Native Roots: How the Indians Enriched America Study Guide

Native Roots: How the Indians Enriched America by Jack Weatherford

BOOKRAGS

Contents

Plot Summary

Native Roots: How The Indians Enriched America was written by popular historian Jack Weatherford about many of the unacknowledged contributions that Native Americans made to the contemporary culture of the United States and Canada. Each chapter is a self-contained unit with a particular lesson about how Native American influences, figures, stories, events, culture, technology or religion contributed to some well-known phenomena. It also aims to dispel a number of myths about the Native Americans, in particular by distinguishing sharply between nations, tribes and the regions that they inhabit.

Many myths are unmasked but several in particular should be mentioned. First, Weatherford shows that the Native Americans had many different forms of life beyond the merely nomadic and occasionally agricultural. When he discusses the ancient Native American city of Cahokia, the ruins of which are located just east of modern-day St. Louis, the reader gets an impression of a vibrant, settled culture with complex trade routes and extended structures of government, much more like the Aztec and Incan Empires.

Another important myth is the idea that the Native Americans only disappeared from the United States due to dying off from wars, massacres and disease. Weatherford discusses the extended, centuries-long process through which intermarriage brought Native American blood into the American and Canadian peoples as a whole. Thus the Native Americans are not some group that stands wholly in opposition to European culture but rather has been somewhat mixed into it. Most striking are the Metis people from Canada, a group of French and Native American mix that has a concept of its own ethnic identity.

Readers will be aware of the fact that the Native Americans introduced corn to the Europeans, but they will be surprised to learn that both cotton and tobacco were products used by the Native Americans and that were later introduced to Europe through their North American settler populations. Further, while many understand that Native Americans did not use European military tactics, they may not realize the extent to which Native Americans were pioneers in the development of guerilla warfare and that many troops in the U.S. Army during the Revolutionary War had absorbed these tactics and used them against the British.

All these lessons and more pervade the book, but Native Roots is not merely a collection of myth-busting tales. Rather, Weatherford uses the tales to make a single point, that the Native Americans are not a people wholly distinct from modern day Americans of European descent. Instead, the cultural, technological, racial, agricultural, historical contributions made by Native Americans show that it is better to conceive of the peoples of North America as a wide range of diverse peoples who are related to one another on a continuum rather than seeing the Native Americans and Americans of European descent as opposing racial and cultural poles.

Chapters 1-3, The Road to Tuktoyaktuk, Pyramids on the Mississippi, Women (and a Few Men) Who Led the Way

Chapters 1-3, The Road to Tuktoyaktuk, Pyramids on the Mississippi, Women (and a Few Men) Who Led the Way Summary and Analysis

Tuktoyaktuk is a peninsula that extends directly from Northern Canada into the Arctic Ocean and is one of the northernmost places the humans inhabit, and yet there is both a military base there and a native Inuvialuit village that intermingle. The author, Jack Weatherford, sees the peaceful coexistence of these two groups as the end of a five centuries old path of social and cultural interactions between the various immigrant groups to North America and the various tribes of natives who inhabited the land before. Much of what is great about Western civilization in terms of science, technology, agriculture, culture and art comes from these interactions.

In Chapter 2, Weatherford introduces the reader to the oft-forgotten Native American city of Cahokia, now located in Southern Illinois, just across the Mississippi River from St. Louis. At its height of population around 1250 A.D. Cahokia was the largest city in North America and would keep that title until Philadelphia exceeded twenty-thousand people in the 18th century. Cahokia was located half-way down the middle of the Mississippi probably for the same reasons that St. Louis was, because of its central location in land and on water. It straddles the boundary of many differences, such as the three distinct linguistic groups of Native American tribes.

We know almost nothing about the people of Cahokia. Much evidence was likely destroyed by Spanish conquistadors who, when they encountered America, were looking for a civilization of stone, not one of 'bead and shell' like the one they found. But even in that day, Cahokia had fallen far from its pinnacle. North America contains many different types of civilizations, not all of which were nomadic. The people of Cahokia built large pyramids some of which stand today and are the only pyramids ever built in a temperate zone. These people were agricultural, as were many of the Native Americans in the American Southwest.

Chapter 3 discusses the many Native American guides used to take Spanish and other explorers to then-unknown places in North America. The first story is relatively recent. From its 'discovery' by Europeans in 1541, many had wondered where the Mississippi River originated. It took around three hundred years to track down its origin and it occurred only through the aid of a woman from the Ojibwa Tribe named Jane Johnston who married Henry Rowe Schoolcraft. He then took credit for discovering the source in 1832, while Johnston's people had known about it for a long time.

When European explorers landed in the Caribbean three hundred years earlier, they immediately wanted guides and started a practice of capturing Native Americans and forcing them into leading them through North America. Native Americans made some of the earliest maps for explorers. Once Hernando Cortez reached Mexico in 1519, he relied on an Aztec woman named Malinche to interpret language for him and take him to the Aztec capital, Tenochtitlan. Due to her intelligence and mastery of regional languages and cultures, Malinche became Cortez's chief negotiator and strategist. It was Malinche who banded together oppressed Native American nations to destroy Emperor Montezuma and his Empire; she deserves as much credit as Cortez.

In 1534, Jacques Cartier sailed from France to the Atlantic coast of Canada and kidnapped Taignoagny and Agaya, two people whom he forced to learn French back in France. The English explorer Martin Frobisher used the Inuit as ship pilots during his first Arctic expedition in 1576. And there are many other examples. When Hernando de Soto received permission from the King of Spain to conquer the rumored North American Empire in Florida, he took an army to the other side of the world and found no great kingdom save an exotic woman, the Lady of Cutifachiqui, who ruled part of the middle of South Carolina. She received De Soto honorably but when she could not tell him the location of the empire, he ransacked her people, stole their wealth and captured her, though she eventually escaped.

Franscisco Coronado captured a still-nameless Native American woman and forced her to guide his men, though she eventually escaped and was captured by De Soto's troops who remained after he died. Perhaps the most famous female Native American guide was Sacajawea, who had been captured and sold to a French Trapper and then hired by Lewis and Clark. Native American women were uniquely prepared to be good guides, because they had specialized knowledge of nature, geography and local flora and fauna. They also knew how to survive on the land. Native American people generally could use the water to navigate in ways that the Europeans could not, particularly in the Canadian areas, where compasses were less useful.

Chapters 4-6, Firestorm, The Tree in American History, Hunting

Chapters 4-6, Firestorm, The Tree in American History, Hunting Summary and Analysis

In Chapter 4, Weatherford opens by discussing the intimate knowledge many Native American nations had of the North American forests. They used wood often, contrary to popular imagery. Even the Navajo used lumber to build long hogans for themselves. Many Native Americans were responsible for the huge forests in North America in part because they had engaged for centuries in controlled burns of the forests. Native Americans regularly cleared out the forests with hard burns in order to clear out insects that brought diseases during the summer. As a result of destroying underbrush, the larger trees could flourish and spread. Further, because the underbrush was gone, random fires could not destroy entire forests because there was no reliable way for the fire to move from tree to tree. The Native American maintenance of the forest was so successful that around A.D. 1000 we know that some buffalo lived in woods.

The Native Americans also maintained firings of large parts of the plains to keep the forests from spreading. Thus large prairie land lay open. When settlers came and removed the Native Americans, the forests actually grew because no one maintained them.

The author then introduces the reader to Cloquet, Minnesota, located near the Objibwa reservation called Fond du Lac. After describing the town, he notes that it appeared younger than it was due to a fire that occurred on October 12th, 1918, when it was one of the country's most important lumber towns. The mills had used most of the lumber near Cloquet and had continued to work further into the forest. A train lit a spark that started a forest fire which led to the largest fire in decades and spread across northern Minnesota. This created hurricane force winds that swept through Cloquet. It then exploded the entire town into flames and killed five hundred people, along with destroying twenty-seven other small towns and villages. This firestorm created a lot of national awareness about forest fires and led to many of the warnings we have today. It also led us back to the controlled fire practices of the Native Americans.

Chapter 5 tells the story of the large trees native to North America and the relationship the Native Americans had to them. The largest trees in the world are the Redwoods or Sequoias. The Indians did not chop them down but instead maintained them and focused more on harvesting local plants like sassafras and ginseng. When the American settlers expanded out to California they began to harvest the Redwoods for profit and to sell sassafras and ginseng as well. The white pines were used to make ships for the British which enabled them to build much larger commercial ships that could travel to farther areas. In general, the large American trees shepherded by the Natives were maintained by civilizations rooted in wood.

Chapter 6 discusses the elaborate hunting habits of many Native Americans. Weatherford starts off by discussing the Inuvialuit nation in Tuktoyaktuk who hunt the polar bear and use snow dogs or huskies to carry their sleds. While they live in government-built houses, their hunting and fishing practices are still alive and well and they are shared with local Americans and Canadians. In fact, over the centuries, the practices of hunting the polar bear and hunting whale have grown quite sophisticated and, like much other Native American hunting, rely more on technique than on technology. They also use the body of the polar bear effectively, including the pelts and organs, save the liver which is poisonous. These practices are maintained despite the presence of the modern oil industry in the area.

The Native Americans are among the world's best hunters and their abilities astounded early European explorers. They had great speed and accuracy but were most effective because they knew the habits of animals intimately. They could imitate bird calls not only with their voices but with small instruments and they wore animal skins as camouflage. Many contemporary American hunters use these same techniques. The Native American hunters also used traps and could manipulate whole herds of animals by stampeding them to exhaustion, to give one example.

When the settlers arrived, they used Native American hunting techniques to make hunting into an industry. Game hunting and fishing has become an incredibly important part of the Inuvialuit economy as a result but, of course, the industry has expanded all over the North American continent. The colonists slowly learned Native American hunting techniques as the Native Americans retreated and died from disease. The colonists learned to live on the frontier, along with bringing much of their European technology, thus the Native American and European cultures were synthesized.

Chapters 7-9, How the Fur Trade Shaped the American Economy, Beads and Buildings, Corn, Cotton and Tobacco

Chapters 7-9, How the Fur Trade Shaped the American Economy, Beads and Buildings, Corn, Cotton and Tobacco Summary and Analysis

New York City has been the center of world events in the twentieth century but it got its start as a trading post for furs. John Jacob Astor built the fur industry in New York after emigrating from Germany. He was one of the first men to achieve a multi-million dollar fortune, through creating the American Fur Company in 1808 which competed fiercely with the Hudson Bay Company in Canada. Astor could not sell to the English and so found a Chinese market for his furs. He got his supply of furs from the Native Americans, who hunted and trapped animals that produced the best and thickest pelts. Hunting often occurred in the winter and so European technology and transport, since it was based on wheels and draft animals, was not particularly effective. Native Americans already knew how to effectively hunt, such as through the use of snowshoes. They also used toboggans to avoid snow glare and learned to economize on weight. The Native Americans were surprised that anyone wanted to buy their furs.

The French were some of the earliest European fur traders with the Native Americas, starting in the early 17th century. The Pilgrims and other British immigrants quickly followed suit. The Dutch did soon after when they founded New Amsterdam on the Manhattan Island in 1614, which they acquired in 1598. Traders from all over the world focused on New Amsterdam as a trading hub. The Spaniards were too focused on gold to compete. The British moved to take over the fur trade in the mid-17th century and largely succeeded. On the other side of North America, the Russians traded furs by forcibly employing Aleuts.

Over the next three centuries the wealth produced in what would become New York City accumulated and was able to finance the building of the city as it is today. John Jacob Astor built many buildings and founded efforts to build some of the first railroads with his money. The finances he left behind helped to lay the investment base for much of New York City. Ultimately, therefore, the money that made New York City began with Native American fur trappers.

In Chapter 8, Weatherford explains the various Native American crafts that have made many tribes well-known across the world and their origins. Weatherford opens with a story about visiting an Inuit and Dene village on a small peninsula in Yellowknife Bay. He observed skilled women artisans personally, watching them sewing and embroidering with porcupine quills and beads. He notes that when fur prices declined as

demand fell in the 19th century, traditional crafts became a larger part of economic development, so the female Native American domestic crafts, built on millennia old traditions, became more profitable. Women used pelts to make coats, and other specialized clothes and also used pelts to make canoes and kayaks.

Due to the mobile life-style of the hunting peoples of North America, they did not use heavy objects very often but instead focused on the use of small objects to construct the things they needed. They also created great works of art from these techniques. For example, the Hopewell people left behind beautiful beadwork. Southwestern Native Americans often wove baskets, which required great skill. Women did almost all of the weaving and decoration. Pottery also achieved its highest expression among the Anasazi people of the Southwest, as did the Mogollon people of New Mexico. Weatherford also emphasizes that craft making was very egalitarian, contrasting it with the very hierarchical art industry in Europe of that period.

Weatherford saw the same values and creativity in the village he visited as he saw at many Native American ruins and was impressed by the cultural continuity between the ancient and the contemporary.

Chapter 9 concerns three American crops that the peoples of the United States acquired from the Native Americans. The first of these is corn, which turned into an American staple food. It could be grown anywhere and was high in nutritional content. Corn made its way into a wide range of food and spread around the world from the United States. Over the centuries, Native Americans had developed many types of corn, nearly all of which were useful.

Tobacco played a major role in United States export industries. Tobacco was grown in particularly large quantities in Virginia and shipped around the world. This was how Virginia's wealth increased so dramatically between the 17th and 18th centuries. Cotton was initially not terribly important as a part of the American economy, since there were no cotton plantations of any large size until 1800. However, as cotton manufacturing techniques expanded and African slaves were imported to work the fields, the cotton crop expanded substantially and was the basis of the entire Southern economy.

Chapters 10-12, The Trade in Indian Slaves, Fishing for Food and Profit, Guerillas and Warriors

Chapters 10-12, The Trade in Indian Slaves, Fishing for Food and Profit, Guerillas and Warriors Summary and Analysis

Chapter 10 discusses the massive enslavement of the Native Americans who survived the epidemics and plagues brought upon them by European diseases. The first instances of Native American slavery arose when the Spanish conquered Mexico which then extended into what is now the American Southwest. Russia threatened to expand its holdings down the Pacific coast into Spanish territory and the Spanish needed an army to fight them off. The Spanish rulers enlisted the aid of local Franciscan monks to convert local Native Americans and get them to labor around the monasteries and fight for the Spanish. The Franciscans abided the Spanish rulers and used vicious and oppressive religious manipulation to fulfill their duties.

Spanish enslavement of Native Americans occurred on an epic scale and while in later centuries was technically illegal, the local Spanish found ways around the restrictions. The French and English also took Native American slaves. In fact, in 1709, Native American slaves were nearly a quarter of all slaves in South Carolina. The Puritans and Pilgrims also participated in the Native American slave trade. Initially, selling Native American slaves was lucrative for American settlers, so slave raids occurred until it was cheaper to import African slaves. By the 19th century, so many Native Americans had died, been killed or assimilated into Negro populations that they basically ceased to exist as slave populations, though the Spanish and Americans effectively continued slavery on reservations by trying to trick and manipulate Native Americans into engaging in unpaid labor.

In Chapter 11, Weatherford explains how the Native Americans of the Pacific Coast created many useful tools and techniques for catching fish, such as the construction of fishing poles with wood and metal, the development of harpoons for hunting flounder and weaving baskets to function as crab traps. Women often processed the fish the men brought to them by gutting, scaling, cleaning and drying them, along with using smoke houses. Women also developed techniques for extracting fish oil.

Large-scale commercial fishing began with the arrival of European sailors who tapped the area's rich resources and soon began to overfish the areas. The Native Americans never overfished. Many Native Americans were captured and enslaved into working on fishing boats. The European specialization of labor stretched them thin into menial tasks. As fur trappers exhausted the regional supply of fish on the East Coast, fishing

became increasingly important, particularly with the invention of canning. And yet somehow, Native Americans have still maintained their ancient habits in some places in the United States, such as on the Northwest Coast from Alaska to Oregon.

Chapter 12 argues that Americans learned guerilla tactics from the Native Americans. It begins by arguing that the Native Americans had never fought in complex formations but instead attacked from hidden places, with traps, raids and the like. Early in the history of European America, Imperial powers used Native Americans to fight each other. In fact, the early Native American practice of scalping, which was dying down at the time, was encouraged by Europeans, who often paid the Native Americans to take the scalps of their opponents. The tactics of the Native Americans were picked up mostly by the French during the French and Indian Wars with Britain. And during the conflict, what were later to be revolutionary soldiers fighting for the new United States would use those tactics against the British. George Washington, for instance, learned those tactics well.

While Europeans invented the practice of using horses in war, the Native Americans made special use of them, combining horse-riding with their guerilla tactics, not unlike the Mongols of Central Asia. Native Americans also aided the United States in World War II. The Navajos are among the most famous because they used their unique language among 430 of their marines to send messages that the Japanese could not decipher. In this way, the Native Americans' styles of war and unique abilities have helped the United States to remain a sovereign nation.

Chapters 13-15, America's Patron Saint, Americanization of the English Language, The Naming of North America

Chapters 13-15, America's Patron Saint, Americanization of the English Language, The Naming of North America Summary and Analysis

Americans were noted early on for their disposition to form vast networks of civic organizations. Many of these organizations were influenced by Native American culture, which helped to form the American identity. One of the first such societies were Tammany societies named after the Chief of the Lenni-Lenape who was said to have greeted William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, when he came to the United States. During the 18th century, Tammany became the subject of many legends and apocryphal stories. None of the European settlers identified as Americans at the time, and often had 'patron saints' of their home nations, Christian saints tied to European nationalities. Some Americans, initially to mock them, formed Saint Tammany societies. They were very popular, counting among them Presidents of the United States, who they called the 'Great Grand Sachem' of their societies.

The Tammany societies proudly emulated Native American practices until the War of 1812, when many of the Native American nations allied with the United States betrayed them. It was then that the American image of the Native American as noble savage and friend was transformed into dangerous, bloodthirsty head scalper.

A more radical society followed them, known as the Red Men, who argued that American democracy derived from a more radical democratic form practiced by the Native Americans. They also abandoned traditional Christianity for the worship of the 'Great Spirit'. Many fraternal societies were built around an American commitment to liberty and democracy and many were influenced by Native American culture and practices, including Woodcraft Indian societies, which often built Native American crafts. These societies spread in the United States but the crafts are most well-known today as practiced by the Boy Scouts of America.

Native Americans also had an impact on the distinctly American strain of English. When British settlers arrived in the United States, they encountered phenomena, flora and fauna for which they had no names, so they often acquired the words used by Native Americans. Bit by bit, these words filtered into the English language, with around two thousand words borrowed from Native Americans, eighty of which are commonly used, such as the Choctaw word oke, which became 'okay'.

Throughout the linguistic evolution of European languages, Europeans developed a huge range of nouns but relatively fewer verbs, often using the verb 'to be' instead of anything more complex. But the Native American languages contain a much higher ratio of verbs to nouns and so supplied a number of new verbs to the English language.

The Native Americans also had a major effect on how America's places, cities, locales and geographical landmarks were named. The various Native American languages supplied names from their chiefs, objects, animals, tribal names, crafts and on and on. A huge number of American states derive their names from Native American words. The following tribes the reader will recognize in their state names: Dakota, Kansa, Massachuset, Illini, Utes (Utah). Cities regularly took their names from Native Americans, such as Seattle, named for a Native American chief named Seal'th. Tucson, Arizona is also a city name taken directly from Native American languages. Many rivers have distinctly Native American names, such as the Tallahassee and the Chattahoochee rivers. Mountain ranges are also often named for the Native Americans.

Native Americans tended to name geographical locations after their features rather than other factors and they also often used animal names, which is how Buffalo, New York got its name. At one point in American history, the people of the United States became enamored with Native American naming and expanded the practice more self-consciously. Less self-consciously, the United States and Canada have absorbed Native American words by means of other languages, such as French. And in some cases, Native American names have even displaced European names for geographical locations.

Chapters 16-19, North America's Inca Historian, Intellectual Mining, Mixed-Blood Nation, The White Roots of Peace

Chapters 16-19, North America's Inca Historian, Intellectual Mining, Mixed-Blood Nation, The White Roots of Peace Summary and Analysis

Chapter 16 is the story of El Inca Garcilaso, a half-Incan historian of the Americans in the late 16th century. El Inca, the name he took for himself, grew up as the Old World of the Incan Empire was collapsing at the hands of the Spanish conquistadors. El Inca witnessed atrocities by both sides and arguably grew up thinking that European influence on his society was a disaster. When he set out to write his histories of South and North America, however, he was unique and important for not rendering value judgments but instead displaying an attempt at historical neutrality. He recorded Spanish and Native American atrocities bit by bit. While El Inca could not leave Peru (and later Spain), he collected sources from all over the Western Hemisphere in order to construct a picture of what the Western world really was like in previous times. He did not discriminate in accord with the nationalities of his primary and secondary sources. His work of thirty years culminated in his book The Florida of the Inca (in those days all the land north of Mexico was referred to by the Spanish as 'Florida').

From other sources, it is clear that El Inca did not regard the Native Americans as inferior to the Spanish but saw them all as equals. He ideally wanted both sides to live together in peace and let their cultures exchange the best from both sides. However, the only thing in European culture he found more admirable than that contained in his culture was Christianity and it appears that he had a genuine and serious conversion. El Inca is a major but often forgotten historian, who arguably ranks among the great historians of antiquity like Philo, Josephus, Berossus and others.

Chapter 17 discusses the intellectual accomplishments that began with professional studies of the Native Americans. Early in the history of the United States, miners and other industrial workers would often discover Native American artifacts and ruins and loot and destroy them. In the early 20th century, the US federal government moved to protect them.

Jane Johnston, mentioned earlier in the book as the Ojibwa woman with great historical knowledge of her people, married Henry Schoolcraft. She transmitted her knowledge of Native American practices to him which enabled him to write great works of anthropology about the Ojibwa and the Algonquin. His work helped form the basis for Wadsworth's The Song of Hiawatha and the Schoolcrafts wrote tales that sold well to the American public.

Ely Parker, a member of the Seneca nation, grew up with the desire to become a historian. His mother was a member of the Iroquois Confederacy and his studies led him to meet a young lawyer, Lewis Henry Morgan, who had similar interests, despite being white. Together they helped to create modern anthropology, although Morgan's work is more well-known, since Parker never organized his extensive research and went on to serve in the Union Army, eventually directly under General Grant. They helped to change perceptions of Native Americans by writing about Iroquois political institutions. Native American studies progressed steadily through the works of many anthropologists, historians, sociologists and ethnographers throughout the rest of the 19th and 20th centuries.

Chapter 18 discusses the mixing of Native American populations with settler and slave populations. The English tended to discourage intermarriage but such marriages occurred anyway, particularly between Native Americans and Scots, who the English encouraged to immigrate. The French were often encouraged to intermarry so Native Americans could be brought into the Roman Catholic Church. However, many still ostracized them. A new ethnicity arose among French-Indian mixes known as the Metis. African slaves also mixed with Native Americans, who were often slaves themselves, though they often merged into the large African populations. While such intermarriages happened more among the lower classes, they often occurred in higher classes. These mixed populations endured wide discrimination in the 19th century in particular. Some rose up to defend these mixed populations, such as Louis Riel, a controversial figure even to this day, who tried to form a pan-Indian confederacy.

Chapter 19 argues briefly that despite all the terrible atrocities committed against the Native Americans, despite all the intermarriages, the American people are a mix of all others and must uphold a common morality.

Characters

Jack Weatherford

Jack Weatherford is the author of Native Roots: How the Indians Enriched America and is the Dewitt Wallace Professor of Anthropology at Macalester College. He is a well-known popular historian whose work on the Native Americans and the Mongol Empire are particularly popular. Weatherford is arguably the most important person in the book for two reasons. First, he is its author and second, he sometimes figures as a minor character in the book. His only appearances are in descriptions of his visits to various tribes and of how his experiences with the Native Americans make him feel connected to his past.

But Weatherford's opinions suffuse the book. While Weatherford is by no means the first to rehabilitate the often negative and racist stereotypes that most Americans have historically associated with Native Americans, he aims to continue the project. The main goal of Native Roots is to document case by case the positive influences Native Americans have had on contemporary American and Canadian society. From beads to battle tactics, Weatherford makes substantial attributions to Native Americans most of which are compelling, though others can sometimes seem exaggerated. Weatherford has been criticized for having something of an agenda in his other books, particularly his work on the Mongols. He seems to have a passion for retelling the stories of derided historical groups from a friendlier perspective. Weatherford also arguably has an ethnic and cultural message, in particular, that North American culture and genes are so profoundly bound up with the Native Americans that they should be considered a continuous part of our collective history.

El Inca Garcilaso

Originally named Gomez Suarez de Figueroa, Garcilaso de le Vega was a historian and writer from 16th and early 17th century Peru. Later calling himself 'El Inca', Garcilaso was born half-Incan, the son of both Spanish aristocrats and Incan nobility, though he was born outside of marriage. Nonetheless, Garcilaso received an inheritance when his father died. He had two half-sisters. El Inca lived from 1539 to 1616. In the 1560s, El Inca traveled to Spain to stay due to dangers posed to the Incan royal line. El Inca received a top-notch education in Spain after he arrived. His historical works have great literary value in part because they are among the only writings at the time to portray the Incas in a positive light, seeing the Incas as good rulers. He also had first-hand accounts of Inca life from his mother's relatives. However, he was deeply Christianized and reads his Christianity into the past, omitting discussion of human sacrifice.

El Inca's most famous work was Comentarios Reales de los Incas or the Royal Commentaries of the Incas, which were based on testimony from his Inca relatives. It also discussed the Spanish conquest of Peru. But before the Comentarios, El Inca

wrote the work on which Weatherford focuses, the La Florida del Inca or The Florida of the Inca, which records the history of De Soto's expedition in North America (which was simply called 'Florida' by the Spanish). In the work, El Inca surprisingly describes the Native Americans as the moral equals of the Spanish and as having dignity and reason.

Jane Johnston and Henry Schoolcraft

Jane Johnston is the first Native American literary writer known, a mixture of Ojibwa and Irish-American lineage. She married Henry Schoolcraft, an important early anthropologist. Together they compiled the information on local Native American folklore which laid the groundwork for Longfellow's The Song of Hiawatha and for modern Native American studies.

Ely Parker and Lewis Morgan

Parker, a member of the Native American Seneca nation, and Morgan, an American anthropologist, worked together to do some of the first ethnographic work on the Iroquois.

John Jacob Astor

One of the first multi-millionaires in history, his wealth coming largely from the fur trade and his company, the American Fur Company.

Saint Tammany

The folklore name of Tamanend, chief of a clan of the Lenni-Lenape nation who greeted William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, when Penn arrived in the United States. He became quite popular in early American popular culture and was called a 'Saint' by Americans who wanted to mock European groups and their identification with their patron saints.

The Spanish Conquistadors

Coronado, Cortez and De Soto were all Spanish conquerers who explored the North American continent and ransacked Native American civilization and killed their leaders.

The Lady of Cutifachiqui

The ruler of a chiefdom that De Soto encountered. She was captured by De Soto.

Malinche

A Nahua woman from the Gulf Coast who was an adviser to Cortez and who aided the conquest of the Aztecs.

The Ojibwa

Better known as the Chippewa, they are one of the largest Native American nations in the United States and Canada and their members are often mentioned in the book, including Jane Johnston.

The Inuvialuit

Better known as the Eskimos, these individuals inhabit Tuktoyaktuk.

The Navajo

The major Native American tribe who, as marines, used the Navajo language as code to fool the Japanese during World War II.

The Iroquois

The Native American tribe that were the object of study of Ely Parker and Lewis Morgan.

The Incas

The Peruvian Native peoples who had an empire that was destroyed by the Spanish Conquistadors.

Objects/Places

Tuktoyaktuk

An Inuvialuit village that lies on the Arctic Ocean, used by Weatherford partly symbolically in Native Roots.

Cahokia

The ancient Native American city located near modern-day St. Louis.

Florida

'Florida' was the term the Spanish used to refer to all of America in the 16th and 17th centuries.

New York City

Through the fur trade, John Jacob Astor's fortune helped to build New York City.

Tammany Societies

American societies named after Chief Tamanend during the Revolutionary War and lasting as widespread phenomena until the War of 1812. These societies often called Tamanend the Patron Saint of the United States of America.

Native American Names and Words

The Native Americans contributed an enormous amount of names and words to American English.

The Florida of the Inca

El Inca's history of North America.

Metis

The mixed ethnicity descended from the French and Native Americans.

Cash Crops

The Native Americans introduced three major crops to the world: corn, cotton and tobacco.

The Fur Trade

The Native Americans taught European settlers how to trap fur producing animals and transport them effectively, which enabled them to create the fur trade.

Native American Art

Weatherford often discusses Native American Art, which was focused less on architecture and more on craft.

Native American Battle Tactics

The Native Americans are in many ways the pioneers of guerilla warfare and these tactics were employed to win the Revolutionary War.

The Good Mind

For many Native Americans, 'the Good Mind' was one based on the principles of righteousness, health and power as opposed to the 'Evil Mind' which causes fighting and conflict.

Themes

European Imperialism and Atrocities

No contemporary history of the Native Americans is complete without a forthright and accurate description of the atrocities committed against the Native Americans by European settlers. The earliest atrocities were arguably the worst, those committed by the Spanish Conquistadors, Cortez, Coronado, De Soto and others. All three figures are discussed in Native Roots, particularly De Soto since he was involved in the first European expedition of North America, which is the geographical subject of Native Roots. Along the way, De Soto massacred and conquered many Native Americans and captured a chieftainess known as the Lady of Cutifachiqui. He was also responsible for the conquest of Peru and the destruction of the Incan Empire.

The English, French and Russians committed their share of atrocities, though the English were undoubtedly the most guilty over time, because they were the leading plurality of ethnic groups that composed the United States and Canada as the Native Americans were slowly pushed out of their native lands and wiped out by European diseases.

Knowing the truth about history is valuable in itself, but Weatherford has a further point in mind. He wants to show that the Native Americans are on a moral and cultural par with European settlers and that they have contributed substantially to American and Canadian culture. As a result, it is necessary to show that European behavior was condemnable on a number of grounds in order to shake the reader enough to revise his image of the Native Americans upward.

Dispelling Stereotypes

The peoples of the United States in particular have historically had a negative attitude about the Native Americans, though the degree and type of negativity has varied over time. One of Weatherford's primary aims, if not his only aim, is to rehabilitate the image of the Native Americans as culturally inferior, despite some acknowledgment of spiritual superiority and being more in touch with nature. Weatherford does not focus on Native American religion or spirituality; neither does he focus on their relationship with nature in detail. Instead, he talks mostly about pragmatic, clear contributions that Native Americans have made to any number of facets of American life.

For instance, many readers will be surprised to learn that many Native American tribes were heavily agricultural and that many Native Americans had a major city, one of the largest in the world, in Cahokia, an ancient city just east of modern-day St. Louis. Further, the Native Americans not only introduced Europeans to corn but to cotton and tobacco. They also heavily influenced the use of battle tactics in the American Revolution because they were pioneers of guerilla warfare. Weatherford from time to

time emphasizes their more egalitarian and democratic forms of government, such as the tribal council, and maintains that their art was not inferior to that of Europe but instead of being focused on painting and architecture, it preferred craft work.

Perhaps most significantly, while many know that the Native Americans died of European diseases and were killed by Europeans and later American settlers and the United States armed forces, they may not know that Native Americans even in the United States were made into slaves along with Africans.

Living as One People

In the final chapter of Native Roots, Weatherford brings out a theme that he does not explicitly articulate in previous chapters, save the very first. Weatherford believes that once his readers see how many contributions Native Americans have made to American life, how much more similar their forms of life have been and how much Native American blood runs in American veins, they will be less likely to see a strong opposition between North American European cultures and Native American cultures. Weatherford sees more continuity between the two sets of cultures as they have often fed into one another in complex ways. This is not to say that the cultures are indistinguishable; rather, he claims that the idea of a strict boundary between the two sets of cultures is a mistake.

The theme, while it does not come out much from Chapter 2 to Chapter 18, is quite powerfully articulated in the final chapter in light of the previous ones. Once the reader becomes aware of the vast contributions that Native Americans have made to American life, they may be much more inclined to see the history of the peoples of North America as far more diverse on the one hand, but far more unified on the other. The simple oppositions of Europeans and Native Americans must dissipate, in Weatherford's view.

What's more, Weatherford thinks that this shift in our own historical narrative will help to bring unity to the peoples of the continent.

Style

Perspective

Jack Weatherford is a cultural anthropologist. He has taught anthropology at Macalester College for nearly thirty years. He has a B.A. in political science and M.A.s in Sociology and Anthropology. He also has a Ph.D in Anthropology from the University of California, San Diego. In his professional life, Weatherford has traveled the world working with historically underrepresented and misrepresented groups, such as Mongolians and Native Americans. Weatherford's work on the Mongol Empire has won him wide acclaim. Native Roots: How the Indians Enriched America is another one of his books.

Weatherford's work displays a clear interest in rehabilitating minority groups who have been misrepresented by history, particularly for malicious, racist or imperialist reasons. Weatherford's interest continues throughout Native Roots. The reader must be aware of Weatherford's bias in favor of the Native Americans. No one must ever make light of the charges Weatherford brings against European settlers not only for the death of Native American civilization (by and large) but for obscuring their central role in the history of North America. However, Weatherford often makes attributions of accomplishments to Native Americans that seem unsupported and which undermine his objectivity in promoting a more central role of Native Americans in the history of European settlers on the continent.

For instance, Weatherford claims that the Native Americans are largely responsible for the fur trade which helped John Jacob Astor accumulate the wealth necessary to help build New York. The implication, which is not very subtle, is that New York City exists because of the Native Americans.

Tone

The tone of Native Roots varies somewhat, which is unusual for a work of popular history. Most popular historical books attempt to give an air of impartiality by making the tone a bit dry and causing the prose to read evenly throughout the narrative of the entire book. However, Native Roots is composed as a series of small lessons, which together are supposed to have a cumulative impact in favor of Weatherford's thesis. Each chapter begins with scene-setting, associating the story with some particular geography or historical event in a way more characteristic of the scene-setting of a novel. Often the prose becomes flowery in these sections.

The tone also expresses clear condemnation and praise for various figures across the book. For instance, rather than simply reporting events, when Weatherford describes the Spanish Conquistadors, his tone turns fairly negative. Similarly, when Weatherford talks about the wisdom and accomplishments of the Native Americans, his tone turns to one of admiration. Finally, at the end of the book Weatherford simply turns to defending

his own theses about how Americans should understand their relationship to the native peoples of North America, waxing serenely about the prospects for continental unity. Much of Weatherford's imagery adds to a more emotional narrative style which is particularly exacerbated when Weatherford places himself in the text, describing his personal experiences visiting Native American tribes. Further, in many places Weatherford's tone turns dramatic, as the emotional style becomes increasingly intense.

Structure

Native Roots contains nineteen chapters. Chapter 1, The Road to Tuktoyaktuk describes one of the northern most points on the North American continent which is a mixture of a native Inuvialuit tribe and a U.S. radar station, which Weatherford takes to symbolize the symbiosis of Native American history and contemporary societies on the North American continent. Chapter 2, Pyramids on the Mississippi, introduces the reader to Cahokia, Illinois, the ancient Native American city near St. Louis that was once a center of trade and culture. Chapter 3, Women (and a Few Men) Who Led the Way, introduces the many women responsible for leading white Europeans through the American continent, many of whom were forced to do so.

Chapter 4, Firestorm, explains how the Native Americans maintained large forests with controlled fires to restrain insect populations and how modern Americans have had to revive their techniques. Chapter 5, The Tree in American History, reviews how the Native Americans introduced settlers to various types of trees which expanded their commercial capabilities. Chapter 6, Hunting, reviews the various innovative methods of hunting developed by the Native Americans. Chapter 7, How the Fur Trade Shaped the American Economy, covers the Native American roots of the fur trade. Chapter 8, Beads and Buildings, contrasts Native American and European art forms. Chapter 9, Corn, Cotton and Tobacco explicates how European settlers came into contact with three major crops, corn, cotton and tobacco through Native American help.

Chapter 10, The Trade in Indian Slaves, discusses the Native American slave trade and Chapter 11, Fishing for Food and Profit, discusses the early fishing industry. Chapter 12, Guerillas and Warriors, shows how early American settlers absorbed Native American fighting techniques, whereas Chapter 13, America's Patron Saint, uses the example of Saint Tammany to explain how much American settlers once respected and explicitly drew from Native Americans. Chapter 14, Americanization of the English Language, points out the Native American contributions to English and Chapter 15, The Naming of North America, shows how Native Americans contributed names to the modern-day United States and Canada.

Chapter 16, North America's Inca Historian, tells the story of El Inca, a 16th century historian of North America, while Chapter 17, Intellectual Mining, reviews how anthropology has its roots in early figures who studied Native Americans. Chapter 18, Mixed-Blood Nation, shows how intermarriage led much Native American blood into the American population at large despite the mass death of Native Americans due to war and disease. Chapter 19, The White Roots of Peace, draws a moral out of the foregoing

chapters that the Americas are mixtures of many types of peoples whose histories are intertwined and that should conceive of themselves as a single human people.

Quotes

"America ends in Tuktoyaktuk not merely because the road ends there, but because Tuktoyaktuk represents the final stages of a process of social and cultural contact that has taken five centuries to unfold." (Chapter 1, 2)

"The scramble of peoples and cultures in North American has created a cultural mixture that probably will not be repeated in world history until we encounter life on another planet." (Chapter 1, 5)

"The continent did not speak to the newcomers because the civilizations of North American did not always speak in loud stone. They spoke in earth and wood, in fiber and textile, in bead and shell." (Chapter 2, 17)

"Today our civilization has turned to plastics made from petrochemicals, and to metals, but the people who settled American created a civilization based on wood." (Chapter 5, 57)

"The Indians and colonists together synthesized a frontier culture from their markedly different traditions, and the core of this frontier culture centered on hunting for subsistence. In this way, the Indians Americanized the settlers." (Chapter 6, 74)

"Modern America is a product of the Industrial Revolution, but it is a product financed in large part by the fur trade, and therefore by the technology of the native men and women who trapped and processed the furs that made America rich." (Chapter 7, 88)

"Most of them have straight black hair, dark eyes, copper-colored skin, and beardless faces. They come from Mexico, speaking Spanish and bearing Christian names, but they are the survivors of the ancient Indians." (Chapter 10, 147)

"A quarter of a century after [the Vietnam] war ended, the native people still remember and mourn those who never returned. They never forget a service done or an honor owed." (Chapter 12, 166)

"From Miami to the Yukon and from Arizona to Ottawa, Indian names still help us to understand where we are on this continent, and help give us our local identity." (Chapter 15, 233)

"The Babylonian civilization was interpreted to the Greeks by Berossus, the Egyptian by Manetho, the Jewish by Philo and by Josephus. This is the distinguished company to which Garcilaso belongs." (Chapter 16, 251)

"Anthropology, linguistics, history, folklore, mythology, and literature have all borrowed heavily from Native Americans. Unlike the Pocola Mining Company that destroyed as much at Spiro, Oklahoma as it stole, the intellectuals have borrowed without destroying." (Chapter 17, 270)

"You will unite yourselves with us, join in our great councils and form one people with us, and we shall all be Americans; you will mix with us by marriage, your blood will mix with ours, and will spread, with ours, over this great island." (Chapter 18, 278)

"We are the people who must uphold the Good Mind that our children may inherit this legacy of righteousness, health and spiritual power. We are the people who now must nurture the Great Tree and water its white roots of peace." (Chapter 19, 288)

Topics for Discussion

How does Weatherford employ Tuktoyaktuk and Cahokia both as real places and as symbols of his themes?

Do you think Weatherford overstates or understates European responsibility for the destruction of Native American civilization? Why or why not?

Weatherford attributes many features of American life to the Native Americans. Discuss the three features and their origins that you think he most plausibly attributes to Native American influence.

Weatherford attributes many features of American life to the Native Americans. Discuss the three features and their origins that you think he most IM-plausibly attributes to Native American influence.

What is Weatherford's message concerning the book as a whole, that is, what is the moral of the book? Pay particular attention to Chapter 19 in your answer.

Who is Saint Tammany? What were Tammany societies? How does Weatherford use Saint Tammany and the Tammany societies to explain the changing attitudes of American settlers to the Native American nations?

How did Native American war tactics influence the American Revolution, in Weatherford's opinion?