

Fools Crow Study Guide

Fools Crow by James Welch (poet)

(c)2015 BookRags, Inc. All rights reserved.



Contents

Fools Crow Study Guide.....	1
Contents.....	2
Plot Summary.....	4
Part 1, Chapters 1-2.....	6
Part 1, Chapters 3-4.....	7
Part 1, Chapters 5-6.....	9
Part 1, Chapters 7-8.....	11
Part 1, Chapters 9-10.....	13
Part 2, Chapters 11-12.....	15
Part 2, Chapters 13-14.....	16
Part 2, Chapters 15-17.....	18
Part 3, Chapters 18-19.....	20
Part 3, Chapters 20-21.....	21
Part 3, Chapters 22-24.....	22
Part 4, Chapters 25-26.....	24
Part 4, Chapters 27-28.....	25
Part 4, Chapters 29-30.....	26
Part 4, Chapters 31-33.....	27
Part 5, Chapters 34-36.....	29
Characters.....	30
Objects/Places.....	36
Themes.....	38
Style.....	41
Quotes.....	44
Topics for Discussion.....	47



Plot Summary

Fools Crow is a story of dreams, honor, loss and changes. It is a coming of age story that takes place amid hardships beyond anything the Pikunis (part of the Blackfoot tribe) have faced in the past due to the encroachment of the Napikwans (white man).

Eighteen-year-old White Man's Dog, who later earns the name Fools Crow when he gains war honors, is a Pikunis brave who struggles with his place in society. Without wealth, no woman finds him attractive as a husband. He has prayed to the "Above Ones" for stronger medicine, but decides that it is up to him to find his power. If he can get a "many-shots-gun" it can increase his wealth. He daydreams of the pleasure of many wives but has never touched a woman. Because of this, his friends make fun of him.

White Man's Dog's friend Fast Horse invites him to take part in a horse-taking raid. This venture becomes the springboard to the rest of the story, for on this journey White Man's Dog has a dream of a white-faced girl, while Cold Maker visits Fast Horse in a dream. Both dreams warn that the group should not continue. Fast Horse tells his dream, but Yellow Kidney does not trust the dream and decides to continue. The meaning of White Man's Dog's dream does not become clear until it is fulfilled when Yellow Kidney finds himself in a lodge filled with bodies of those with the white-scab disease (smallpox). This fateful raid changes lives forever. White Man's Dog returns home with honor, Fast Horse returns sullen and vexed, and Yellow Kidney finally returns home after a long absence without his fingers, his body pock-marked from the white scab disease.

When Yellow Kidney tells how Fast Horse's loud-mouth boasting led to his capture, Fast Horse quits camp and joins up with Owl Child before he can be banished. The band of young men who follow Owl Child are tired of nothing being done about the Napikwans who break their word. Owl Child's band kills, rapes, and steals from the Napikwans. Their actions stir up trouble for the rest of the peace-loving Pikunis.

Dreams fuel the plot of this story. Through dreams, Fools Crow sees that fighting the Napikwans is a necessary evil. For in his dream with the white landscape void of animal life, the white represents the Napikwans taking over their lands and no animal life represents the white man's senseless killing of their food sources. When Raven appears in a dream, he tells Fools Crow that he must kill the big Napikwan who kills animals needlessly. Fools Crow objects, but Raven convinces him that it is for the good of his people. He agrees and uses his wife to bait the large white man. The plan succeeds but Fools Crow gets shot. When they return to camp, the men of the Lone Eaters camp listen to Fools Crow's story and agree that the killing was necessary, but no more killing of the white man should go on for it will bring great trouble to their people. However, Owls Child and his followers go on killing the Napikwans who then blame all the Indians.

The Napikwans gradually stretch further into the Pikunis lands. The white scabs disease spreads faster than fire weakening the Pikunis people. At this time Fools Crow is called



in a dream to take a seven day journey. He does not know his destination, only that he is to dress as beggar, take no food and make no stops. His horse carries him to a mystical canyon where he meets So-at-sa-ki (Feather Woman) who was once married to the god Morning Star. However, she was banished to earth when she dug up the sacred turnip. She paints an image on a yellow skin, images of changing scenes that come to life. Through the images, Fools Crow sees snippets of his peoples' future. He does not understand it all but returns home and watches the story unfold. Even through the difficulties, he looks to the future with renewed hope for So-at-sa-ki has told him he can do much good for his people.



Part 1, Chapters 1-2

Part 1, Chapters 1-2 Summary

Fools Crow is a story of dreams, honor, loss and changes. It is a coming of age story that takes place amid hardships beyond anything the Pikunis (part of the Blackfeet tribe) have faced in the past due to the encroachment of the Napikwans (white man).

Eighteen-year-old White Man's Dog, who later earns the name Fools Crow when he gains war honors, is a Pikunis brave who struggles with his place in society. Without wealth, no woman will find him attractive as a husband. If he can get a "many-shots-gun" it can increase his wealth. He daydreams of many wives, but his reality falls far short. He has never touched a woman and his friends make fun of him. White Man's Dog heads to his father's lodge thinking about his father's third wife who is a year younger than him. He feels shame for thinking in such a way.

Fast Horse approaches White Mans Dog about a secret plan to steal horses from the Crows. Fast Horse is full of self-importance. He brags about his powerful medicine and takes credit for talking Yellow Kidney into bringing White Man's Dog on the raid. Fast Horse is esteemed because of his fathers Beaver Medicine Bundle and has a promising future. White Man's Dog is unlucky . He has not received a vision or song and is afraid of the Crows. Fast Horse has talked with Mik-api, the many-faces-man (healer), and the boys will build a sweat lodge in the morning so he can perform a ritual that provides them with medicine to make them brave. White Man's Dog goes to his father's lodge with lifted spirits.

Part 1, Chapters 1-2 Analysis

The author sets the scene around the life of the young protagonist White Man's Dog, who later becomes Fools Crow. The author masterfully introduces Native American culture and terminology within the story's context. After establishing White Man's Dog's inner conflict, the focus of this first chapter is answers to life—and in this case White Man's Dog thinks his answer is to own a many-shots-gun. When White Man's Dog prays to the stars, they are "pitiless and gathered their light within themselves" (p. 5), which foreshadows the theme of "loss and change" as ancient ways give way to the advancing Napikwans. The author uses the natural world and Native American traditions to create suspenseful hooks. When White Man's Dog looks at the stars and they are brighter, it foreshadows the brave's internal hope and belief in the many-faces-man's magic. This growth in character development and the introduction of the theme of "loss and change" is further emphasized through the point of view of White Man's Dog's father, Rides-at-the Door. White Man's Dog faith brings about a new confidence and changes his outlook as he loses the "unlucky" persona.



Part 1, Chapters 3-4

Part 1, Chapters 3-4 Summary

A small band of Lone Eaters heads toward the Crow camp. Yellow Kidney brings White Man's Dog because he respects his father. His prime concern is Fast Horse's boastful recklessness could bring trouble. They sit in a war lodge where Fast Horse shares a power dream. In the dream, Cold Maker asks Fast Horse to find a frozen spring blocked by a large rock. The challenge is to remove the rock. If Fast Horse does not complete the task, he is warned that the entire party will be punished. They do not find it but continue onward. White Man's Dog thinks about a dream he has had for three nights in which he stands within an enemy camp on a moonlit night. He enters a tipi filled with dark shapes. A young white-faced girl takes form and stands with her arms outstretched, but he awakens. He does not know what it means.

Yellow Kidney is skeptical of Fast Horse's dream because he tends to be ambitious and foolish. When the ice spring is not located, Fast Horse pouts. Fast Horse doubts his dream, but Yellow Kidney doubts the dreamer. He prays for guidance because he does not want to anger Cold Maker. As they travel, thoughts of White Man's Dog lifts his spirits. "In spite of his unlucky reputation, there was a steadiness, a calmness in White Man's Dog that Yellow Kidney liked," (p. 21). In his heart he knows the lad is trustworthy. Yellow Kidney chooses to raid Bull Shield's camp. White Man's Dog uses yellow pigment to paint his body to gain strength and cunning. When the raiding party draws near to the Crow camp, White Man's Dog prays to Sun Chief and Thunder Chief for success. Night riders patrol the camp. Yellow Kidney assigns White Man's Dog to oversee the young men stealing horses. He, Eagle Ribs and Fast Horse go into the heart of the camp to steal the largest horses. White Man's Dog and those under him head up the mountain with their horses. Yellow Kidney, Eagle Ribs and Fast Horse enter the heart of the camp. Yellow Kidney walks into the camp singing his death song.

Part 1, Chapters 3-4 Analysis

This chapter opens from Yellow Kidney's point of view. Through his eyes we see qualities and deficits in two of the lead characters: White Man's Dog and Fast Horse. Yellow Kidney worries that White Man's Dog may bring bad luck which raises tension and conflict. Fast Horse's reckless, boastful attitude foreshadows the disaster that will befall Yellow Kidney during the raid. This chapter also introduces the theme of dreams. Not only are they part of the Native American culture, but the author uses them to build the plot and raise questions in the reader's mind. Fast Horse's dream challenges the journey. It is considered a "power dream." As a result, if Fast Horse does not complete the task, the entire party will be punished. They do not find the frozen spring and yet continue with their plans. White Man's Dog's dream is introduced as almost secondary, when in fact it plays a larger role in things to come. The undefined meaning works as a hook and further builds conflict and tension because even though he does not



understand his dream, he knows there is danger. The contrast drawn between Fast Horse and White Man's dog is both physical and psychological. Physically, Fast Horse is taller. He carries himself with pride, but in Yellow Kidney's point of view it is a pride not earned. Fast Horse's ambitiousness and reckless nature leads Yellow Kidney to doubt the young man's dream. White Man's Dog on the other hand is physically less appealing in the eyes of man, but his spirit is attractive. This foreshadows White Man's Dog future role. As the raiding party prepares for the last leg of the journey to reach the Crow camp, Yellow Kidney reminds them of the omen of bad fortune from Fast Horse's dream. This increases tension and ultimately this is the beginning of bad fortune for the Pikunis brought about by Fast Horse. The author masterfully draws attention to Fast Horse's dream while it is White Man's Dog's dream that eventually explains details relating to the misfortune of the ill-fated raid.



Part 1, Chapters 5-6

Part 1, Chapters 5-6 Summary

Eagle Ribs catches up with White Man's Dog but Fast Horse and Yellow Kidney have not shown up. Eagle Ribs is troubled. He relates a dream of a white horse death horse. The animal wears a bridle with the reins dragging. Fast Horse shows up, and White Man's Dog asks about Yellow Kidney. Fast Horse did not wait for him. While he took shelter in a den, he had a dream of Cold Maker. They have offended him. Fast Horse vows to bring two robes for Cold Maker's daughters. Three days later Yellow Kidney's wife, Heavy Shield Woman, steps from her lodge in mourning. She makes a meal for her 16-year-old daughter, Red Paint, and two sons. She sets a place for her missing husband and tells the children Yellow Kidney appeared in a dream and would be coming home. She cannot tell them when. Months later she requests to be Medicine Woman if Yellow Kidney returns.

White Man's Dog wants to search for Yellow Kidney, but without a sign it is impossible to find him. He hunts and leaves food at Yellow Kidney's lodge. White Man's Dog almost tells of Fast Horse's dream and vow, but it can turn one's medicine bad if they tell another man's dream. It bothers him that Fast Horse is not keeping his vow. Perhaps Cold Maker holds Yellow Kidney while waiting for Fast Horse to fulfill his vow. He talks to Fast Horse about it. He grows angry and White Man's Dog knows something is wrong. White Man's Dog visits Mik-api and becomes his apprentice. Mik-api dreams about Raven and an animal caught in the jaws of a Nipikwan trap. Raven has heard that White Man's Dog is strong and brave of heart. Raven suggests sending him to release the animal. In return he will teach him to use the creature's power. White Man's Dog follows Mik-api's instructions. The bird is one of great power. He leads White Man's Dog to the trapped wolverine. He releases the animal. Before they part Raven promises that he alone will possess the magic of the wolverine.

Part 1, Chapters 5-6 Analysis

The author uses Fast Horse's dream to introduce the character's selfishness. He makes a vow to save his own skin. If he does not fulfill the vow it brings trouble on the entire Lone Eater camp. In contrast, Yellow Kidney's wife approaches the chief of the Lone Eaters for permission to fill the role of Medicine Woman at the Sun Dance ceremony. "He had told her that he was wandering in the land of the Crows, that he could not return yet, that he could not return until Heavy Shield Woman agreed to perform a task which only the most virtuous of women could accomplish," (p. 42). This vow is selfless and shows faith which stands in stark contrast to Fast Horse's response to his encounter with Cold Maker. The theme of "dreams" combines with the themes of "honor" and "change and loss" as the reality of the impact of dreams within this culture continues to deepen the plot. Not acting or believing on a dream can change the direction of lives. For example, loss changes the lives of Heavy Shield Woman and her



family. Honor plays an important role in this culture and is used as an agent of change providing insight into the actions, motives and thoughts of the characters. The theme of dreams is expanded when White Man Dog tries to will himself to dream in order to find Yellow Kidney. It does not work. Dreams are not forced or manipulated but a line of communication between the gods and their people. The theme of honor is brought into focus when White Man's Dog confronts Fast Horse about fulfilling his vow. The young man's reaction lets White Man's Dog know something more is going on. It foreshadows coming trouble beyond the loss of a relationship. Fast Horse is not only turning from White Man's Dog but also from authority, tradition and his people. The theme of dreams further carries the plot when Mik-api dreams of Raven which leads to White Man's Dog releasing the trapped wolverine. Due to his obedience, Wolverine will teach the young man how to use the creature's power. He is the only man who will have this animal's power.



Part 1, Chapters 7-8

Part 1, Chapters 7-8 Summary

Three riders enter the camp with Nipikwan horses. Owl Child sits on a white horse with his many-shots-gun. Three Bears questions whether the Napikwan horses are stolen. The young men are not invited to stay, and Owl Child invites Fast Horse to come visit him. White Man's Dog's looks at the horses. They come at too high a price. He thinks about the raid and feels Fast Horse is responsible for Yellow Kidney's disappearance. When White Man's Dog tells Mik-api about the dream of the white-faced girl, the man performs a purifying ceremony. He could not see the dream of death clearly. Mik-api also notices White Man's Dog looking at Red Paint. White Man's Dog does not want to talk about her.

Fast Horse is an outsider among the Lone Eaters. The Beaver Medicine will not be his way to power. Instead he will find something more tangible. He only respects Owl Child for he defies the Napikwans. A small white horse comes into camp carrying a very thin Yellow Kidney. The blanket falls revealing his fingers are gone. He recounts the Crow raid. He entered the camp and led Bull Shield's horse away when Fast Horse's fierce boasting broke the silence. Yellow Kidney hid in a nearby lodge under a blanket, with a girl. She felt warm and he sees the dreaded white-scabs disease. This is the fulfillment of White Man's Dog's dream. He blames himself for Yellow Kidney's disfigurement. If he had told the dream, they would have turned back. Bull Shield cut Yellow Kidney's fingers off and tied him to a horse while unconscious. The horse wandered until an old man and woman took Yellow Kidney in and nursed him when he came down with smallpox. Chief Three Bears declares war on the Crows. Boss Ribs must banish his son.

Part 1, Chapters 7-8 Analysis

When Owl Child and his companions ride into the Lone Eater camp with stolen horses, lines are drawn between the ways of the long-ago ones and new ways filtering into their culture. This plays into not only the theme of honor, but also the theme of loss and change as ancient traditions are undermined by both the Napikwans and this handful of young Pikunis men. Results are far-reaching. When White Man's Dog tells Mik-api about the dream of the white-faced girl, the old man is quiet. His response is a purifying ceremony which foreshadows the seriousness of the death dream which touches not only Yellow Kidney, but the entire Pikunis tribe. Mik-api also tells him that the bad spirit is gone but is not dead. Dreams complicate the plot and raise the question of whether or not Yellow Kidney is still alive. The plot deepens with conflict as Yellow Kidney returns. The truth about Fast Horse's role in his capture and disfigurement comes to light. This revelation does not just separate Fast Horse from his people or family. It separates his ways from the traditional ways. All three major themes culminate as the Fast Horse leaves his people. Themes of honor and loss and change are the most prominent, and while Yellow Kidney has suffered the loss physically which has changed his life forever,

Fast Horse has suffered loss he does not realize. His life too is changed forever. The changes in Fast Horse are changes that can alter his culture. Yellow Kidney's return also reveals the fulfillment of two dreams. Eagle's Rib's dream of the horse of death with the reins dragging and the dream of the white-faced girl in the death lodge.



Part 1, Chapters 9-10

Part 1, Chapters 9-10 Summary

White Man's Dog tells his father about the white-faced girl dream, and how he feels responsible. Rides-at-the-door assures his son that what happened to Yellow Kidney is not his fault and that Fast Horse must be banished. White Man's Dog travels to the other camps with news of Heavy Shield Woman's vow to be Medicine Woman. Running Fisher and Rides-at-the-door come into the lodge with news that Fast Horse left with all his belongings. He joins Owl Child's band. This will bring more trouble, because they find honor in killing Napikwans. White Man's Dog relates another dream. This time the Pikunis lose their fingers. His father agrees it may come to fighting, but the Napikwans will not think anything of wiping out the Pikunis. It is best to leave the Napikwans alone. White Man's Dog visits the other Pukunis bands. Mountain Chief's band has crossed the Medicine Line, and White Man's Dog is disappointed he does not get to see Fast Horse.

White Man's Dog arrives home. His father and him go to Three Bear's lodge where he sits beside the chief to tell of his journey. They determine the camp of the Many Chiefs is on the run because the seizers are chasing Owl Child. Red Paint sits next to her mother. Heavy Shield Woman accepts the role as Sacred Vow Woman. White Man's Dog speaks to his parents about taking Red Paint as his wife. Rides-at-the-door is surprised and concerned. His son will be responsible for Yellow Kidney's entire family. The news hits Kills-close-to-the-lake hard. Without White Man's Dog living in the lodge there is nothing for her. Four days later Red Paint and White Man's Dog marry. Yellow Kidney gives White Man's Dog his many-shots-gun. Not long after, the camp builds a lodge to the Sun Chief. Ceremonies and rituals prepare for the Sun Dance. Heavy Shield Woman prays for strength and courage. Rituals are performed and ancient tales of how So-at-sa-ki (Feather Woman) are told. She created a hole in the sky when she dug up the sacred turnip. She was married to Morning Star and their son was Star Boy. They lived in the sky with Sun Chief and Night Red Light. When she looked down through the hole she became homesick and Sun Chief banished her to earth. White Man's Dog dreams carry him to a white river that flows over white stones. He meets the wolverine who needs to be set free again. White Man's Dog asks why it is so white. "That's the way it is now. All the breathing things are gone—except for us. But hurry, brother, for I feel my strength slipping away," (p. 118). Wolverine gives White Man's Dog a slender white stone and his power song. A woman dressed in white furs strips to bathe. It is Kills-close-to-the-lake. She says that in this place it is permitted for them to desire each other. They make love. When he awakens and dresses, a slender white stone falls to the ground. As bands gather for the Sun Dance, Mountain Chief speaks to the people. White Man's Dog sees Owl Child and Fast Horse, their faces painted for war. Fast Horse grins, but his eyes remain cold. Mountain Chief does not like the Napikwan's presence, but it is now a way of life. They will counsel with the Napikwans. If they do not want too much, they will concede. Owl Child leaves with Fast Horse. White Man's Dog's mother asks him to douse the fire. He goes to fill the kettle. On the way back, Kills-close-to-the-lake is on the path, her left hand bandaged. She tells of a



dream in which Wolverine ravished her and bit off her finger which turned into a white stone. She found where White Man's Dog slept and put the white stone in his robe for good fortune. White Man's Dog is confused. She was not in his dream.

Part 1, Chapters 9-10 Analysis

When Rides-at-the-door is faced with bringing news of banishment to Boss Ribs, he knows their relationship will change. The theme of loss and change initiates deep running plot threads with this one action. "Now, even if Boss Ribs understood the necessity of his son's banishment, he would not forgive Rides-at-the-door for bringing the message. Fathers and sons would all suffer," (p. 86). When it is discovered that Fast Horse has quit camp and joined Owl Child, Ride's-at-the-door's prediction that it will bring more trouble, because they find honor in killing Napikwans, foreshadows difficulties to come and is fulfilled within his hearing when his younger son says that someday they will have to fight. To add to this, White Man's Dog relates another dream. This time the Pikunis lose all their fingers, a dream that foretells of loss and change that will make them feel as useless as Yellow Kidney. Kills-close-to-the-lake feels trapped as the third wife to a man old enough to be her father. One year younger than White Man's Dog, she hopes somehow she will be his, but he marries and moves out of the lodge. On his wedding night she catches him outside and gives him a scabbard for his new rifle. She walks into the darkness and White Man's Dog's eyes follow her until he cannot see her. This encounter reveals his deep-set honor because even though he is drunk and has been attracted to her in the past, he does nothing to reflect those feelings. White Man's Dog's dream of the wolverine foreshadows a number of things. First, everything is white and all the breathing things are gone. This represents the white man encroachment and the killing of animals. When Wolverine says, "But hurry, brother, for I feel my strength slipping away," (p. 118), this shines light on White Man's Dog as the dwindling hope for the future. The wolverine is his power animal, but even his strength is diminishing. The dream marks urgency to take action. Kills-close-to-the-lake has a similar dream, but different. In her dream Wolverine ravishes her and bites off her finger which turns into a stone. When White Man's Dog awakens from the dream the white stone falls from his robe. The dream releases both of them from their former desires to move on and the stone ties the meaning of the dreams to reality.



Part 2, Chapters 11-12

Part 2, Chapters 11-12 Summary

It scares Red Paint that her husband will leave for war party in six days. He has been chosen to count coup on behalf of her father. She loves him and wonders if she is with child. Her mother catches her daydreaming. They talk of her father. He no longer touches her and chooses to live in self pity. Red Paint decides to tell her mother she thinks she is pregnant. Her mother hugs her and cries. Red Paint and White Man's Dog admit something could go wrong. It concerns him. The whole family depends on him. She begs him not to go, but he must. They decide to name their unborn son Sleep-bringer and will give the honor of naming him to Yellow Kidney. Fox Eyes prays for all the gathered Pikunis. He worries for the inexperienced. Their plan is to attack Bull Shield's camp and kill him, for he is responsible for Yellow Kidney's condition. On the middle of the fourth day, the sun disappears. It frightens White Man's Dog. The sun reappears, and he catches up to the others. Rides-at-the-door says they cannot ignore the sign. Crows Foot agrees. White Man's Dog sees real fear in his brother's face for the first time. They attack Bull Shield's camp. White Man's Dog sings his power song. He is nervous but rides through the camp firing his gun. He dismounts and fires into Bull Shield's tipi. Bull Shield walks out singing his death song. White Man's Dog is distracted by Fox Eyes and is shot. Fox Eyes is shot and falls from his horse. When White Man's Dog looks up, Bull Shield is walking in his direction. He raises his gun and shoots the chief in the chest. White Man's Dog scalps the chief. His father cuts Bull Shield's black horse free and tells White Man's Dog to get on. As they ride away, he vomits. They carry six dead bodies to be buried, another 13 are missing and seven more are severely wounded.

Part 2, Chapters 11-12 Analysis

The ground work for the theme of loss and change is laid in this chapter as men both young and old prepare for battle. The eclipse is a bad omen and foreshadows loss to come, not just loss of lives, but loss of innocence and the change that will be wrought within young braves. The eclipse also foreshadows the removal of the hand of blessing by the Sun Chief. When White Man's Dog rides into battle slightly ahead, but between his father and Crazy Dog, it is a position of honor—it is Yellow Kidney's place. The subtle theme of honor winds through the culture and setting of this story and this time places White Man's Dog at the front of the battle. The theme of loss and change is also emphasized. The Pikunis walk away from the battle with six dead bodies, 13 missing and seven severely wounded. Each of these lives touches others, and loss initiates more changes. Changed lives can never be restored to what they were before the fight. So loss begets change and change begets more change. The men return to camp never to be the same.



Part 2, Chapters 13-14

Part 2, Chapters 13-14 Summary

Red Paint wakes her husband by calling his new name "Fools Crow." Three Bears chose the name after hearing about how he tricked Bull Shield into thinking he was dead. Fools Crow is uncomfortable. The story has been exaggerated. Among the Lone Eaters he is now a man of much medicine. At the sound of horses approaching, he grabs his gun and steps outside. The seizers wear blue uniforms. They sit, smoke. As the Napikwan speaks, Rides-at-the-door does not let on that he understands. The scout tells of the murder of a white man known to the Pikunis as Four Bears. Survivors have identified Owl Child, as the murderer. Fools Crow wonders if Fast Horse was with him. The murdered man was two-faced and his death is not what bothers him. It is Owl Child, for he is a bad man.

War with the Napikwans is inevitable. Fools Crow and Red Paint have been away from camp for 18 days. He falls asleep awakened by laughter. It is Raven. Fools Crow is surprised Raven knows his new name. He asks if Raven saw him trick Bull Shield. Raven does not think he fooled Bull Shield. Fools Crow's blushes and admits he fell. Raven promises never to tell. It increases Pikunis power to believe one so strong walks among them. He also tells of an evil presence. For the last eight months, a Napikwan has killed wastefully. Raven wants Fools Crow to kill the man. Raven says his people will starve because Fools Crow is not willing to put an end to the senseless killing. Finally, Fools Crow agrees. The White Man's heart is filled with lust, and Fools Crow uses Red Paint as bait. He hides in the brush. The large Napikwan approaches. Fools Crow fears for Red Paint's safety. He glances toward her and when he looks back the man has moved. Fools Crow panics. He runs, shouting for Red Paint to get away. He is shot. His death song fills his head strengthening him. He leaps, reaches his gun and shoots the man in the forehead.

Part 2, Chapters 13-14 Analysis

As Fools Crow listens to news of the murdered Four Bears, his real concern is for Fast Horse. Not because he may have been part of the murder, for the killed man is two-faced. His concern is that Owl Child is a bad man. This new information further drives the two childhood friends apart. Fools Crow considers the life Fast Horse could have—a future with promise as the holder of the Beaver Medicine. However, Fast Horse throws all this away and embraces Owl Child's ways. This initiates the loss of a friend. The seizers' aggressive attitude and broken promises also bring forth change. More and more Pikunis see war with the Napikwans is inevitable. This change of heart will lead to more loss, not only of lives but of a way of life. Raven arrives in a dream to warn Fools Crow of a large Napikwan who kills animals for no purpose. He wants Fools Crow to kill the man, but Fools Crow resists. The Raven makes it clear it is the right thing to do. This dream pulls Fools Crow toward the ancient traditions of his people and yet he knows it



will go against what they believe today. This dream reveals the struggle between the old ways and new ways thrust upon the Pukunis with the arrival of the Napikwans. It foreshadows the future Pikunis struggle as white men encroach on their territory and kill their animals.



Part 2, Chapters 15-17

Part 2, Chapters 15-17 Summary

Back in the Lone Eater Camp Fools Crow tells what happened. Killing a Napikwan is serious. Young Bird Chief suggests it is time to kill all Napikwans. Others agree until Rides-at-the-door tells the history between the Napikwans and the Pikunis. They learned to live with them, giving them lands and thinking the Napikwans would be satisfied, but the Napikwans continually break their word. The Pikunis have the right to hate them. All the men agree. They rather die fighting and retain their pride. Fools Crow gets caught up in the reasoning. Rides-at-the-door fought the Napikwans in his youth, but their numbers have grown. Three Bears wants no more killing. The Pikunis will be known for their wisdom and honor.

A lone rider heads toward Fools Crow. It is Fast Horse and he has been shot. Fools Crow delivers him to his father. Three days later, Fast Horse opens his eyes. His father tells him that he has been praying for him. He has used the Beaver Medicine to make him well. When he recovers, his father hopes he will stay. Fast Horse no longer believes in the Beaver Medicine. He has killed white men, lain with their women and stolen their gold. Boss Ribs hopes his son will repent and rejoin his people. Red Paint questions fate. Her pitiful father, her mother, and now Boss Ribs who has to turn his son away. It is not fair that Fast Horse lives and her father suffers. If Fast Horse had died, the camp would be better off.

Fast Horse departs the Lone Eater's camp hoping to catch up with Owl Child. He wants revenge on the Napikwan who shot him. Boss Ribs asks Fools Crow what changed his son. Fools Crow tells him everything including the fact that Fast Horse did not fill his vow. Boss Ribs is ashamed but longs to pass the power of the Beaver Medicine to his son. He asks Fools Crow to find his son and bring him home.

Part 2, Chapters 15-17 Analysis

Fools Crow follows Raven's plan and kills the big Napikwan even though he does not want to do it. This is another example of the theme of dreams and its fulfillment ushers in loss and change, for the large white man's killing of the animals does both. It forces a change in the Pikunis lifestyle. Not only that, it shows another change in Fools Crow as his shifting circumstances force him to take action that goes against his honor. He is forced to do things he does not want to do and loses another piece of his "self" in the process. The theme of honor also ties into this killing when the Lone Eater men gather to decide if Fools Crow was in the right. They decide his actions were justified but Three Bears wants no more killing. When Boss Ribs tells Fast Horse that the Pikunis help and depend on each other, and that they fight and die beside each other, it not only establishes honorable ways but highlights the contrast. When he tells his son there is not room for a man who despises his brothers, Fast Horse turns away. This represents



a turning away from his people. Boss Ribs recognizes his son is a man without honor. Fools Crow knows this too, but hopes the friend will return. Fast Horse's return highlights the culmination of change and loss in the Pikunis culture as Boss Rib's son no longer wants anything to do with his honored family traditions. The exchange between Boss Ribs and Fools Crow exemplifies the subtle changes in their relationship with Fast Horse.



Part 3, Chapters 18-19

Part 3, Chapters 18-19 Summary

Owl Child and his band talk of conquests, murder and rape. Fast Horse wants revenge. It reminds Owl Child of his own grudge against Four Bears, but now that he has killed the man, he is not satisfied. He wants to kill all Napikwans. The man Fast Horse wants to kill is at his ranch along with his wife and two children. Fast Horse is three days ahead of Fools Crow. Owl Child and his band reach the ranch of the man who shot Fast Horse. Owl Child rapes the man's wife and leaves her alive to credit him with the deed. Fast Horse stands in the corral with the red scalp dripping from his hand. He regrets the man died too fast.

Fools Crow's mother prepares a meal for her guests. She looks forward to White Grass Woman's gossip. Right now she is angry with Fools Crow who risks his life for Fast Horse. Her sons are grown and her concerns settle on Running Fisher. He moved out and she does not understand why. While the dinner guests are engrossed in White Grass Woman's gossip, Kills-close-to-the lake slips out and goes to Running Fisher's lodge where they lie together. At 18 she does not fit into the conversations back with the others, but in the arms of this 17-year-old she finds a little happiness. Outside Striped Face eavesdrops on their love making.

Part 3, Chapters 18-19 Analysis

Fools Crow tracks Fast Horse. On his journey he realizes that he likes the freedom of being alone—the same freedom Fast Horse lives. He considers alternatives, but his honor holds him fast to his quest. He gave his word to Fast Horse's father that he would find him and ask him to come home. Fast Horse's life of freedom stands in contrast to Fools Crow's ties to family and honor. The theme of change and loss is introduced through Running Fisher and Kills-close-to-the-lake. Running Fisher has moved out of Rides-at-the-door's lodge. He has not been the same since the eclipse which represents the loss of Sun Chief's blessing. Loss of courage filled him with fear at the Crow battle. That change also led to a loss of respect for the traditions of his people and the honor due his father. His betrayal runs deep as he sleeps with his father's third wife.



Part 3, Chapters 20-21

Part 3, Chapters 20-21 Summary

Fools Crow sees buildings with corrals but no animals. At dusk, he rides to the house and finds the scalped dead man. Back at the Lone Eater camp, Yellow Kidney thinks his life is like that of an old man. That night he leaves and hopes his wife will be happy. For the first time since he lost his fingers, he feels alive. From Owl Child's look-out, Fast Horse recognizes Fools Crow as he approaches. Fast Horse is angry. Their friendship is over. They follow different paths. Fools Crow tells him that he visited the ranch of the murdered family. "You Fast Horse, you have become the heartless insect, for you would betray your own people," (p. 235). Fools Crow asks what he is to tell Boss Ribs. Fast Horse says to tell him that he did not find him. Boss Ribs is better off not knowing what his son has become. Fools Crow asks what changed Fast Horse. He says that Cold Maker betrayed him, for he promised he would become powerful.

While sheltering in a war lodge, Yellow Kidney considers returning home. Not far away a white man leads packhorses through the snow. He plans to find shelter in the war lodge. When he approaches the lodge, he sees smoke. His son waits outside. In his heart the man wants to kill an Indian. Inside Yellow Kidney thinks of his unborn grandson. He does not see the rifle before it blasts through his chest.

Part 3, Chapters 20-21 Analysis

When Fools Crow catches up with Fast Horse, he sees that they are not friends anymore. The theme of loss and change highlights the different paths the two have taken. Fools Crow realizes "the break was as final as death," (p. 235). It stirs an unexpected hatred toward his childhood friend—another change. The theme of dreams is revisited when Fools Crow asks Fast Horse what changed him after the raid. Fast Horse blames it on Cold Maker, who had given him a power dream, but then betrayed him. However, he also admits that he offended Cold Maker. When Fools Crow mentions Yellow Kidney and presses the fact that Fast Horse caused the man's disfigurement, Fast Horse does not accept responsibility. He shouts after Fools Crow as he rides away, blaming Yellow Kidney for being a foolish man. This sheds light on the role of obedience and honor to see the dreams fulfilled. Yellow Kidney leaves his home and family because of the changes that haunt him since the loss of his fingers. He feels useless. Once away from his camp he feels alive again, and thinks of returning home. He sees an unusual yellow calf and instead of killing it, lets it live, thinking it is a sign. It will make a good name for his unborn grandson. However, he never gets to fulfill that desire. The white man's son rushes outside and throws up which emphasizes the loss of innocence in the white man's world too. Choices lead to consequences and the lives of Yellow Kidney's family are changed forever.



Part 3, Chapters 22-24

Part 3, Chapters 22-24 Summary

Mik-api keeps the incomplete dreams he has had for three nights to himself. He sees the war lodge and horses, but Yellow Kidney is not in the dream, yet it has to do with him. More Napikwans have been killed and Three Bears worries that Pikuni will suffer. Red Paint worries for her unborn child. Members from the Lone Eater lodges talk about the latest Napikwan proposal from the "seizer chiefs." The seizer chief wants to meet with all the Pikunis leaders but they fear it may be a trap. Three Bears wants Rides-at-the-door to represent the Lone Eaters. His plan is to resist them, but to offer something.

Red Paint's youngest brother is bitten by a rabid wolf. Fools Crow encourages the boy telling him not to think of the wolf as his enemy, for it is a power animal. To help the boy with his nightmares, he reminds him that if the wolf visits his dreams it is because he may want to become his dream helper. The boy looks forward to the wolf's visits but comes down with rabies. Fools Crow performs the healing rituals; the boy survives.

A pathetic representation of the Pikunis leadership heads to the agency to meet with the seizers. They are to meet with the man in charge of Indian Policy, General Sully. He makes the points of contention clear. There are three. The Pikunis and Kainah chiefs are to cooperate or consequences will be serious. They have a warrant for Owl Child's arrest. The Indians are expected to turn him in. All stolen livestock is to be returned. Lastly, killing of white people will cease. The Canadian government has agreed to cooperate and the Indians will no longer be able to cross the "Medicine Line" (border) to be safe. They agree to kill Owl Child to avoid war. They also agree to return the Napikwan horses. The seizers warn that smallpox is spreading among the Blackfeet. They ask for food and blankets because the white scab disease hits when they are weak. They must comply before they get anything.

Part 3, Chapters 22-24 Analysis

Mik-api's incomplete dreams represent a weakening in the Pikunis "medicine." Yellow Kidney's absence in the dream also reflects the fact that he is no longer living. This creates an effective hook. How will a dead man return to his people? Honor is the chief theme in this chapter as the Lone Eater leaders discuss how to deal with the seizer's latest proposal. They are not fools, and know better than to trust the Napikwans, and yet if they do not come to an agreement, their people could be wiped out. This takes the theme of loss and change a step further. They are willing to give up Owl Child to keep peace and their way of life. Struggles mount and test the faith and resolve of Fools Crow as he takes on the role of father for Red Paint's brothers. When he returns from a hunt, he learns that the One Spot has been bitten by a rabid wolf. As he consoles the boy, we see the strength of dreams. Fools Crow tells the boy not to fear the wolf in his dream but to think of him as his helper. The boy's nightmares stop. While recovering



from his bites, rabies symptoms threaten to take his life. Fools Crow steps in as medicine man. His willingness to do whatever is needed reflects honor. Tension and conflict rise in the chapter as a handful of Pikunis leaders meet with the seizers. The theme of honor plays out on both sides of the conflict. Each upholds their standard of honor for the good of their people. However, from the omniscient point of view, it is easy to see that honor in this story belongs to the Pikunis. Talks do not go well for the Indians, and they must accept the Napikwan terms. As if this is not bad enough, the announcement that smallpox is among the Indians foreshadows future difficulties.



Part 4, Chapters 25-26

Part 4, Chapters 25-26 Summary

Whiskey runners are spotted by Owl Child. One of the men protecting the cargo is killed by Fast Horse. They kill the rest of the Napikwans. Fast Horse says they are too close to the Pikunis camps. This will bring trouble to his people. To his surprise, Owl Child agrees. They burn the wagons and drive away the oxen. Fast Horse wonders if Owl Child is losing his nerve. Two men enter the Lone Eater's camp. One is Pretty-on-top, the other is a Napikwan healer. They bring news of the white scab disease. Many Blackfeet have died. The healer was married to a Pikunis woman who died of smallpox. He tells of a vaccine that prevents the disease, but it will take a month to arrive. Until then, he warns them not to intermingle. Visitors will have to be turned away. Pretty-on-top warns that it is worse than they know. The sickness is everywhere. Leaders discuss the healer's warning. They trust the Napikwan healer but will not turn anyone away. Fools Crow suggests going north to live among the Sikiskas to escape the sickness and return when it has passed. The idea is put off. Rides-at-the-door arrives two days later from the council meeting adding more bad news. They reject the seizer's demands.

Part 4, Chapters 25-26 Analysis

Fast Horse has showed himself to be a boastful rebel until recent chapters. There is now a new change in Fast Horse now that he has lost his connection to his people. Before he cared nothing for what his people thought or did, and now his actions offer a glimpse of honor. He not only thinks that attacking and killing the whiskey runners close to the Pikunis camps is a bad thing, but he vocalizes his concern. Through circumstances, the author reveals his outlook has changed. He no longer looks at Owl Child as someone to look up to, but sees him as a man whose days are numbered which foreshadows bad things to come. Within this culture, tradition and honor go hand in hand. When the Lone Eaters learn that the white scab disease is spreading among the Blackfeet, they choose to go against the warnings of the Napikwan healer because they cannot turn others away. While honorable, it also makes them vulnerable and raises tension within the plot. The chiefs rejection of the Napikwan terms foreshadows war, but the white scab disease brings a threat they cannot fight.



Part 4, Chapters 27-28

Part 4, Chapters 27-28 Summary

Fast Horse and Owl Child arrive at the deserted war lodge. Owl Child stays with the horses, and Fast Horse finds a dead Pikunis man lying on the floor. When he takes a closer look, he notices the fingerless hands. It is Yellow Kidney. He studies the hands—the hands he caused to be this way long-ago. When the leaders of other Pikunis bands come for council, they reach an impasse regarding the Napikwan healer's warning. The Pukinis chiefs do not want to give in to the seizer chief's demands. They act as if the problem will disappear if ignored. Fools Crow feels impotent. He stares at Bull Shield's scalp and thinks of the power he had. What good is it against sickness and these times?

Part 4, Chapters 27-28 Analysis

The finding of Yellow Kidney brings this thread of the story full circle. For the first time, Fast Horse admits his responsibility for what happened. This reveals honor rekindling in his heart, for it runs deep within him, even if he no longer follows his people's ways and beliefs. It is another example of loss and change. This time it is the loss of life that brings the change for good in Fast Horse. Fools Crow considers the current tribulations with which his people are faced. The Napikwan demands, the white scab disease, and the fact that his people cannot agree on a plan of action is contrasted to the power he remembers as he looks at Bull Shield's scalp which represents a bygone era.



Part 4, Chapters 29-30

Part 4, Chapters 29-30 Summary

In a dream, Nitsokan tells Fools Crow to go on a seven-day journey dressed as a beggar. He does not know where he is going; only that it will help the Lone Eaters. Nitsokan challenges him to ride for three days and nights without stopping. He trusts the dream helper to give his horse strength. At dusk on the third day, he reaches a canyon. The horse brings him to a small Napikwan dwelling. A woman answers the door and exhaustion overtakes him. He awakens and eats. His only company is a dog. He falls back to sleep. In his dreams, he comes to an impasse in the narrow canyon where a boulder blocks his way. The dog slips under a bush beside the boulder. Fools Crow crawls through the opening into a summer-like land. It is beautiful but there is no life in it. The clear water has a sandy bottom. No plants, rocks or debris. Only sand. The woman stands with the dog which runs to him and draws him to a path.

A Lone Eater day rider notices a horse pulling a makeshift travois carrying Yellow Kidney's remains. Fast Horse watches in the distance. When the body is received, he leaves. In his own past as a day rider, he dared to dream of wealth, wives and power. "Now he was a solitary figure in the isolation of a vast land," (p. 330). He desires to return, but in his heart he cannot ask for forgiveness. He is no longer one with the Pikunis.

Part 4, Chapters 29-30 Analysis

Honor and faith carry Fools Crow on a journey orchestrated by Nitsokan. The Above Ones watch out for him on his journey, and when he arrives at the canyon he is expected by a woman who knows he has made this journey for his people. His visit to the summer-land, where no life lives, foreshadows the Napikwan promises of good things, but represents the empty promises and loss of their way of life. As much as Fast Horse wants to believe he is no longer part of the Pikunis people, his actions betray his true feelings. He is alone, because he chooses to be alone. It is pride mingled with guilt that keeps him from returning to his father's lodge and asking forgiveness. In some small way, returning Yellow Kidney's body is an act of confession and restitution.



Part 4, Chapters 31-33

Part 4, Chapters 31-33 Summary

The older woman dressed in the doe skin takes Fools Crow to her lodge. The dwelling is almost empty except for a sack of turnips and a digging stick. The woman paints a design on a yellow skin as she sings. When he awakens, the woman is gone; he looks at the yellow skin and it is empty. This confuses him. He saw her paint the skin. In the distance, he hears geese. As a child the thrashing of wings terrified him, and now he stands in nothing but a breechcloth without a weapon. He leaves the lodge, with the sound of geese all around. He walks like a man in a dream knowing his power is gone. In the moonlight he sees the woman bent over a garden. The woman sings; he asks whom she mourns.

Rides-at-the-door contemplates Running Fisher's betrayal. He blames himself for doing nothing about his son's haughty pride. Sometimes as boys grow, it can lead to honor. "Honor is all we have, thought Rides-at-the door, that and the blackhorns [...] One feeds us and the other nourishes us," (pp. 339-340). Kills-close-to-the-lake comes in with her head down. Running Fisher follows. Rides-at-the-door starts tells his son that he has brought dishonor to his home. Instead of killing or mutilating his young wife, he releases her. She must leave before sunrise. Running Fisher is sent to live with the Sikiskas. He accepts his punishment and confesses his wrong. It goes back to the day of the eclipse when he lost his courage. Rides-at-the door is sorry he did not see this in Running Fisher. The Lone Eaters are ready to move north to escape the white scab disease, but Rides-at-the-door cannot do that now that Running Fisher is sent away and Fools Crow has been gone for six nights. A voice in the back of his mind tells him he is foolish for staying, but he ignores it.

Fools Crow sits across from the woman in white. She has painted the yellow skin all day. She is the legendary So-at-sa-ki. It takes him a moment to understand she is Feather Woman, the wife of Morning Star and mother of Star Boy. She will be unhappy until she rejoins her family in the sky. She lays the scroll beside him and leaves. The designs on the skin come to life. He sees many lodges belonging to different bands, circled by painted horses standing on white. The moving sketches startle him. There is suffering in the lodges. The white scab disease has reached the Lone Eater Camp. He closes his eyes and new images appear when he opens them. Seizers travel into Pikunis territory. The last scene is Pikunis lands void of animals with Napikwan dwellings along the Milk River. Feather Woman talks to him about what he has witnessed and that he can do much good for his people by preparing them for the future. In the distance his horse awaits. "If they make peace within themselves, they will live a good life in the Sand Hills," (p. 359). Fools Crow regrets that the children will not know Pikunis ways. The woman agrees that much will be lost .



Part 4, Chapters 31-33 Analysis

The childhood fear of geese represents Fools Crow's fears. Standing naked and unarmed represents his vulnerability. He walks like a man in a dream. His power is gone. He comes to the end of himself and trusting in his own strength. Rides-at-the-door blames himself for the dishonor because he did not notice when his son chose to leave the good path to walk without honor. This ties in with the theme of honor and the theme of loss and change. For when his son lost his courage, his life changed. This perpetuates loss and change as Kills-close-to-the-lake is turned out, and Running Fisher is forced to go live with his northern relatives. Loss touches the Lone Eaters as a whole too, for Rides-at-the-door puts off moving the camp to go north because it will be hard for his wife to leave without either of her sons. He ignores the voice that tells him he is foolish which foreshadows the coming of smallpox to their camp.



Part 5, Chapters 34-36

Part 5, Chapters 34-36 Summary

The white scab disease spreads fast and takes its toll. Fools Crow arrives in camp the night of the first death and busies himself with purifying sessions and other medicinal duties. He delivers fresh herbs to Boss Ribs, but when he enters the lodge the man sits with the Beaver Medicine bundle's contents scattered, and his six-year-old daughter dies. The sickness hits closer—Red Paint's brothers come down with it and the older one dies. Red Paint thinks now of the son within her.

The thirteenth morning after the sickness breaks out, Fools Crow walks with his father through the camp. Three Bears has died. Dead are taken from the camp and five new cases erupt. The healthy men must hunt or the people will starve. While hunting, Fools Crow spots survivors, some of them children, in the distance. Seizers have attacked their camp and only these few got away. He goes to their camp to find it burned. Survivors gather and anger rises in Fools Crow. He feels ready to fight the Napikwans, but the Pikunis have no power. He remembers what he saw on the skin. They must think of the children.

Mik-api doubts his powers as the many-faces-man. His dreams draw him closer to the Sand Hills. They smoke the Thunder pipe and the procession begins. Fools Crow and his wife wait outside their lodge. His face is painted. Thunder rolls, and Fools Crow dances. His heart beats with the drum and he feels a peculiar happiness that abides with sadness. Somewhere, somehow he knows Feather Woman is watching. Rain pelts the earth. The people feast and the children play in the rain.

Part 5, Chapters 34-36 Analysis

Smallpox spreads through the Lone Eater camp taking with it young and old, weak and strong. As much as Red Paint wishes things could go back to what they were when her father was healthy, it cannot be. The cycle of life begins again with the son inside her. The dream of the invading Napikwans Fools Crow witnessed on the yellow skin comes to pass. Not only has he seen it before it happens, he knows what it means to the Pikunis children and their future dressed in Napikwan clothing.

The last chapter completes the dream. Fools Crow understands the bleakness of the future but while he can he passes on the Pikunis heritage to the next generation with honor.



Characters

White Man's Dog (Fools Crow)

White Man's Dog is a young man who belongs to the Pikunis, one of three tribes belonging to the Blackfeet Indians. Their band is known as the Lone Eaters. At the start of the story, White Man's Dog is an unhappy 18-year-old who is often teased by the other youth for never having had a girl. He is a head shorter than Fast Horse who is a year younger than him and is tormented with wrong feelings toward his father's third wife who is one year younger. He feels doomed because without wealth, in his view, no girl will look at him. When Fast Horse approaches him to join a raid on the Crow Indians to steal horses, White Man's Dog's temperament changes. Even the stars look brighter as he faces the future with hope. While on the journey to the Crow camp, Yellow Kidney sees positive attributes in the young man. "In spite of his unlucky reputation, there was a steadiness, a calmness in White Man's Dog that Yellow Kidney liked," (p. 21). White Man's Dog does not disappoint. He leads the young men in the taking of the horses. During their flight into the mountains, White Man's Dog is forced to kill a Crow youth who spots them. Snow falls and covers their trail, but to his dismay Yellow Kidney, Eagle Ribs and Fast Horse are delayed. Finally Eagles Ribs arrives, and later Fast Horse who is cold and troubled by a visit from Cold Maker. His vow to bring robes and coals for Cold Maker's daughters bothers White Man's Dog because if he does not fulfill it, it may mean trouble for the entire people.

When he returns to camp following the raid, White Man's Dog visits Mik-api (medicine man) and together they sit in the sweat lodge and pray for Yellow Kidney's safe return. When he walks out, White Man's Dog feels cleansed. This starts their relationship and White Man's Dog visits the "many faces man" regularly. His powers fascinate the young brave.

After the raid, White Man's Dog's relationship with Fast Horse changes. They no longer get together or talk. Fast Horse does not even care for his horses or care when some are stolen. When winter storms blow through, he stays in his father's lodge and sulks. Rides-at-the-door, White Man's Dog's father, and some of the other men ask White Man's Dog to speak with Fast Horse. White Man's Dog almost tells his father of Fast Horse's dream and vow, but it can turn one's medicine bad if they tell another man's dream. The thing that really bothers White Man's Dog is that Fast Horse is not keeping his vow to Cold Maker. This can bring hardship upon all the Lone Eaters, but this is not the only reason it bothers him. He thinks that perhaps it is Cold Maker who holds Yellow Kidney and not the Crow. Perhaps he is waiting for Fast Horse to fulfill his vow. White Man's Dog decides to talk to Fast Horse about it.

White Man's Dog hunts to provide for Yellow Kidney's family which includes his daughter Red Paint whom he asks to marry. Red Paint becomes pregnant and in these troubled times they look forward to having a son. Through his dreams, White Man's Dog receives guidance and it is through such a dream that he kills his first Napikwan (white



man). It is a justified killing, but stirs concern within the Lone Eater Camp. The seizers (white man's army) visit the camp looking for Owl Child. Things heat up as more and more Indians see that the Napikwans are two-faced. White Man's Dog takes part in revenge against the Crow for what they did to Yellow Kidney and he earns war honors and the name Fools Crow because he fooled the Crow chief Bull Shield, making him think he was dead. In fact, Fools Crow had fallen.

Life grows more and more difficult as the Napikwan numbers grow and spread across the land. Along with these troubles, the white scab disease takes a heavy toll. Fools Crow thinks Sun Chief looks with favor on them, but following instructions he receives from Nitsokan in a dream, he travels for three days without eating and comes to a canyon where he meets So-at-sa-ki, the mythical woman who was cast back to earth after digging up the sacred turnip. She paints a yellow skin, and at first he can see no images, but when his eyes are open to the images they move. He sees the landscape as if from a birds view, and the story they tell is not good. The blackhorns disappear, the Napikwans spread, and the lodges of his people are fewer. He returns to his people but does not tell many of what he knows until he sees things begin to unfold. However, even in the midst of adversity, his son is born and he holds on to the belief that his people will survive and go on as they always have.

Red Paint

Daughter of Yellow Kidney and Heavy Shield Woman, Red Paint becomes the wife of White Man's Dog before he receives the name Fools Crow. As a young man he takes note of the attractive 16-year-old her outside her family's lodge while Yellow Kidney is missing. Her hair is dark and shiny and hangs to the neck. Her eyes are light, almost a yellow color. She does excellent bead work and sells it to others in the camp. She worries about her younger brothers because without their father's guidance they grow boastful. She is also concerned for her mother who is wrapped up in preparing for her role as Medicine Woman at the Sun Dance, but the thing that is on her mind the most is the family's lack of a provider. She thinks that one day White Man's Dog will grow weary of providing for them. Instead he asks to marry her. It takes her by surprise. One day she does not even think of marriage and the next she is a wife. She falls in love with White Man's Dog and he with her. He gains war honors and the name Fools Crow after he kills the Crow chief. When White Man's Dog's banished friend Fast Horse returns to the camp wounded, she watches the two friends walk together and thinks of the crush she used to have on Fast Horse and how things have changed. Now she carries Fools Crow's child. She is happy that Fast Horse did not die, but she loves her husband.

Red paint loves her family—when her father is mutilated by the Crow it hurts her deeply. However, when he returns changed, his lack of emotional connection with his family also hurts. For a young woman she goes through much. While expecting her first child, she not only has to worry about whether or not her husband will return when he leaves camp, but her father is killed and she loses a younger brother to the white scab disease. After her son is born though, the cycle of life begins again as she, her son and husband make a new family unit.



Eagle Ribs

At 24 years old, Eagle Ribs is an experienced "horse taker" who accompanies Yellow Kidney and his group as scout for the Crow raid. He owns a single-shot gun and his scouting abilities make him a real asset. He goes to the Crow camp ahead of the others and returns with a rundown of the camp layout and guides the path of the raiding party. Eagle Ribs travels ahead to locate the right camp. He enjoys the thrill of traveling during the day, for only the best can do it. The other men rest, paint their bodies, and double-check the condition of their weapons. When Eagle Ribs reaches the Crow camp in the moonlight, he drapes his short-robe over his head and back to create a larger silhouette like that of a bear. He looks down at the camp astounded by the number of Nipikwan tents on the outskirts of the large camp. Trading in such numbers with the Nipikwans has never happened before. Yellow Kidney assigns White Man's Dog to oversee the young men stealing horses while he, Eagle Ribs and Fast Horse go into the heart of the camp to steal buffalo runners, the largest, fastest horses. Each goes their own direction.

Eagle Ribs catches up to White Man's Dog and the other young men who stole horses from the Crow before they crossed the river. He talks to the younger men because he is troubled. Winter is setting in and can help cover their tracks but can also become their enemy. He relates a dream of a white horse with split hooves that bothers him. The animal's hide is scored but it wears a bridle with the reins dragging on the ground. Rattler identifies it as the death horse. This horse foreshadows the horse to which Yellow Kidney will be tied. When the others ask about Fast Horse, "there's something in the way Eagle Ribs said Fast Horse's name, disdain or scorn, that startled Medicine Stab and the others," (p. 36). Eagle Ribs never talks like this. Later when a small white horse comes into camp carrying a mysterious man wrapped in a blanket, Eagle Ribs is the first to recognize Yellow Kidney.

Rides-at-the-door

Rides-at-the-door is White Man's Dog father. He stands a head taller than his son and has a broad torso. He owns many horses, has three wives and speaks the language of the Napikwan. When the story opens he harbors concern for his son because White Man's Dog is depressed and timid. Gossip spreads throughout the Lone Eater's camp that his son will take the coward's way and never strike an enemy. However, no one says this directly to his face for they respect him. In his heart, he wonders if it might be true. By comparison, his younger son, Running Fisher, surpasses White Man's Dog in achievements. At age 16, his younger son already has stolen two horses from the Cutthroats and the girls notice him.

When the Crow horse-stealing raid is planned White Man's Dog sees hope for his future, and Rides-at-the-door senses a change in his son. As a father, he hopes it is a real beginning and it is. The boy returns changed. His father is proud of him but has questions about Yellow Kidney and whether or not he was a good leader. White Man's Dog has nothing but praise for his leadership. Then his father asks if Yellow Kidney is



dead. The question surprises his son. He does not think the man is dead. His father agrees, for his medicine is powerful. That night Rides-at-the-door holds a feast to honor the return of his son.

When Yellow Kidney shows up at camp a mutilated shadow of a man, Rides-at-the-door asks what it was about Yellow Kidney's story that troubles him. White Man's Dog tells him about the dream of the white-faced girl, and how he feels responsible for what happened to Yellow Kidney because he did not tell him the dream. Rides-at-the-door assures his son that what happened to Yellow Kidney is not his fault. They discuss Fast Horse. White Man's Dog wonders what will happen to him. His father tells him that he is going to talk with Boss Ribs to tell him that he must banish his son. Before he leaves he tells White Man's Dog, "Let your heart quit this dream and its consequences, for you are as blameless as this river when it sometimes carries away one of our boys," (p. 86).

Rides-at-the-door's relationship grows with White Man's Dog, and when they raid the Crow camp to avenge the mutilation of Yellow Kidney, he sees his son earn war honors and his new name. However, his second son is the one who takes the cowards way and stays on the outskirts of the battle. Later this second son disgraces his father by sleeping with his third wife.

Rides-at-the-door shows wisdom works as a go-between with the Napikwans. When the Lone Eater chief dies of the white scab disease, Rides-at-the-door becomes chief.

Mik-api

A "many-faces-man" or healer to the Lone Eaters. Before White Man's Dog and Fast Horse go on the raid to steal Crow horses, they visit the healer. Mik-api prays for the two as they steam out the bad spirits in a sweat lodge. They face north, south, east and west as they smoke to the Above Ones, Below Ones and Underwater People. Mik-api gives White Man's Dog a small pouch that holds yellow pigment following the cleaning sweat that he uses to paint his body before entering the Crow camp. If the young man uses it exactly as directed he will gain both the strength and cunning to be successful in the raid. The two of them grow close and White Man's Dog becomes his apprentice.

Fast Horse

A youth one year younger than White Man's Dog who stands a head taller than his friend. He carries himself erectly with a stance of pride that borders on arrogance. He wears his hair in a knot on the front of his head. At the start of the story he is a braggart and thinks himself quite important because he will inherit the same medicine his father acquired. While on the journey to steal horses from the Crows, Fast Horse has a dream about Cold Maker who visits him from the land of Always Winter. Dressed in furs and riding a white horse, Cold Maker's visit frightens Fast Horse and he asks the god to take pity on him. Cold Maker laughs and tells Fast Horse to stand up. As they smoke together, Cold Maker tells Fast Horse how to be successful in the raid upon the Crows. He gives Fast Horse directions to his favorite ice spring, hidden within the rocks. It gives



him strength, but there is a problem. A large rock has fallen and covers the mouth of the spring. Cold Maker tells Fast Horse to move the rock, and that if he does it ensures the raid to be a success. If not, the entire party will be punished. This dream fills Fast Horse's traveling companions with both fear and excitement and is a life altering event in the young man's life when they do not find the spring. He feels betrayed.

Fast Horse is separated from the others when stealing horses from the Crows and he stops to shelter in an animal den. There Cold Maker visits him again. "I told him that we had tried to find the sacred ice spring, but he said we should not have gone on, that we offended him by continuing our journey without moving the rock that covered his favorite drinking hole," (p 38).

White Man's Dog's relationship with Fast Horse changes after the raid. They do not get together or talk much. Fast Horse does not even care for his horses and does not care when some are stolen. When a winter storms blow through he just stays in his father's lodge and sulks. The thing that really bothers White Man's Dog is that Fast Horse is not keeping his vow to Cold Maker. This can bring hardship upon all the Lone Eaters, but this is not the only reason it bothers him. He thinks that perhaps it is Cold Maker who holds Yellow Kidney and not the Crow. Perhaps he is waiting for Fast Horse to fulfill his vow. He decides to talk to Fast Horse about it, but Fast Horse grows angry. Then when Yellow Kidney does return to camp with his hands mutilated and his body marked with white scab pocks, Fast Horse is banished for his role in Yellow Kidney being caught.

Fast Horse joins up with Owl Child and becomes a renegade. He turns his back on his family and heritage which hurts his father deeply. Along with Owl Child and his followers he takes part in killing and raping Napikwans and stealing their wealth. After a time he starts to see Owl Child for what he really is and feels trapped. He can no longer go home, for he is no longer the same man. He sees Owl Child's confidence wane and knows that his days are numbered. He chooses to no longer follow Owl Child and becomes a man that does not belong anywhere.

Owl Child

A rebellious young man who is feared and hated by many of his own people because he has killed Napikwans and brings trouble to the Indians.

Yellow Kidney

An experienced horse-taker who leads the horse-taking raid against the Crows. This raid is life altering for Yellow Kidney as well as for Fast Horse and White Man's Dog. Yellow Kidney is one of the Pikuni men who own a many-shots gun. While on the journey to steal the horses from the Crow he second guesses if the youth who accompany him are ready for the venture. The only other experienced horse-taker is Eagle Ribs whom he uses as a scout. During the journey to the Crow camp, Yellow Kidney gets to know White's Man's Dog better and sees in him an honorable youth.



During the journey to reach the Crow Camp, Yellow Kidney is thankful for the years he has had but feels the effects of age creeping up on him. His legs hurt and his body is stiff in the morning chill. He does not even need another horse but will be obliged to lead the raid into the camp. He gets caught by the Crow because of Fast Horse's loud-mouthed antics and he not only is captured but his fingers are cut off by the Crow Chief. They tie him to a horse and send him off. He catches the white scab disease while being cared for by the Spotted People, but survives. He returns to the Lone Eaters a shadow of the man he once was. After a time, he decides his family will be better off without him and he leaves. While staying in the war lodge, he decides to return home and even has a name for his unborn grandson, but he never makes it for he is shot to death by a white man looking for shelter in the lodge.

Boss Ribs

Fast Horse's father and the powerful Beaver Medicine man. He has lost two wives and three children and then Fast Horse shuns the traditions of his people. He eventually dies of the white scab disease.

Kills-close-to-the-lake

Third of Rides-at-the-doors three wives, she is a shy, slim girl who is one year younger than her stepson White Man's Dog and a year older than his brother Running Fisher. White Man's Dog finds her attractive and struggles with mixed feelings toward her as he finds her desirable but logically knows she is his "near mother." Rides-at-the-door brought her into his lodge as an act of kindness, but she is not happy. Due to the sexual tension between her and White Man's Dog, he does his best to avoid her. When White Man's Dog marries and moves out, Kills-close-to-the-lake becomes Running Fisher's secret lover. When they are found out by Rides-at-the-door's middle wife Striped Face, Kills-close-to-the-lake is banished.



Objects/Places

Sun Chief

The sun who they believe to be a male god.

Night Red Light

The moon who they believe to be a female god.

Chief Mountain

A mountain belonging to the range known as Backbone of the World. Chief Mountain stands apart from the others. It is not as strong, but its granite face serves as a landmark to all who pass. On this mountain great warriors from long ago like Eagle Head and Iron Beast dreamed visions that made them strong in spirit.

Beaver Medicine Bundle

One of the most powerful medicine bundles among the Pikunis. It is owned by Fast Horse's father and will be passed on to him when his father dies.

Pikunis

One of three bands of peoples belonging to the Blackfeet Indians.

Kainahs

One of three bands of peoples belonging to the Blackfeet Indians.

Siksikas

One of three bands of peoples belonging to the Blackfeet Indians who live in Canada.

Sweat Lodge

Lodge where the man-of-many-faces or medicine man sweats out bad spirits from his patients.



Sand Hills

Place where the dead go to live in the after life.

Buffalo Runners

Fast, big, strong horses.

White Scabs Disease

Smallpox



Themes

Dreams

Fools Crow is a story of dreams, honor, loss and changes. It is a coming of age story that takes place amid hardships beyond anything the Pikunis have faced in the past. Dreams foreshadow and predict the difficulties to come. White Man's Dog has a dream of a white-faced girl, while Cold Maker visits Fast Horse in a dream. Both dreams warn that the group should not continue on to the raid on the Crows. Fast Horse tells his dream, but Yellow Kidney does not trust the dream. The meaning of White Man's Dog's dream does not become clear until it is fulfilled when Yellow Kidney finds himself in a lodge filled with bodies of those with the white-scab disease. This fateful raid changes lives forever. White Man's Dog returns home with honor, Fast Horse returns sullen and vexed, and Yellow Kidney finally returns home after a long absence without his fingers, his body pock-marked from the white scab disease.

Dreams fuel the plot of this story. Through dreams, Fools Crow sees that fighting the Napikwans is a necessary evil. For in his dream with the white landscape void of animal life, the white represents the Napikwans taking over their lands and no animal life represents the white man's senseless killing of their food sources. When Raven appears in a dream, he tells Fools Crow that he must kill the big Napikwan who kills animals needlessly. Fools Crow objects, but Raven convinces him that it is for the good of his people. He agrees and uses his wife to bait the large white man. The plan succeeds but Fools Crow gets shot. When they return to camp, the men of the Lone Eaters camp listen to Fools Crow's story and agree that the killing was necessary, but no more killing of the white man should go on for it will bring great trouble to their people. However, Owls Child and his followers go on killing the Napikwans who then blame all the Indians.

The final dream of the story takes Fools Crow on a seven day journey to a mysterious canyon that takes him to a summer-like land devoid of life. Feather Woman talks to him about what he witnesses and tells him he can do much good for his people by preparing them for the future. In the distance his horse awaits. "If they make peace within themselves, they will live a good life in the Sand Hills," (p. 359). Fools Crow only regrets that the children will not know Pikunis ways, for he saw them on the skin dressed like Napkiwans. The woman agrees that much will be lost but stories will be handed down to preserve the history. This dream strengthens Fools Crow to return home where he deals with the loss of many through the white scab disease and at the hand of the Napikwan. Through it all he holds on to hope for the future as his people survive and those who live celebrate life and a Pukinis feast. Thunder rolls and Fools Crow dances. His heart beats with the drum and he feels a peculiar happiness that abides with sadness. Somewhere, somehow he knows the woman from the white lodge is watching.



Honor

The subtle theme of honor winds through the culture and setting of this story. *Fools Crow* is a story of dreams, honor, loss and changes. It starts when White Man's Dog's friend Fast Horse invites him to take part in a horse-taking raid. This venture becomes the springboard to the rest of the story, for on this journey White Man's Dog and Fast Horse both have dreams. Both dreams warn that the journey should not continue. Fast Horse tells his dream, but Yellow Kidney does not trust the dream because Fast Horse is without honor. The meaning of White Man's Dog's dream does not become clear until it is fulfilled when Yellow Kidney finds himself in a lodge filled with bodies of those with the white-scab disease. The fateful raid changes lives forever. White Man's Dog returns home with honor, while Fast Horse is sullen and vexed. Yellow Kidney finally returns after a long absence without his fingers, his body pock-marked from the white scab disease.

Honor is an important part of this culture and is even used as an agent of change providing insight into the actions, motives and thoughts of the characters. This theme is brought into focus when White Man's Dog confronts Fast Horse about fulfilling his vow. The young man's reaction lets White Man's Dog there is something more going on. This exchange foreshadows the trouble coming, not just the loss of their relationship, but trouble that touches the entire Pikunis tribe. Fast Horse not only turns away from White Man's Dog but also turns his back on authority, tradition and his people for he is a man without honor.

When Owl Child and his companions ride into the Lone Eater camp with their stolen horses, lines are drawn between the honorable ways of the long-ago ones and new ways filtering into their culture. This plays into not only the theme of honor, but also the theme of loss and change as ancient traditions are undermined by both the Napikwans and this handful of young Pikunis men. The results are far-reaching.

When *Fools Crow* is forced to kill the big Napikwan, honor ties into the killing. When the Lone Eater men gather to decide if *Fools Crow* was in the right to take the Napikwan's life, they decide his actions were justified but Three Bears wants no more killing. He wants the Pikunis to "[...] be known as men of wisdom who put the good of their people before their individual honor," (p. 178).

When Boss Ribs tells Fast Horse that the Pikunis help and depend on each other, and that they fight and die beside each other, it not only establishes their honorable ways but foreshadows their future. When he tells his son that there is not room for a man who despises his brothers, Fast Horse turns away. Boss Ribs recognizes that his son is such a man, a man without honor. *Fools Crow* knows in his heart that Fast Horse is a man without honor, but he holds on to the hope that the friend he once knew will return to his people's ways, but Fast Horse has changed and the friendship is dead.



Loss and Change

Fools Crow is a story of dreams, honor, loss and changes. When White Man's Dog prays to the stars and Above Ones, the distant stars are "pitiless and gathered their light within themselves," (p. 5), which foreshadows the theme of "loss and change" threaded throughout the book as ancient ways give way to the advancing Napikwans. The author uses the natural world and Native American traditions to create suspense that hooks the reader. When White Man's Dog looks at the stars and they are brighter, it foreshadows the brave's own internal hope and his belief in the magic of the many-faces-man Mik-*api*. This growth in character development and the introduction of the theme of "loss and change" is further emphasized through the point of view of White Man's Dog's father, Rides-at-the Door. He sees White Man's Dog's new confidence which changes his outlook as he loses the "unlucky" persona.

White Man's Dog's relationship with Fast Horse changes after the Crow raid, and they do not get together or even talk much after that. Fast Horse does not even care for his horses and only shrugs when some of them are stolen. White Man's Dog does not understand it until he talks with Fast Horse about his vow. Fast Horse becomes angry and White Man's Dog realizes that Fast Horse is in some way responsible for Yellow Kidney's disappearance. He thinks it may be a result of Fast Horse not keeping his vow to Cold Maker. The theme of "dreams" combines with the themes of "honor" and "change and loss" as the reality of the impact of dreams within this culture continues to deepen the plot. Not acting or believing on a dream changes the direction of lives and the story. Yellow Kidney suffers physical loss which changes his life forever. Fast Horse suffers loss and does not even realize it, but his life too is changed forever. The difference is that the changes in Fast Horse are changes that usher loss throughout his culture. On a personal level it initiates deep running plot threads including this one action. "Now, even if Boss Ribs understood the necessity of his son's banishment, he would not forgive Rides-at-the-door for bringing the message. Fathers and sons would all suffer," (p. 86).

Loss and change is foreshadowed too when men both young and old prepare for battle. The eclipse is a bad omen. It predicts more loss to come, not just the loss of lives, but the loss of innocence and the change that will be wrought within the young braves like Running Fisher and White Man's Dog. The eclipse also is tied with the removal of the hand of blessing by the Sun Chief on the Pikunis people, another long reaching change. They walk away from the battle with six dead bodies, 13 who are missing and seven severely wounded. Each of these lives touched others, and loss initiates more changes. These lives can never be restored to what they were before the fight. So loss begets change and change begets more change. The men return to camp never to be the same.



Style

Point of View

Fools Crow is written in the third-person omniscient point of view. This allows the reader to observe situations through the senses and inner thoughts of each character without partiality. The focal character shifts from scene to scene, offering perspectives from different focal characters and allowing readers to make determinations without being told what to think. For instance, at the council meeting the General Sully makes the points of contention clear when he meets with the Pikunis chiefs. The reader sees things from the white man's point of view, but then also knows the thoughts and feelings of the Indian Chiefs. Most of the Indian chiefs eye the seizers with suspicion knowing that Mountain Chief will not take killing Owl Child lightly because he is part of Mountain Chief's band. This is an example of being privy to thoughts and feelings of focal characters which adds to conflict and tension within the plot. The third-person omniscient point of view works well to convey inner conflict as well when Fools Crow does not want to kill the big Napkwan at Raven's request. It allows the reader to see how Fools Crow overcomes his reservations and agrees to killing the man and yet maintains his Pikunis honor. The omniscient point of view uses the viewpoint characters' senses and thoughts to allow the reader to draw their own conclusions. James Welch handles the switching of focal characters view points masterfully. In this way it is similar to a first-person point of view because it is limited to one character's view point at a time. However, third-person omniscient point of view provides information from several characters and is used to drop tidbits of information along the way that stir questions, create hooks, foreshadowing and leaves the reader turning the page because they know information not all the characters know.

Setting

The story takes place in a historic setting when the Pikunis people's freedom was eroded by the invasion of the white man into their territory. They try to adjust to keep the peace, but the white man's thinking differs from theirs and little by little they not only lose their land but also their way of life. The unlikely savior is a young man named White Man's Dog who earns the name Fools Crow when he kills the enemy chief. In this society bravery and honor are highly regarded and family and tribal heritage are important. Dreams play an integral role in what they believe and how they act. To ignore a dream or sign leads to far reaching consequences. Unrest regenerates with each meeting with the Napikwans because they do not keep their word, but keep taking Pikunis lands and resources. The outlook is grim, and the Pikunis know that it will lead to a war they cannot win because the white men out-number them and have superior weapons. The Pikunis recognize changes and read the signs as the white men close in. Fools Crow reads the future through the images on the yellow skin and knows that not only will the white men live and take over their territory, but that the white scab disease will cause much death and suffering. This is a battle they cannot win, but must endure.



Armed with this knowledge he returns to his people with hope, for in his vision Feather Woman has told him he can do much good for his people. As he celebrates with his people, his heart beats with the drum and he feels a peculiar happiness that abides with sadness. Somewhere, somehow he knows the Feather Woman watching. Rain pelts the earth. The people feast and the children play in the rain.

Language and Meaning

James Welch's effortless storytelling style weaves unique Native American language and its meaning into the context effortlessly. A many-faces-man is a healer and medicine man. He has powers to read dreams and see other people's dreams and helps by offering guidance when asked. A lodge is a tipi which moves with the band as they set up camps in different areas for different seasons, while a war lodge is a stationary tipi the Indians use when traveling. The war lodge is used by Yellow Kidney and those who accompany him on the Crow raid, and is again visited when Yellow Kidney leaves home after his disfigurement. Since the war lodge is stationary, the white men also know of its location, and during the blizzard when Yellow Kidney takes shelter there, he is killed by a white trader who also seeks shelter.

Probably the most difficult of terms in this story have to do with the Pikunis everyday life. For example the Beaver Medicine Bundle and the Medicine Woman Bundle are believed to be powerful. The Medicine Woman Bundle is costly and take many of Heavy Shield woman's possessions, while the Beaver Medicine Bundle is handed down to the next generation within a family unit. They consist of artifacts, stories and songs thought to hold power. Yet, the holders of these bundles learn to question their effectiveness by the end of the story for fate seems to be against them. Boss Ribs sees his only son turn his back on his inheritance to become a renegade that brings trouble to his people, and Heavy Shield Woman loses her husband and eldest son.

Structure

The story starts out by drawing a comparison between White Man's Dog and Fast Horse. One is painted as unlucky and insecure and the other has a promising future. The journey to the Crow camp to steal horses quickly paints a deeper picture, showing the hearts of these young men through their dreams. While White Man's Dog is insecure, but his heart is good and honorable. Fast Horse, on the other hand, is prideful and thinks nothing of the consequences he brings down upon others. He is the reason Yellow Kidney is caught and his fingers cut off. Distinctions are drawn between these two central characters throughout the book and used to accentuate the struggles within the Pikunis people as they deal with the white men's encroachment in their territory.

Fast Horse is the anti-hero who leaves his people to travel with Owl Child and his band. He kills, rapes and steals from the Napikwans. With all the suffering he causes, he heart becomes hardened. Fools Crow still cares about his childhood friend and for a long time hopes he will turn back to the Pikunis ways. However, when Fast Horse refuses to



return to his father to learn the ways of the Beaver Medicine Bundle, Fools Crow can see that their friendship is dead. Through visions and dreams, Fools Crow sees the plight of his people, but with the help of Feather Woman, he does not give up. He returns to his people amid much suffering because, even through the difficulties, he looks to the future with renewed hope for So-at-sa-ki has told him he can do much good for his people.



Quotes

"It was up to him, perhaps with the help of a many-faces man, to find his own power" (p. 4).

"There the big chiefs hated and feared the Pikunis and wished to exterminate them" (p. 15)

"This one was a sign, and he didn't know how to interpret it. He wanted to go to the white-faced girl but knew that there was danger in that direction" (p. 18).

"Yellow Kidney himself had two of the big fast horses and didn't need any more; nevertheless, he would be obliged to lead the way into camp" (p. 20).

"In spite of his unlucky reputation, there was a steadiness, a calmness in White Man's Dog that Yellow Kidney liked" (p. 21).

"And it struck Eagle Ribs that he had not seen such a large encampment outside the Sun Dance encampment of his own people [...] That many people would hunt out the game in a matter of days" (p. 25).

"There's something in the way Eagle Ribs said Fast Horse's name, disdain or scorn, that startled A Medicine Stab and the others" (p. 36).

"I told him that we had tried to find the sacred ice spring, but he said we should not have gone on, that we offended him by continuing our journey without moving the rock that covered his favorite drinking hold" (p. 38).

"He had told her that he was wandering the land of the Crows, that he could not return yet, that he could not return until Heavy Shield Woman agreed to perform a task which only the most virtuous of women could accomplish" (p. 42).

"If you will send this young man, I will teach him how to use this creature's power, for in truth only the real-bear is a stronger power animal" (p. 52).

"Of all the two-leggeds, you alone will possess the magic of Skunk Bear. You will fear nothing, and you will have many horses and wives" (p. 58).

"The white ones steal our land, they give us trinkets, then they steal more. If Owl Child has taken a few of their horses, then he is to be honored" (p. 60).

"If these foolish young men continue their raiding and killing of the Napikwans, we will all suffer. The seizers will kill us, and the Pikuni people will be as the shadows on the land" (p. 61).

"There on her face and chest were the dreaded signs. I had copulated with one who was dying of the white-scabs disease" (p. 75).



"Then I vowed that if [Old Man] would let me die and give me back my fingers, I would hunt on behalf of all the old ones in the Sand Hills, since I could not hunt for my own family in this life" (p. 80).

"Let your heart quit this dream and its consequences, for you are as blameless as this river when it sometimes carries away one of our boys" (p. 86).

"But perhaps Sun Chief would favor him in another way, would allow him to become a good man to be trusted and respected by all the people" (p. 92).

"We thought the Napikwans would leave us alone, for we had tried their way and it was no good" (p. 96).

"His feet ached, he was weary in his bones, but being near Red Paint made even his weariness seem a thing of joy" (p. 103).

"And if he were to be honest with himself, he would have admitted that the idea was not appealing to him, not because of Red Paint but because White Man's Dog would have to provide for the entire family" (p. 106).

"They could kill us now and their bosses would be pleased, thought Fools Crow. Sun Chef favors them with strong medicine" (p. 157).

"The visit by the seizers had only heightened a tension that had existed since the Sun Dance, since Mountain Chef's speech and owl Child's reaction to it. So many Napikwans, closing in all the time, made the people feel that their time on the plains was numbered" (p. 159).

"But if the Napikwans mistake our desire for peace for weakness, then let them beware, for the Pikunis will fight them to death" (p. 177).

"Let the Lone Eaters be known as men of wisdom who put the good of their people before their individual honor" (p. 178).

"This is how we Pikunis live. We help each other, we depend on each other, we fight and die beside each other. There's no room for the man who despises his fellows" (p. 187).

"This was what the Lone Eaters did not know about, he thought, this urgency, this ease with which one could make his enemies pay" (p. 210).

"He [Fools Crow] studied his friend's face and saw that they were truly not friends anymore. They had chosen different lives, and the burning eyes told him that the break was as final as death" (p. 235).

"These seizers know how powerful the Pikunis and Kainahs are and they will welcome us with good hearts. Let us meet them with the same" (p. 271).



"Already the wheels were in motion for an action designed to punish the Blackfeet severely. This meeting could have made such an action unnecessary and, as an added benefit, would have enhanced Sully's reputation as a man who brought peace to the northern plains" (p. 277).

"Honor is all we have, thought Rides-at-the door, that and the blackhorns [...] One feeds us and the other nourishes us" (pp. 339-340).



Topics for Discussion

How does Fast Horse's dream of the icy spring change his fortune and that of others?

How did Fast Horse differ from White Man's Dog? Give at least three examples and explain.

Name three concessions made by the Pikunis to the Napikwans. What was their thinking behind the concessions and what was the final result?

Kills-close-to-the-lake and White Man's Dog share a dream with a white landscape. Their dreams are similar but different. Explain how they are the same, how they differ and how they affect their lives.

List three dreams you think most important to the Fools Crow plot, along with two or more paragraphs explaining why they play a significant role.

What kind of character is Fast Horse? Support your reasoning with elements from the story.

What does Fools Crow learn from So-at-sa-ki (Feather Woman) and the images on the yellow skin?