is the big Shalako festival, it is doubtful George will be found in the large crowd. O'Malley is certain that the killings were done to cover up the narcotics operation and shows Leaphorn a few mugshots of people to look for in the Shalako crowd. Among them are Halsey and Otis, the young man who was on a bad trip the first time Leaphorn visited the commune. After this meeting with the FBI, Leaphorn visits Pasquaanti and tells him everything, including George's ambition to be a Zusi. Pasquaanti becomes very grim when he hears the killer is wearing a ceremonial Zuni mask. He promises to watch out for the masked man. Leaphorn recalls that the penalty for such sacrilege is death according to Zuni mythology.

Chapter 17 Analysis

More subtle prejudice is inflicted on Leaphorn in this chapter by the FBI agent, O'Malley. O'Malley downplays the paralyzing assault that Leaphorn has suffered in the course of his investigation. The reader can't help but wonder how differently O'Malley would feel had it been one of his own men hit by the projectile syringe. His decision that the nearly deadly attack on Leaphorn is not as important as the other charges he plans to file against the murderer is a clear insult to Leaphorn. Perhaps this is why Leaphorn, upon learning that O'Malley is after Halsey and Otis, does not bother to inform O'Malley that Otis has been sent away by Halsey. Leaphorn's decision to keep such information to himself is understandable on a human level considering O'Malley's complete and continuing lack of respect for Leaphorn's detective work. However, this decision also shows a weakness in Leaphorn, since Leaphorn is not above making petty decisions like withholding information because he feels personally slighted.



Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

Saturday, December 6, 4:19 p.m. Leaphorn spends the afternoon staking out the ground George would most likely travel to arrive in Zuni for Shalako. From his high vantage point, he can see the blue cooking smoke hanging over Zuni from the holiday baking. Leaphorn uses the time to think. He releases his anger at O'Malley. Logically, it makes sense that the commune and narcotics would influence O'Malley's thinking about the murder cases since the commune was already being watched by federal agents prior to the deaths. Also, Leaphorn realizes he has no more respect for O'Malley than O'Malley has for him, and so he lets his anger go. He watches the Zuni parade of the gods begin. The Little Fire God, who should have been Ernesto Cata, crosses the bridge wearing the Fire God's ceremonial mask. Behind him comes the Salamobia, wearing the same mask the killer has chosen to wear. Leaphorn extracts from his pocket the turquoise bead, abalone shell and broken flint lance tip that George buried by the deer. Suddenly, the flint arrowhead tip provides Leaphorn with the solution to the case. Realizing that George will be killed if the killer catches him at Shalako, he hurries down the slope and to the Zuni village.

Chapter 18 Analysis

Watching for George is only part of Leaphorn's decision to stake out the high ground above Zuni. More than anything, Leaphorn needs to get in touch with nature. Communing with the natural flow of patterns, rhythms and cycles helps Leaphorn's logical mind work best. It is no accident that his key inspiration that solves the crime comes to him in this natural setting.



Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

Sunday, December 7, 2:07 a.m. Leaphorn has all but given up on finding George Bowlegs at the festival. He sees Pasquaanti, who has a ceremonial role in the proceedings. Leaphorn tells Pasquaanti the conclusion he's come to about the murders. Pasquaanti listens silently. Later, Leaphorn sees Agent Baker staking out a young hippie couple. Leaphorn is filled with a desire to ask Baker to drop the stakeout and help find George Bowlegs before it's too late. Baker, however, doesn't want to be seen with a uniformed cop right at the moment, and Leaphorn does not approach him. From a balcony, Leaphorn watches the giant Shalako bird dancing in a sunken pit four feet below floor level. The bird stares directly into Leaphorn's eyes, although Leaphorn realizes that the giant creature is actually being manipulated by a dancer far below and inside, holding a pole. The bird looks away, and Leaphorn sees George Bowlegs on the balcony directly opposite Leaphorn's. George stares at the dancing god with fascinated, slightly crazed eyes, drinking it all in.

By the time Leaphorn can push his way through the crowd, George is gone. Leaphorn follows George outside into the cold winter night. He finally sees George in an alleyway. Five seconds later, George is dead. A shot rings out in the alley. Leaphorn finds only the feather from a Salamobia mask and George's crumpled body. Leaphorn realizes from the contents of George's pockets that George must have gone back to his hogan and seen the hole punched through the wall in honor of his father's death. George knew that he was more alone than ever. In George's pocket is a prayer offering made from a perfect, unbroken Stone Age lance point, carved in the distinctive style of the Folsom man. Leaphorn covers George's body and follows the killer's track through the alley. Two men wearing moccasins just a few doors down caught the killer. The tracks inside the building indicate that the two men were carrying the killer when they exited through the back door. Leaphorn realizes it is all over. In violation of O'Malley's principles, he picks up George's body and carries him out of the cold night.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Leaphorn's decision to tell Pasquaanti who the killer is leads directly to the Zuni taking revenge on the killer, as Leaphorn knew it would. However, the poignancy of this chapter comes from the fact that each law enforcement agency is only concerned with its own agenda. Neither Pasquaanti nor Agent Baker will commit any resources to protecting George Bowlegs. Just as Leaphorn once told Isaacs that Susanne was not Leaphorn's responsibility, by converse, George Bowlegs is exclusively Leaphorn's responsibility. None of the non-Navajo policemen will come to George's aid. Leaphorn is all he's got, and Leaphorn arrives five seconds too late to save the boy. To further underscore the tragedy, the author reveals that George learned of his father's death

while on the run. The lonely boy in the alley dies knowing that he is completely alone in the world. George never even has a chance to meet his would-be protector, Leaphorn.



Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

Sunday, December 7, 9 a.m. Ted Isaacs welcomes Leaphorn into his camper at the dig site. Isaacs mentions that in a few days, he plans to visit the commune and check on Susie. Leaphorn informs him that it's too late. Halsey kicked her out, and Leaphorn last saw her being questioned by federal authorities in Zusi. Isaacs asks if she's still there, but Leaphorn doesn't know. Isaacs splutters that Susanne has nowhere to go. Leaphorn angrily tells Isaacs that he told him of her situation days ago. Leaphorn reaches into his pocket and pulls out the broken lance tip from George Bowlegs' deer fetish. Isaacs jerks open a drawer and pulls out the matching piece of the broken tip. Isaacs is horrified to learn that Bowlegs acquired such a vital artifact. Leaphorn explains that Ernesto stole some artifacts from Reynolds' pickup truck. Isaacs explains that Reynolds could not have had any artifacts in his pickup truck because Isaac keeps everything stored away and cataloged. Leaphorn explains how Reynolds was manufacturing fake evidence and planting it in the ground. In anthropological terms, this is called salting the site. Isaacs realizes that Reynolds would have had the opportunity as he was in the habit of inspecting the site alone every evening.

Isaacs immediately leaps to the conclusion that Reynolds would have had to kill the boy or else suffer professional ruin. Isaacs clearly feels that the professional ruin would be worse than murdering two boys. Leaphorn shakes his head once again at Isaacs' way of thinking. Leaphorn explains Reynolds' motivation and how he figured out the case. "Leaphorn tapped the broken lance tip. 'You'd already found the butt and Bowlegs had the tip. So he had to go hunting for George. He had to catch him and make sure he got the tip back before he could kill him.'" (pg. 239) Leaphorn explains that Reynolds continued to wear the kachina mask to avoid detection. When Isaacs learns that Reynolds killed George, too, he pushes the artifacts back at Leaphorn, telling him to take them for evidence. Leaphorn tells him the Zuni have already taken care of Reynolds. With Reynolds dead, suggests Leaphorn, there will be no one to accuse Isaacs of finding fake arrowheads. Angrily, Leaphorn reminds Isaacs that Isaacs gave up his woman for fame and fortune. What else will Isaacs give up? Leaphorn makes a derogatory remark about the ways of white men and turns on his heel and leaves. Leaphorn starts up his truck and decides to take a sweep of the highways looking for Susanne. If he finds her, he'll give her a ride into town and loan her the ten-dollar bill in his wallet. Maybe, thinks Leaphorn, he will one day write a note to O'Malley telling him who the killer was. Leaphorn doubts he'll get around to it.

Chapter 20 Analysis

In the aftermath of the awful tragedy which takes the lives of two young boys, Leaphorn takes his anger out on Isaacs, who has let Susanne down. Isaacs chose a homicidal employer over the young woman he loves because of his greedy desire for fame and



fortune. Having seen two young lives already wasted, Leaphorn is furious with Isaacs for wasting yet a third life, Susanne's. Leaphorn has judged Isaacs and found him wanting. However, Leaphorn leaves him with a choice to make. Isaacs can publish the falsified evidence and have his fame and fortune, or Isaacs can go to the police station, find Susanne and turn in the fake evidence for the murder case. Leaphorn has no faith that Isaacs will make the right decision. In fact, Leaphorn has no faith that the authorities even care who killed Ernesto, George and Shorty. Leaphorn's moral disgust is his excuse for leaving the crime unsolved.

Leaphorn's moral choice is perhaps little better than Isaacs. By telling Pasquaanti that Reynolds was the mask-wearing murderer, Leaphorn has knowingly assured Reynolds' death. By not telling Agent Baker or Agent O'Malley who the true murderer is, Leaphorn reveals his judgmental soul. Perhaps the agents would not have been interested in the truth, preferring to prosecute the hippie commune for the drug and murder charges. However, by withholding information, Leaphorn does not even give them the opportunity to do the right thing. Leaphorn, despite his good character, is subject to the same prejudices as the white men. Rather than attempt to educate the white policemen about his skills as a tracker or about local customs, Leaphorn prefers to leave them in ignorance while he maintains his feeling of righteousness. If Leaphorn were to communicate the new evidence to the authorities, they would have the opportunity to follow up on it and put the murder rightfully to bed. Leaphorn tells himself that he's withholding evidence because the authorities would not care, and certainly there is validity to that belief. However, by denying the authorities the chance to do the right thing, Leaphorn is also guaranteeing himself a feeling of moral superiority. In the end, Leaphorn's greed to be right rivals Isaacs' greed for money.



Characters

Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn

Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn is a highly sympathetic protagonist. As a Navajo, he is a traditionalist. Leaphorn values the Navajo way of life, which he was fortunate enough to learn from his wise grandfather. As a detective, Leaphorn finds the Navajo belief-system useful in uncovering the culprits of the various crimes he must solve. The Navajos believe that nature and man are wholly interdependent and that nothing ever happens in isolation. For Navajos, beauty is found in the perfect patterns and symmetry of nature. As solving crimes is a matter of figuring out patterns as well, Leaphorn's ability to "walk in beauty," as the Navajo say, contributes greatly to his success as a detective.

Leaphorn solves the case of Ernesto Cata's murder by examining the patterns and incongruities that the evidence reveals. He does some of his best thinking while sitting in nature. The natural world is for him a touchstone that reminds him of the natural patterns in all things. Leaphorn has a great deal of personal integrity as well as a caring heart. The murder of a young boy is horrifying to him, and his desire to save Ernesto's friend, George Bowlegs, from a similar fate drives him to solve the crime. Leaphorn reconciles his loving heart with the gruesome crimes he sees around him again by virtue of his Navajo upbringing. Leaphorn has been taught that one can learn to live with evil if one can recognize its pattern and thus its cause. As a detective he uses this ability to make a difference by rooting out the true cause of the evil murders. Unlike the other detectives in the story, Leaphorn is not thrown off the real killer's trail by the many false leads and circumstantial evidence which seem to point in a different direction.

Ernesto Cata

Ernesto is the twelve-year-old Zuni boy who is murdered in Chapter 1. Ernesto's loss is felt deeply by the Zuni because Ernesto was born into the eminent Badger Clan and would have likely grown up to become a leader in his community. Already at age twelve, Ernesto was selected for the honor of portraying the Little Fire God at the annual Shalako festival. Ernesto took this honor quite seriously, and despite his young age, he has applied himself daily to the rigorous training regimen required to succeed at the long night of festival dancing. When Ernesto is found dead at the end of his training route, the Zuni community is deeply angered.

The reader is given little direct knowledge of Ernesto because he dies so early in the book. However, several factors become apparent from the perspective of the other characters. First, it is apparent that Ernesto is less prejudiced and more open-minded than the rest of the Zuni community. He is the only boy in the Zuni school who will deign to befriend a Navajo like George Bowlegs. However, it is also apparent from Ernesto's thought process in Chapter 1 that he has picked up some of his culture's discriminatory attitudes towards Navajos and that to some extent he does look down on George. Cecil



reinforces this belief when tells Leaphorn that Ernesto, being a Zuni, was never a true friend to George Bowlegs. This candid remark reveals Cecil's prejudice as well as Ernesto's and makes it clear to the reader that the two cultures live side by side in an uneasy truce.

George Bowlegs

Although the reader never meets George Bowlegs, the author reveals the young Navajo boy's sad plight throughout the course of the story. The Navajo people are known for their loner ways and tend to live far apart from one another. This system works if one's family unit is successful and cohesive, but George Bowlegs has an absentee mother and an alcoholic father. Further, George is isolated from his peers because he attends a Zuni school, where he is discriminated against as a Navajo. Young George does not give up on life, though. Instead, the brave boy takes responsibility for his family. From an early age, he begins hunting for meat to feed his brother and father. By the time he is fourteen, George is an accomplished hunter and knows both the Navajo and Zuni style of hunting.

George longs to heal the huge void in his life. He is desperately lonely and has no one upon whom he can rely. Given his family's deep poverty, George likely sees very little academic or career possibility in his future. He pins all of his hopes on finding a way out through religion. George studies the various local religions voraciously. He attends the Catholic Church and even takes peyote buttons in a quest to find his spiritual totem animal. After all of his studies, George eventually falls in love with the Zuni religion. Unfortunately, even here George is isolated, for the clannish Zuni do not allow other Native American ethnicities to convert to their religion. Ever optimistic, George continues his Zuni studies regardless, hoping to change the minds of the Zuni elders. This is why his friendship with Ernesto, a Zuni boy, is so important to George. George hopes that through Ernesto's influence he will finally be admitted into the Zuni way of life. Tragically, the murderous Dr. Reynolds uses George's desire to trick George. He appears to George as a Zuni god in order to get close enough to the boy to murder him.

Shorty Bowlegs

Little is known about Shorty Bowlegs other than that he is an alcoholic. Leaphorn mentions that Shorty is a friendly man and loving towards his children despite the neglect the boys suffer due to Shorty's shortcomings. Given the stark realities of Shorty's impoverished and isolated life with few apparent opportunities for improvement, the reader is inclined to be sympathetic to this man despite his failure as a father and provider for his children.

Cecil Bowlegs

Cecil Bowlegs is a very brave young Navajo boy. He is George's younger brother, and when Leaphorn first meets him, he confuses Cecil for George. Cecil lives with his



brother and alcoholic father in a rundown Navajo hogan near Zuni territory. The Bowlegs family is cut off from their Navajo roots and extended family. Because Cecil's mother ran away years ago, the little boy finds himself truly alone when his brother disappears and his father is killed. Cecil is mistrusting of authority, and given the sad circumstances of his life, Cecil seemingly has good reason for this mistrust. He has been let down by his absentee mother and his alcoholic father. Since he goes to a Zuni school, Cecil is more likely to encounter prejudice than support from the Zuni authority figures. Young Cecil resents his older brother's attempts to integrate with the Zuni society, which has treated them both so badly. Cecil is astute enough to realize that even George's best friend Ernesto looks down on George because he is not Zuni like Ernesto. Cecil is extremely wary of other people, especially authority figures, which makes it a challenge for Leaphorn to win his trust.

Leaphorn is able to use his common Navajo bond with Cecil to initiate their initial dialogue. Then, the smart little boy catches on that Leaphorn is trying to manipulate him into giving up information about George's whereabouts. Leaphorn creates trust, however, by admitting to Cecil that he had indeed been trying to extricate George's location from Cecil. Leaphorn apologizes for lying and generally treats Cecil with more respect than Cecil has probably ever received in his young life. Even so, Cecil only shares partial information with Leaphorn. It is not until his father is killed, leaving Cecil absolutely alone in the world, that he places his trust fully in Leaphorn.

FBI Agent O'Malley

Agent O'Malley is, from Leaphorn's perspective, a cookie-cutter FBI type. O'Malley is clean-cut, clean-shaven and confident of his superiority. O'Malley not only believes that he is a superior law enforcement agent because he is with the FBI, but he also believes he is superior to Leaphorn because O'Malley is white and from the big city. In fairness to O'Malley, the reader only sees him through Leaphorn's eyes, and Leaphorn admits to being as prejudiced against O'Malley as O'Malley is against him.

Ed Pasquaanti

Pasquaanti is the Zuni Chief of Police. At the end of the novel, he is the only law enforcement agent Leaphorn entrusts with the killer's identity. Pasquaanti, however, makes no move to arrest the killer. Instead, he informs his fellow Zuni of the blasphemous acts perpetrated by Ernesto Cata's killer. Zuni tradition calls for the death penalty in response to sacrilege, and the Zuni men take justice into their own hands, presumably killing Dr. Reynolds for his sacrilege and for having murdered one of their own.

Dr. Reynolds

Dr. Reynolds is the murderer who Leaphorn discovers at the end of the investigative trail. Reynolds' motive for killing Ernesto Cata, Shorty Bowlegs and George Bowlegs is



simple greed. This same greed had inspired Dr. Reynolds, a well-known anthropologist, to plant fake evidence in the dig site that he is sponsoring for his protygy, Ted Isaacs. When the boys steal a broken arrowhead from Reynolds' truck, they believe it is a real artifact and plan to make a traditional hunting fetish with it. What the boys don't know is that the arrowhead is a fake, and Reynolds has already planted the other half for Isaacs to find. Now Reynolds needs to get his fake evidence back from the boys so that he can plant it near the first broken piece at the dig site. Reynolds' goal is to plant this evidence as a shortcut to proving an anthropological theory. Reynolds feels he must kill the boys to prevent anyone from finding out that Reynolds planted fake arrowheads. If the academic community were to find out such a thing, Reynolds' career would be ruined. Thus he sacrifices a total of three lives to save his reputation.

Ted Isaacs

Ted Isaacs is Dr. Reynolds' protygy and alleged fiancy to Susanne. Isaacs is the self-described son of Tennessee white trash. He resents his impoverished upbringing and the deprivation he endured while earning his way through college. Ted is determined to make it big in the anthropological world. A regular junior-faculty appointment will not content the young man. He is tired of struggling to advance in the world and intends to make himself a star through the evidence he is discovering at his dig site. Isaacs intends to prove the Reynolds' theory, which will guarantee him fast advancement in the world of academia. To this end, Isaacs is willing to sacrifice Susanne's safety, although he claims to love her. Leaphorn finds Ted's attitude unconscionable. When Leaphorn discovers that Ted's boss is the murderer and that the artifact evidence that Ted has been counting on to make his reputation is actually fake, Leaphorn feels a sense of poetic justice. There is beauty in the pattern. Ted rejects Susanne for the promise of great rewards, and then the rewards turn out to lack integrity, just as Leaphorn feels that Ted lacks integrity.

Susanne

Susanne is a young Caucasian woman, probably in her late teens by Leaphorn's estimation. The burn scar on her hand and her unwillingness to discuss her home life lead Leaphorn to believe that she comes from an abusive background. Susanne ran away from home in the tenth grade and continues to worry about her little sister, who still lives with their abusive parent. Susanne has the type of heart that embraces everyone. She would gladly help any of her friends at her own expense, as she proves by joining Leaphorn on an arduous and dangerous search for George. Unfortunately, Susanne lacks even the means to take care of herself, much less anyone else. The only refuge Susanne has been able to find for herself since leaving her parent's house is with the controlling Halsey who runs the hippie commune. When Leaphorn meets Susanne, he is struck by Halsey's controlling attitude and violent edge. Later, Leaphorn discovers that the commune is a front for Halsey's narcotics trade and insists that Susanne move away before she gets embroiled in a potential narcotics raid.



Susanne has learned in her young life to expect very little from people and thus is neither surprised nor angered when her fiancy, Ted, refuses to take her in despite the fact that she is in danger from both the killer and the law. Leaphorn wishes desperately that he could do more for Susanne, but he acknowledges that he is not responsible for her. Leaphorn's responsibilities are to the Navajo people, and he takes ownership of George Bowlegs' trouble. However Leaphorn is infuriated when Ted refuses to take in Susanne, because from his point of view Susanne is Ted's responsibility. Because Ted chooses career vanity over the woman he loves, Susanne is left on her own at the end of the novel.

Father Ingles

Of the Order of the Saint Francis, Father Ingles has worked for years out of Saint Michael's Mission near Window Rock and is known among the Window Rock Navajos as Narrowbutt in deference to his bony hindquarters.



Objects/Places

Shalako

In Zuni tradition, Shalako is the courier between mankind and the gods. Once a year, a ritual dance and feast is held to honor Shalako and to accept the blessings Shalako brings from the gods. The spirits of the kachinas, portrayed by specially selected Zuni people, dance at Kothluwalawa, the Dance Hall of the Dead. If the kachina dance is not properly re-enacted by the Zuni, the rains and the harvest may not come that year. This annual holiday brings Zuni children home from all over the country, just as many young Jewish or Christian children return home for holidays like Christmas or Passover.

Halona Itawana

Halona Itawana is the Zuni name for the Zuni Village. Halona Itawana means the Middle Ant Hill of the World. This anthill houses nearly all of the Zuni population, numbering 6,000 all together. It is called an anthill partly because Zuni tradition calls for extended families to live together in tightly knit groups. Few of the area Zuni live away from Halona Itawana. During the time of Shalako, the populace jumps to some 8,000 people as Zuni children return from college or other pursuits, accompanied by tourists and traders attracted by the festival.

Kothluwalawa

Kothluwalawa is also known as the Dance Hall of the Dead. Mythological scholars have narrowed down four possible locations for Kothluwalawa, according to Father Ingles, although some scholars insist it does not exist anywhere on earth. George Bowlegs believes that a dry lake bed northeast of Zuni village, one of the four possible spots considered by scholars, is the authentic Kothluwalawa. He journeys there hoping to meet the kachinas and the spirit of his dead friend, Ernesto.

The Salamobia Mask

The ceremonial Salamobia Mask, with its distinctive collar of bird feathers, is worn by the killer to disguise his identity. Wearing such a mask for such evil purposes is a sacrilege to the Zuni people, and such sacrilege demands death.

The Shulawitsi Mask

The Shulawitsi Mask is the mask of the Little Fire God, which Ernesto Cata was scheduled to wear at the Shalako festival prior to his untimely death.



Shorty Bowlegs' Hogan

The Navajo-style house where father Shorty Bowlegs and sons George and Cecil live is a modest home at best. Due to Shorty's alcoholism and lack of employment, the sum total of the hogan's contents are worth approximately \$100. However, the hogan is ransacked by Shorty Bowlegs' killer in search of extremely valuable evidence.

Alice Madman's Hogan

The hogan once belonging to Frank Bob and Alice Madman now belongs to Alice's ghost, according to the Navajo tradition. A group of hippies moves into the hogan and calls their new home Jason's Fleece. The young people in the commune either don't care or don't believe that the hogan is haunted.

George's Hunting Fetish

The fetish, consisting of a turquoise bead, a broken arrowhead, a piece of shell, deer fat and some of the deer's internal organs, is a Zusi-style offering made to the gods in thanks for a successful hunt. George has no way of knowing that the ancient arrowhead he stole from Reynolds to make a more potent fetish is actually a fraudulent copy made by Reynolds as "proof" of his Folsom man theory.

The Folsom Point

Ancient Folsom man is known for his distinctive, beautifully artistic style of arrowhead, known today as Folsom points. Folsom man used the technique of pressure flaking to carve his stylish arrowheads. However, this technique is immensely time-consuming, and anthropologists believe it may have contributed to the demise of the Folsoms.

The Bicycle

The bicycle, belonging to Ernesto Cata, initially disappears along with the boy. It is eventually found hidden next to Ernesto's shallow grave and becomes part of the case evidence.

Social Sensitivity

in Tony Hillerman's earlier Joe AsLeaphorn novel, *The Blessing Way* (1970), *Dance Hall of the Dead* stresses the importance of cultural identification to the establishment of a complete individual identity.

George Bowlegs, who never appears directly in the novel, is between cultures himself, attempting to leave his Navajo traditions behind in favor of the belief system of the Zuni people. Being "between cultures," as it were, Bowlegs has no personal identity as Hillerman sees it—although Bowlegs recognizes this and is attempting to remedy the situation—and therefore cannot personally appear in the novel. Joe Leaphorn, on the other hand, although having been exposed to white Anglo culture at Arizona State University and to many cultures through his study of anthropology there, has consciously chosen to follow the Navajo Way, and thus appears as a complete, mature, and sympathetic character to the reader.

Akin to the question of culture is the problem of racism, which so often appears when and where two or more cultures meet.

In this case, the problem appears primarily in Leaphorn himself, demonstrating both the depth of Leaphorn's characterization as well as the fact that not even the most sympathetic and heroic of Hillerman's characters can avoid the foibles common to the human race. Leaphorn, having developed the prejudice that the Zuni believe themselves superior to the Navajo after spending a year rooming with a Zuni during his freshman year at Arizona State, recognizes such feelings as a personal defect, and struggles to overcome them—more or less successfully, it would appear—in his own Navajo quest to live in harmony with all things.

Additionally, Hillerman stresses the importance of individual choice of a belief system over the actual tenants of that system. Although clearly admiring the Navajo ideal of living in harmony with all, Hillerman does not present the Navajo Way as the only acceptable way of life. Suzanne is presented as a positive character because, although she has rejected Anglo culture in general and, later, has been in turn rejected by the Golden Fleece commune, she cares for and about other human beings, reflecting her own desire to live in harmony with them. George Bowlegs, although seemingly impractical and perhaps impetuous, also appears in a positive light because he seeks to adopt a culture to replace the Navajo traditions that were never truly taught to him by his dysfunctional family and therefore hold no value for him. Bowlegs, at least, recognizes the absence of that culture, and seeks to find his place.



Techniques

To a degree, Tony Hillerman's writing style resembles Hemingway's, in that he includes relatively few adjectives and adverbs, preferring to deal with more solid nouns and verbs. Also like Hemingway, Hillerman is a European war veteran whose style developed, in part, from his thirty year career as a reporter and news editor, as well as additional years of teaching journalism at the University of New Mexico. Thus, his descriptions of setting in *Dance Hall of the Dead* include much rich, realistic detail, but also serve to further the plot and/or characterization of the novel.

Consistent with his other works, Hillerman uses the awe-inspiring landscape of the American Southwest almost as a character in *Dance Hall of the Dead*. Hillerman describes many of the Native American characters as being in harmony with the land, as he does when Joe Leaphorn is able to analyze deer migration patterns to track George Bowlegs, who he assumes will follow the deer because, as a fellow Navajo, Bowlegs should be able himself to track the same deer as a source of food. Moreover, the Golden Heece commune, consisting of whites, did not share this harmony with the land, and ruined some sheep grazing land as well as a water source. They learned, however, from these experiences, and have come into greater unity with their surroundings—and with their Navajo neighbors—as a result.

Significantly, Dr. Reynolds defiles the land itself, planting artifacts deep within the earth to "seed" an archeological dig site, in his pursuit of selfish gain.

Hillerman's inclusion of detailed information regarding Native American traditions, beliefs and culture serves to promote what Hillerman himself described in an interview for *Writer's Digest* (Jan. 2000) as a "priority"; that is, to "force the reader to attend a Native ceremony or get involved in the religious tradition in order to follow the plot." In the case of *Dance Hall of the Dead*, Hillerman's plot revolves around the Shalako ceremony of the Zuni people. Any mystery reader hopes, with the detective, to solve the crime described in the novel, and the reader must understand both the legend behind this Zuni ceremony and its purpose in order to understand what motivates George Bowlegs, the Navajo youth Joe Leaphorn seeks. Leaphorn's understanding of these Zuni beliefs allows him to track Bowlegs both on his quest for a sacred lake and back to the Zuni village in time for the main ceremony itself.



Themes

Themes

In Joe Leaphorn's universe, there would appear to be no absolute truth. Religious beliefs that appear not only conflicting, but actually contradictory, are all considered equally valid. Father Ingles, a Catholic missionary priest of the Order of Saint Francis, can therefore speak with some authority on the subject of Zuni religious beliefs, and compare them accurately to Navajo beliefs, without appearing to condemn either system—which would appear to be in direct opposition to his own Catholic doctrine. Leaphorn, a Navajo, can learn about George Bowleg's desire to leave behind his Navajo culture for the Zuni tradition without any negative reaction—such matters are individual choices, regardless of the fact that it is Leaphorn's own chosen system that Bowlegs is rejecting. Leaphorn, in fact, treats religion almost dismissively at times, although he certainly believes some of the Navajo tradition himself. He is willing, for example, to overlook what appears to be an instance of criminal drug use at the Golden Fleece commune on the grounds that the same drug is sometimes used in Native American religious ceremonies, and is therefore not often prosecuted by Native American law enforcement officers—all this although Leaphorn knows that this particular instance of drug use is not connected in any way with Native American belief.

Nonetheless, although he certainly seems to advocate no particular tradition, Hillerman acknowledges a basic human desire to be part of some belief system. Reynolds wishes to be accepted for his beliefs by the mainstream of American anthropological academia. Isaacs also seeks to replace his "poor white trash" upbringing in Tennessee with a similar academic acceptance. Bowlegs obviously desires to make a cultural exchange of the same sort. The Golden Fleece commune members have intentionally distanced themselves from their parent culture, but in doing so, have created their own "miniculture" on Navajo land. And Hillerman emphasizes the importance of religious beliefs to the Zuni people many times throughout the novel.

Culture and Tradition

The story's protagonist, Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn, spends a lot of time reflecting on the value of culture and tradition during the course of his investigation into a Zuni boy's murder. Leaphorn experiences a subtle level of discrimination from the clannish Zuni because of his Navajo background. Leaphorn even admits to having a minor inferiority complex about the Zuni, whom he admires despite their feelings about Navajos. In ancient times, Zuni tribal initiations actually involved scalping a Navajo. The bad blood between the two cultures goes back to before the time the white man came to America. When the white man conquered the country inhabited by Native Americans, he lumped all the Native Americans together in one category. For the most part, that category was discriminatory in nature and according to Joe Leaphorn's experience, many whites still persist in their ignorant belief that Indians are dumb savages. The Zuni and the Navajos



represent a cultural dichotomy within the broader Native American culture. Through this dichotomy, the author is able to explore the benefits and drawbacks of the broader Native American heritage.

The Navajos admire the Zuni because the Zuni have managed to retain the inspiring spiritual practices and long-reaching traditions despite the coming of the white man. The Navajo way, by contrast, is dying out, as symbolized in the book by the young lost boy, George Bowlegs. George has been denied the way of his people, for unlike Leaphorn, George had no wise uncle, father or grandfather to teach him about Navajo beliefs. George has not been allowed to integrate with the surrounding Caucasian or Zuni peoples either, and so he has no culture and no tradition to embrace. The fact that the Zuni live together in large family groups and continue to celebrate their traditions involving the Dancing Gods is cause for Leaphorn's envy. The Zuni traditions are beautiful but time-consuming. In fact, many of the men selected to portray gods, or kachinas, at ritual ceremonies must quit their jobs for a year in order to prepare. Anthropologist Ted Isaacs suggests that such time-consuming rituals can cause a culture to die out, as evidenced by the disappearance of the ancient Folsom man.

In fact, most of the local Native American cultures have given up the old ways in an effort to integrate with modern society. Leaphorn bitterly recalls a banner posted in his high school, which read "'Tradition is the Enemy of Progress.'" (Chapter 4, pg. 43) For Leaphorn, the traditional thinking of the Navajo way is a touchstone that guides him to success, and he mourns both the loss of such Navajo traditions and the plight of George Bowlegs. Yet even the ritualistic Zuni have felt the need to make some changes over the years. Certainly, they no longer scalp Navajos. On balance, the author presents a case for retaining tradition while finding a way to integrate old traditions into modern society.

Troubled Youth

Although *Dance Hall of the Dead* focuses on the diversity and prejudices of several different ethnicities, the author's theme of troubled youth underscores that human flaws are common to all races. Raising children may be conducted quite differently by distinct cultures, but the need to raise children is central to all human cultures. Unfortunately, many people of varying ethnicities fail in this ever-important task, as Leaphorn realizes when he meets Susanne. "What the hell is she doing here with this hard bunch? She's too young. Why don't white people take care of their children? Then he thought of George Bowlegs. And why don't Navajos take care of their children?" (Chapter 11, pg. 113)

Leaphorn's opinion of the white men is that they are soulless and lack respect for nature, their families and other fundamentally important tenets of the Navajo way. He blames the white man's lack of family and spiritual connection for Susanne's tough life. George Bowlegs, however, is a Navajo. Still, Leaphorn believes George's problems are similar to Susanne's. George has been denied access to his own culture. He lacks a responsible and wise caretaker to teach him the Navajo way. George has become so



desperate for spiritual fulfillment that he gullibly believes that the murderous Reynolds is actually a kachina god. George reveals his good heart and his longing for a spiritual path through his quixotic quest to find the kachina he believes to be responsible for Ernesto's death and apologize. Leaphorn, unable to catch George in time to save him, can only watch George's lonely life end in tragedy. The similarity between Susanne and George's situations torments Leaphorn, who mourns the lack of strong cultural and family ties that could have saved the children.

Ethnic Prejudice

Prejudice is dealt with in the story on numerous levels. Initially, the reader is introduced to the historical feud between the Navajo and the Zuni. Navajo protagonist Leaphorn finds himself in the uncomfortable position of admiring the Zuni despite their intolerance for Navajos. The Zuni are a closed-off community, which is partly why they have been able to preserve their cultural traditions despite the encroachment of modern life. Leaphorn greatly admires their cultural integrity and wishes his own Navajo people had been as successful in passing along their ethnic traditions. However, Leaphorn resents the Zuni for their air of superiority and refusal to accept other cultures into their clan. He has an inferiority complex regarding the Zuni and frequently chastises himself for letting their prejudices get to him. Leaphorn is a wonderful protagonist for a story about prejudice because he is determined to acknowledge and rise above his own prejudices. Interestingly, this desire to rise above prejudice is part of the Navajo tradition, and so it is because of his ethnicity that he embraces the ethnicity of others.

However, not even Leaphorn can rise above his resentment of the white man. His personal history with Caucasians has convinced him that all white people think Native Americans are stupid savages. He also realizes that the white man has no concept that there is more than one ethnicity within the Native American populace. The Zuni and the Navajo are shown to be quite distinct, but the white FBI agent views them and all Native Americans as the same. This racism infuriates Leaphorn as well as the other Native American officers involved in the case. Leaphorn and the other officers from the various local law enforcement agencies normally treat each other prejudicially because of their varied ethnicities. However, thanks to Agent O'Malley's blanket prejudice against all of them, they wind up uniting in brotherhood against their common antagonist.

Style

Point of View

Dance Hall of the Dead is narrated in the third-person omniscient style, but from the main character Joe Leaphorn's point of view. Because Lieutenant Leaphorn is a Navajo, and because the story focuses on the Native American lifestyle in modern day America, Leaphorn's point of view is more than merely his personal point of view. Leaphorn represents the Navajo point of view as well. Throughout the novel, Leaphorn reflects on the Navajo way. This reflection not only shows Leaphorn's cultural pride, but it also serves to educate the reader regarding the wisdom of the Navajo. Fundamentally, the Navajos believe that everything in nature, man included, is interdependent. A beetle does not move unless something causes it to move. The beetle's movement in turn causes some other animal to move as well.

The Navajo people believe there is a natural pattern in everything, including evil-doing. Leaphorn's ability to find the pattern in the evil murder of a young boy ultimately leads him to solve the case. The Navajo wisdom he imparts to the reader additionally includes the importance of a man's character. Leaphorn doesn't judge a man by his monetary success. His Navajo point of view puts much greater emphasis on a man's character and his ability to find his place in the overall harmony of life.

The author makes one notable deviation from Leaphorn's point of view. Chapter 1 is actually told from the point of view of Ernesto Cata, the young Zuni murder victim. As it is the only instance in which the author switches points of view, this single instance indicates the relative importance of the first chapter. Indeed, it not only describes the events immediately preceding Ernesto's murder, but it also references every clue which Leaphorn will eventually discover and follow up. Additionally, Chapter 1 presents the Zuni traditions of Shalako from a Zuni perspective. All subsequent discussion of Zuni tradition is told through Leaphorn's Navajo perspective. By setting apart Chapter 1 so clearly, the author highlights the importance of the information and point of view contained in the chapter.

Setting

The setting of *Dance Hall of the Dead* is integral to the story. The Navajo philosophy modeled by main character Joe Leaphorn could not have developed in anything but a natural setting. The Navajo way of life is tied to the earth, its cycles and to the indigenous plant, animal and insect populations. Thus the central philosophy of the book was developed ages ago in the vast natural landscape of the North American content. The landscape that gave birth to this philosophy has changed very little in the ensuing years. Joe Leaphorn knows all the same plants, animals and stars that his forefathers knew. However, the desert is a rough climate, and the lack of opportunity



available to the modern-day Navajos in the book can partly be credited to this barren setting.

However, Leaphorn fulfills his Navajo destiny by finding his place in the harmony of life. He uses the hunting and tracking skills he has learned from his native habitat to become a successful local detective. Leaphorn's ability to track a man, animal or even a Zuni kachina god through this vast desert landscape is critically important to the story. Because of this, Leaphorn's character is a testament to Navajo wisdom, and his ability to find patterns in nature contributes greatly to his ability to solve crimes.

Language and Meaning

In *Dance Hall of the Dead*, author Tony Hillerman introduces the reader to the beauty of Native American languages. Both Navajo and Zuni words are used and defined throughout the story. When Lieutenant Leaphorn first meets young Cecil Bowlegs, Leaphorn uses the word Dinee to stress his common bond with Bowlegs. Both man and boy are Navajo, and Dinee is the Navajo word for The People, meaning not just any people, but specifically the brotherhood of Navajo people. The book is written in English, but the reader does learn secondhand from the author about the Navajo tradition of intentionally mispronouncing vowels in order to create verbal puns. The Navajo sense of humor is revealed through the nicknames that they assign men. Father Ingles is called Narrowbutt by his humorous but friendly Navajo neighbors. Leaphorn privately assigns nicknames to the people he meets as well, including Hair in Bun and Man Who Wore Moccasins. Such nicknames reveal the tongue-in-cheek sense of humor attributed to the Navajo people in the book.

The names of the Zuni gods and sacred places of worship are used in the story as well. The reader becomes acquainted with such gods as Salamobia, which can be fierce, and Koyemshi, which means Mudhead and represents the mutant offspring of incest. The term Kothluwalawa means Dance Hall of the Dead, for which the book is titled, and it refers to the place in the hereafter where the Zuni gods dance forever underneath a sacred lake. Halona Itawana means the Middle Ant Hill of the World, and it is the name for the Zuni home village, where the entire population lives hived together rather like a busy anthill. Additionally, the author employs some anthropological terms, most notably *salting the site*, which refers to the disreputable practice of planting fake artifacts for the diggers to discover. All of these culturally varied and colorful terms are evocative of the setting and story and lend the book a distinct feel.

Structure

Dance Hall of the Dead is divided into twenty chapters. The first chapter is set apart by its point of view. In Chapter 1, the author divulges the details leading up to the central murder through the eyes of the murder victim himself. Every subsequent chapter is told from the point of view of the protagonist, Lieutenant Joe Leaphorn. Because the novel is a detective story about a homicide, the time factor is critical to the developing events.



The linear plot traces the story from the Sunday of the first murder to the following Sunday. This one-week span of time is a relatively short time frame in which to encapsulate an entire story, especially a story with plot and characters as well-developed as this one. However, in homicide detective time, a week is quite long. The odds of solving a homicide decrease exponentially with each passing day. The author keeps the clock ticking by beginning each and every chapter with the date and time, to remind the reader that precious seconds are ticking by.

Given the importance of speed in such an investigation, it is ironic that the main character is a man who never hurries. Leaphorn believes in a methodical approach and finds that hurrying often results in wasted time. Leaphorn's wisdom contains great truth, and yet his slow deliberate style is used with great effect by the author to raise the tension level. Ultimately, Leaphorn's methodical approach is the only approach that works to solve the crime, even though there are five other law enforcement agencies working the same case. Yet Leaphorn's refusal to hurry is costly as well. In the end, he fails to save young George Bowlegs because he finds him five seconds too late to prevent his murder.



Quotes

"Don't look so sour,' the radioman said, still grinning. 'I don't think the Zusis' been initiating anybody into the Bow Society lately.' "Leaphorn had laughed at that. Once, or so Navajos believed, initiates into the Zuni Bow priesthood had been required to bring a Navajo scalp." Chapter 2, pg. 8

"Leaphorn suddenly understood his mood. It was because he felt that Zusis felt superior to Navajos. And he felt this because, he Joe Leaphorn, had once - a long time ago - had a Zuni roommate during his freshman year at Arizona State about whom he had developed a silly inferiority complex." Chapter 2, pp. 9-10

"Was this why the Zuni had survived as a people against five centuries of invasions? Was there some natural law, like the critical mass of nuclear physics, which held that X number of Indians compacted in X number of square yards could resist the White Man's Way by drawing strength from one another?" Chapter 7, pg. 71

"That had always been the point of the lesson. Interdependency of nature. Every cause has its effect. Every action its reaction. A reason for everything. In all things a pattern, and in this pattern, the beauty of harmony. Thus one learned to live with evil, by understanding it, by reading its cause. And thus one learned, gradually and methodically, if one was lucky, to always 'go in beauty,' to always look for the pattern, and to find it." Chapter 7, pg. 77

"As green as spring, as gray as winter. How had she come here? Where had she come from? Why didn't the white man take care of his daughter? Was he, like Shorty Bowlegs, hiding from his children in a bottle?" Chapter 11, pg. 116

"He spoke Navajo, which was rare among white men, and had mastered its complex tonalities so thoroughly that he could practice the Navajo pastime of spinning off puns and absurdities by pretending to slightly mispronounce his verbs." Chapter 13, pg. 138

"What George Bowlegs was hunting, Leaphorn thought, was a concept so foreign to The People that their language lacked a word for it. There was no heaven in the Navajo cosmos, and no friendly kachina spirit, and no pleasant life after death. If one was lucky, there was oblivion. But for most, there was the unhappy malevolent ghost, the chindi, wailing away the eons in the darkness, spreading sickness and evil." Chapter 13, pg. 147

"He was so lonely. I think it must be bad to be a Navajo if being lonely bothers you.' "The thought had never occurred to Leaphorn. He considered it, looking across the broken expanse of grass, brush, and erosion which faded away to empty blue distance across the pond. 'Yeah,' he said. 'Like a mole that hates the dark.'" Chapter 14, pg. 168



"'We will watch for that man,' Pasquaanti said. His voice was grim. It caused Leaphorn to remember something that Rounder had told him years ago; in Zuni mythology, the penalty for sacrilege is death." Chapter 17, pg. 212

"The fragment of flint in Leaphorn's palm became a sort of keystone. Around it the pieces of the puzzle of why Ernesto Cata had to die fell exactly into place." Chapter 18, pg. 219

"He sat stock-still, sorting it very precisely in chronological order, checking for flaws, assigning to each of those deeds which had seemed so irrational a logical cause." Chapter 18, pg. 220

"'I'm trying to learn more about white men,' he said. 'You wanted all that worse than you wanted your woman. What else will you give up for it?'" Chapter 20, pp. 241-242

Adaptations

Audio Partners Publishing Corporation published a two-cassette version of *Dance Hall of the Dead*, read by Michael Ansara, in 1989. Books on Tape, Incorporated published a six-cassette version of *Dance Hall of the Dead* in 1994.



Key Questions

Hillerman demonstrates the essential conflict between individual desire and societal and cultural limits in *Dance Hall of the Dead*, as he does in much of his other work as well. He often portrays individual decisions as wrong—or at least misguided—but generally seems to allow cultures as diverse as the Golden Fleece commune, the Navajo people, the Zuni people, and AngloAmerican society to choose whatever rules by which they desire to live. Cultural differences, always a source of tension in Hillerman's fiction, become resolved only through individual commitment and resolve.

1. Hillerman presents many of his characters in pairs—there are two Federal officers involved in the case, two Native American officers, two commune members treated in any detail, two archeologists, two young boys murdered, etc.

Choose any such pairing and compare and contrast the two characters involved. Why does Hillerman pair up his characters in this way?

2. Discuss the competing law enforcement jurisdictions as Hillerman describes them. Does the author include this merely for the sake of narrative realism, or is there more that he seems to be trying to say?

3. Books on Tape, in publishing an audio version of this novel in 1994, described it in part as being about "the strange laws of the Zuni Indians." Is this an apt description of the novel? Do you think Hillerman would describe the novel in this way?

4. Hillerman combines elements of several forms of detective fiction in *Dance Hall of the Dead*, including ethnic fiction, hard-boiled detective fiction, and the police procedural, to name only a few. How should this novel, then, be categorized? Should it be categorized at all?

5. Leaphorn spends the entire novel searching for a Navajo boy he never really finds. What does this say about the duty of the Navajo policeman?

6. Describe the character of Suzanne, of the Golden Fleece commune. Does Hillerman portray her as a positive or negative character? Why do you think so?

7. What is Dr. Chester Reynolds' essential failing? What is Hillerman saying about the human condition in general with this character?

8. The reader never really encounters George Bowlegs except through the eyes of other characters. What does the reader learn about Bowlegs in this way? Why do you think Hillerman limits the experience of the reader in this way?



Topics for Discussion

Discuss Joe Leaphorn's view of logic and problem-solving. What aspects of his theories on problem-solving do you believe work best and why?

Being a good tracker takes intelligence, keen observational skills and patience, amongst other qualities. Which of these three or what other quality would you say is Leaphorn's strongest? Give examples from the story to support your position.

Describe the differences between the Zuni belief about the afterlife and the Navajo.

Describe any similarities you noticed between the Zuni and Navajo cultures, giving at least one example from the story.

Do you think it was fair to label young George Bowlegs crazy? Why or why not?

Based on what little you know about Ernesto Cata, including his thoughts from Chapter 1, do you think he inherited his people's prejudice against the Navajo? Explain your answer.

Describe Leaphorn's point of view on Ted Isaac's relationship with Susanne.

Literary Precedents

Hillerman's novels fit into so many traditional sub-categories of detective fiction that he becomes almost impossible to classify in such terms. Ethnic detectives like Chee and Leaphorn have appeared in the earliest detective fiction, as Edgar Allan Poe's protagonist, C. Auguste Dupin, was a Frenchman living in Paris, and his other major detective figure, Legrand, is a displaced Huguenot living in South Carolina.

As an ethnic detective writer, Hillerman belongs in the same category as Australian Arthur Upfield, whose works featuring half-Aborigine half-Anglo Napoleon Bonaparte apparently influence some of Hillerman's writing. Bonaparte also must work in relatively isolated areas—many even largely and more sparsely populated than the "Big Reservation." Like Bonaparte, Chee and Leaphorn also hark back to the frontier novels of James Fenimore Cooper and others, in which the hero finds himself struggling between the opposing cultures and values of civilization and the "wilderness."

Obviously, this same struggle can be seen in much Western literature as well, as in the works of Louis L'Amour. This last connection may, in fact, be the strongest, as detective literature in general has often been linked with the traditions of the American Western, and Hillerman's work is set in the American Southwest. However, his work also includes aspects of the police procedural, the ethnography, the hard-boiled detective novel, the religious detective, and the suspense novel or "thriller."



Related Titles

Tony Hillerman's first novel, *The Blessing Way* (1970), marks the first appearance of Navajo Tribal Policeman Joe Leaphorn.

As usual, Leaphorn's unique understanding of both white Anglo culture and Navajo tradition allows him to solve a murder that seems to be the result of Navajo witchcraft.

Leaphorn, of course, returns years later in *Dance Hall of the Dead*, winner of the Edgar Award for best mystery of the year, and often considered one of Hillerman's best works. Hillerman also illustrates the differences in culture and tradition between Native American groups—groups often considered largely homogenous by outsiders—in 1977's *Listening Woman*.

In 1978, having sold the television rights to the character of Joe Leaphorn, Hillerman introduced another Native American law enforcement officer, Jim Chee, in *The People of Darkness*. The younger and more spiritual (when compared to Leaphorn) Chee returned in *The Ghost Way* (1981) and *Ghostway* (1984), and eventually appeared in a number of novels featuring both Chee and Leaphorn, the first of which was *A Thief of Time* (1985), a novel Hillerman himself has referred to as his favorite work. Chee and the more pragmatic Leaphorn must work together for some time before their relationship evolves into anything more than just professional courtesy toward each other.

This most clearly begins to happen in *Skinwalkers* (1986), as they look into a number of killings together. In *Talking God* (1989), one of a number of Hillerman's novels in which he decries the pursuit of archeology and anthropology for personal gain, Chee and Hillerman find their investigation hampered by personal issues both men must address.

Coyote Waits (1990) may be Hillerman's darkest, most pessimistic work, as the title itself refers to the traditional Navajo belief that death and chaos wait for all, and are ultimately unavoidable, regardless of man's best-intended struggles against them.

Hillerman again presents the religious culture of the Navajos in *Sacred Clowns* (1993), in which the theft of a sacred relic leads to murder. Leaphorn and Chee continue to develop their relationship in 1996's *The Fallen Man*, although Leaphorn has retired from active duty as a law enforcement officer. He returns again as a private investigator to assist Chee in *The First Eagle* (1998), searching for a missing health department official and the murderer of one of Jim Chee's Navajo police officers. *Hunting Badger* (1999) describes the use by Leaphorn and Chee of Native American cultural knowledge to track down a group of casino robbers amid FBI incompetence—a story based at least in part on a real-life episode from 1998.

In addition to the Leaphorn and Chee mysteries, Hillerman has published numerous works about Native American culture and/or the American Southwest, including *The Boy Who Made Dragonfly: A Zuni Myth* (1972), *New Mexico* (with photographer David Muench, 1974), *Rio Grande* (with photographer Robert Reynolds, 1975), *The Spell of*

New Mexico (1976), The Great Taos Bank Robbery and Other Indian Country Affairs (based on Hillerman's Master's thesis, 1980), Indian Country: America's Sacred Land (1987), Hillerman Country: A Journey through the Southwest with Tony Hillerman (1991) and New Mexico, Rio Grande, and Other Essays (1992).



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