

Pretty-shield, Medicine Woman of the Crows Study Guide

Pretty-shield, Medicine Woman of the Crows by Frank Bird Linderman

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Plot Summary

Frank Linderman, in *Pretty-Shield*, wrote the first extended account of Native American life from the perspective of a Native American woman, an elderly Crow medicine-woman known as Pretty-Shield. Linderman studied Native Americans for 46 years until he spoke at length with an old Native American woman because they think it appropriate to keep silent and far away from discussions among men.

Pretty-Shield was a member of the Sore-lips Crow clan that produced many leaders and chiefs; she also belonged to a prominent Crow family. The Crow (Absarokees) are plainsmen and have lived in Southeastern Montana for generations. During this period, they found themselves involved in wars constantly with the Sioux, Cheyennes, Arapahoes and Blackfeet. They were always out-numbered, yet they survived.

Pretty-Shield is largely the story of Pretty-Shield's youth because the days when her people had to adjust due to the disappearance of the buffalo and the move to the reservations were sad ones where nothing happened. Thus, the book's nineteen chapters largely consist of stories from Pretty-Shield's childhood, including how the tribe produced food and commodities, how they interacted with other tribes, their religious practices and folklore, familial relationships and struggles with death.

Linderman speaks little of himself, save of the questions he wanted to ask Pretty-Shield. Most of the story takes place in earlier times, but Linderman will often make observations about the way Pretty-Shield related her stories. In Chapter One, Frank introduces the reader to Pretty-Shield; she tells Linderman about the place of her birth, her parents, the origin of her name, her move to live with her aunt, and how she loved to move with her tribe during the seasons.

In Chapter Two, Pretty-Shield discusses the split between the Crow in the mountains and at the rivers. She often speaks of her interactions with other young girls. In Chapter Three, they discuss Pretty-Shield's parents and in Chapter Four, Pretty-Shield recounts seeing her first white man. In Chapter Five, she relates how as a young girl she once lost a baby and in Chapter Six, she discusses the tragic death of a young boy from a malfunctioning medicine gun.

Chapter Seven covers stories about running from buffalo herds; Chapter Eight covers various interactions with grizzly bears. In this chapter, she also related for the first time her encounters with animal-people, individuals mixed between animal and human that she speaks of often throughout the book. Chapter Nine pursues the animal-people subject in more detail. Chapter Ten covers Pretty-Shield's marriage, Eleven the care of newborn babies, and Twelve the magical powers of the chickadee.

In Chapter Fourteen, Pretty-Shield recounts wars with other tribes, such as the Lacota. Most of the negative interactions the Crow had were with the Lacota and subsequent chapters describe these interactions in detail, including the practice of the tribes



enslaving captured members of each other's tribes. In Chapter Seventeen, Pretty-Shield talks about the history of her friend, Chief Plenty-coups.

The book somewhat climaxes in Chapter Eighteen, where Pretty-Shield recounts the Battle of Little Bighorn from the perspective of her husband, Goes-ahead. Chapter Nineteen ends the book with Pretty-Shield lamenting the sad state of her tribe and her struggle to not be angry with the white man for his incredible cruelty.



Chapter One

Chapter One Summary and Analysis

Frank Linderman, the narrator, kindles a fire in a stove at Crow Agency when an elderly woman, Pretty-shield, came to see him with her interpreter, Goes-together, the wife of Deer-nose the Indian Police Judge. Frank is pleased to have the opportunity for an interview, as Indian women are notoriously shy. He asks (by means of Goes-together) Pretty-Shield about herself, about her experiences as a little girl.

Frank wants a wise old Indian woman's story and Pretty-Shield will oblige, but her storytelling is circuitous, so Frank must ask her questions directly. He first asks her how a man treats his married sister-in-law among the Crows. Pretty-Shield informs him that they were banned by law from speaking to one another. Further, a man who married a woman had the authority to claim her unmarried sisters as wives, so long as relatives believed he would care for them appropriately.

Pretty-Shield was born across the Big [Missouri] river in March in the area where Yellow-Calf was killed by the Lacota [Sioux]. According to records, she was seventy-four. Her mother was named Kills-in-the-night and her father was Crazy-sister-in-law. She was the fourth of eleven children. Pretty-Shield was given her name by her father's father, Little-boy-strikes-with-a-lance, the fourth day after she was born.

In her youth, Pretty-Shield was a happy child among a happy people; they had much to eat and could laugh. Everything has changed. She notes that the Crow had split in 1832 between the Mountain Crows and the River Crows; Pretty-Shield was a Mountain Crow. However, at the age of three she left to live with her aunt, a River Crow, but the separation was not particularly deep so she saw her family often.

The Crow would move often and Pretty-Shield always enjoyed it. She pauses to interact with her grandson and tells Sign-Talker (Frank) that she worries about her grandchildren, as they do not respect the elderly. She tells Frank that her tribe never struck their children, although she did so recently. The young do not know the old customs and have no way to learn them. She is happy to tell Sign-Talker about the old customs so that they will be recorded.

When the Crow moved - when Pretty-Shield was a child - they often moved to the mountain and ate well. She saw her mother again but had to leave to return to the river. She notes that she is a member of the Sore-lip Clan, the Crow chief, Plenty-coups, is one as well.

Frank asks her where the Crows came from; she claims they come from Magah-hawathus (Man-alone), who made them, gave them language, but also made their enemies. He promised to be with them to protect them even in times of trouble. Frank

asks what their tribal name 'Absarokee' means; she claims that no one knows, as E-sahca-wata (Old-man-coyote) gave them the name without telling them the meaning.



Chapter Two

Chapter Two Summary and Analysis

Pretty-Shield says that the Crows could not live together and so the clans were scattered. They were able to find much Buffalo meat in those days, as the Buffalo were plentiful. Pretty-Shield says that she loved to imitate her mother, who would carry her children on her back. She also enjoyed setting up her little tepee, and never tired of moving. She then tells a story of catching and killing a calf as a young-girl with some other young girls and also covers other childhood playtime activities. The Crow often enjoyed clowning around and playing pranks on each other.

While Pretty-Shield admired her mother she spent more time with another woman, the only woman of Long-horse, the chief. Her name was Kills-good and Pretty-Shield tried to imitate her in everything. Pretty-Shield was also friends with her daughter, Good-cat-tails, who she found beautiful. The chief's family had many nice things. Kills-good was a strong and kind woman, sometimes commanding enough moral authority to rebuke Chief Long-horse for being mean.

Long-horse was killed one day while Pretty-Shield was a young girl. On that day, the children were dancing and playing drums. But they suddenly noticed that a Lacota war-party was staring at them from a cliff. Then the children ran and the Lacota gave chase, shooting arrows at the adults. Many died but the clan's warriors drove away the Lacota; despite this, Long-horse was killed and Pretty-Shield was too young to understand its full import.

When the River Crows met again with the Mountain Crows, they learned that the Lacota and Cheyenne had killed three Mountain Crows, men she knew. This made her sad. Pretty-Shield becomes so saddened by this experience that she ends her talking for the day, promising to return in the morning.



Chapters Three and Four

Chapters Three and Four Summary and Analysis

The next day Frank asks about Pretty-Shield's parents. Pretty-Shield was thirty-two when her mother died and she missed her deeply. Her mother had wandered off after watering the horses, but one ran from her, afraid. Her mother ran after him but she fell. When she rose, a man had caught the horse and brought it back to her. Once she took the rope, she saw that there were two men, her sons, who were killed in the war. When she returned she told them what happened and took it as a sign of her impending death; she then laid down, fell asleep, and died.

Pretty Shield's father was kind to all save their enemies. He was small, not as tall as Pretty-Shield and belonged to a secret society. He also liked women besides her mother, but he had a big heart. He was also a great warrior. The men often had to fight because the Lacota, Cheyenne and Arapahoe would gang up on them, sometimes five to one. After one battle, the Crow captured a Lacota woman, giving her as a slave to Warm-Robe, her uncle. She eventually married One-leg, and she became Good-trader.

Pretty-Shield's father died of Smallpox at a very late age. Pretty-Shield had Smallpox as well, but she survived. They had acquired the disease from the Shoshones. Before that, her people were rarely sick and the people died primarily from war and accidents. She comments that watching so many people die at once is very difficult. The grief caused her to end the conversation for the day.

In Chapter Four, Pretty-Shield reports that she saw her first white man when she was six; white trappers came to their village. They were not initially called Masta-cheeda (yellow eyes). They first called the white man Beta-awk-a-wah-cha (Sits-on-the-water). Pretty-Shield regrets that her people could not write because her clan was great. The trappers they met had kind eyes and were only there to trade; they shared tobacco.

When Pretty-Shield was eleven, three bearded, not-white men came to the Crow and caused trouble. Two were killed and one man stayed with them. Frank speculates that the man may have been a mulatto named James P. Beckwourth. He became a petty chief but was probably rejected and then left for Colorado.

Pretty-Shield then asks Frank whether he knew of a people so large that they would need to kill buffalo en masse by running them off of cliffs. She asked because she heard old women talk about seeing vast fields of buffalo bones. As a little girl, they had been near the bone fields and came upon a human skull twice the size of any man living that they knew of. The skull scared them.

Another time, the women of Pretty-Shield's tribe had been out playing with their children when a wolf alerted them to Lacota coming, but they turned out to be white trappers. She also tells Frank that the women never picked up arrowheads they found if they



were in large piles. She tells him that Red-woman made the first stone arrow-points, and she was a bad person who bones of stone.

Pretty-Shield's people had, long ago, tried to burn Red-woman but her bones are stone and rain came and chipped them off; the arrows then spread. The Red-woman was bad and was the first to live in the world; she probably was never made, like E-sahca-wata. She finally drowned.

Pretty-Shield then tells a longer story about Red-woman who had captured a boy with the heart of a warrior and trapped him far away from anyone. One day a coyote came upon him and told him that he was living with Red-woman and the coyote encouraged him to hurt her by stealing her feathers, tying them to a stone and throwing them in the water. The feathers are her heart. The boy had been transported to Red-woman's country with his arrows and he used them to transport him back, with the feathers in hand. When he returned, his mother helped him escape Red-woman and then drown her heart, which killed her.



Chapters Five and Six

Chapters Five and Six Summary and Analysis

Pretty-Shield tells Frank on the next day about her losing a baby. She always loved real babies, even adopting one before she got married; she raised the woman and today she has grandchildren. The story of the lost baby begins during a summer tribe move.

Pretty-Shield and some friends helped out a woman running behind by taking care of her child. They all mothered the child until nightfall, when they decided that they needed to catch up with their tribe.

Pretty-Shield was leading the pack-horse carrying the child, but when she looks back the baby wasn't there. The girls all stopped to look, but a great herd of buffalo were coming and the girls had to leave the baby. As they rode, they met young men and begged for help. The men helped them out, but not before laughing at them. The men eventually found the baby, who was asleep. Pretty-Shield and their girls were scolded and insulted. She then notes that the baby was named Turtle and is dead today, but her children remain with them.

Pretty-Shield then tells Frank about the scar on her forehead, which was a wound that nearly removed her eye. It happened when she was seven on a hot day. Buffaloes often went mad in the heat. On this day, young girls were digging up turnips when her mother called them in because a buffalo bull was running at them, mouth foaming. Pretty-Shield tripped on her run and a root-digger stuck into her forehead. The men killed the bull, but the root-digger was not easy to remove. A medicine-wolf removed it without removing her eye.

The chapter ends as Frank notices that young Indians complained about their physical ailments but the Pretty-Shield was an old Indian, ignoring any complaints or afflictions and displaying simple-hearted love.

The next day, Pretty-Shield tells Frank that she is enjoying telling him stories. Her next story concerns a buffalo cow that chased her. This time, she is nearly a grown woman. In April, Pretty-Shield had taken her little sister and brother to play. A younger boy then pointed out the Buffalo cow to them, saying that if you spoke words to a Buffalo cow alone, she would give chase. Pretty-Shield didn't believe him and tried to prove him wrong but the cow charged. Eventually, a man killed the buffalo.

Her next story is about finding a medicine-gun. The story takes place during a winter, with little excitement. The women of the tribe danced. Pretty-Shield was just a little girl. The children had rigged a travois to some dogs, so they were sledding. But while sledding they found an enemy's gun. The boys were all excited and did a war-dance. One boy then challenged the others to take the gun from him and one boy charged at him. The gun fired and shot a boy, and the others ran. The boy died.



It turns out that it was filling the gun with sage leaves that set it off, as it was a medicine-gun. It is still with them. Pretty-Shield notes that guns made their lives easier, as it was easier to kill Buffalo. She regards using guns as ultimately a mistake. But horses only made the Crows better. Before horses, the elderly could not travel and so men would try to die fighting. She notes that comforts have made her tribe weak, however.



Chapter Seven

Chapter Seven Summary and Analysis

The next day, Pretty-Shield brought Frank tobacco-seed, a ceremonial herb planted by the Crow. Frank had had tobacco-seed before but gave it to colleges for study. This time, he intends to plant the seed for himself. He wants to grow some to study it. He notes that the Crow say they discovered it on the south side of the Yellowstone River.

Frank asks again about Pretty-Shield's life as a little girl. She notes again that her youth was a happy time. Her next story begins on a hot summer day; her village was spending its tenth day on the Missouri River. They were going to a country that was not nice. On that day, an older girl suggested the girls stop to swim in a creek. When they were finished, they left to catch up with the other girls, and Pretty-Shield lent a slower girl her horse. Then they saw a herd of buffalo running towards them. Her mare could not gallop fast enough.

The buffalo herd began to pass them; Pretty-Shield tried to stay on her horse but she couldn't. Eventually something hit her in the head, what later turned out to be a rawhide rope. A Crow named Pecunnie roped the mare and pulled her to the edge of the herd. The horse Pretty-Shield rode had gone crazy. A friend had been forced into a cactus, along with her horse. They didn't remove the cactus spines fast enough and the girl died.

In the next story, Pretty-Shield's father's buffalo-horse ran away from her. Her father admired his horse and one day had Pretty-Shield ride him when she was ten. She was proud and wanted to rope a buffalo calf, but when she took the horse close to the herd and got caught up in it. The horse got out but Pretty-Shield's father took the horse away from her and scolded her.



Chapter Eight

Chapter Eight Summary and Analysis

The chapter opens with Frank walking to the Sloan home, where he was staying. He met Mr. C.H. Asbury, the Superintendent, who asked how he was getting along with Pretty-Shield. Frank indicated things were going well and that he thinks Pretty-Shield is a good woman. Asbury strongly affirms this, arguing that she 'is charity itself'. Frank then comments that he is deeply interested in Pretty-Shield's loyalties that go beyond her blood relatives, such as her loyalty to her clan, The-sore-lips.

In the morning, Pretty-Shield comes to the schoolhouse in a happy mood. Frank asks her why she speaks so little of her aunt, when her aunt adopted her. Pretty-Shield answers that she spent a lot of time with her aunt and that when her husband, Goes-ahead, married her, they brought her aunt into her house. She was a widow.

Frank then asks Pretty-Shield about what she liked and feared in her childhood. She fears grizzly bears, who sometimes killed people. She then tells a story about one such case when she lived with her mother with the Mountain Crows. One day a woman was being chased by a bear, which had torn her back and ripped open her side. The men killed the bear but Kills-by-the-water, the woman who was attacked, died.

But then she tells a better story about bears. At fourteen, she was betrothed to Goes-ahead to marry when she was sixteen. In July, she and five girls went to dig turnips. During the digging, the girls see horsemen in the distance; Pretty-Shield thought they were Lacota. But when they got closer, it was clear they were Crows. Yet they had bears with them. The girls had climbed up into trees and the men left the bears there to tease them and keep them up there. When they removed the bears, Pretty-Shield was furious. The bears were harmless, with their teeth removed, and some were kept by the Crow.

Pretty-Shield goes on to discuss a story about bear cubs and about how the women liked to keep bears and other animals as pets to help with their work. She then stops to give her grandchildren some money and continues with another story.

One day in the late spring, the girls were playing a kind of kickball. Her father then suggested they dig up bitter roots and so they did so. However, the girls separated to find more roots; during her search, Pretty-Shield came along two baby antelope. She then pointed this out to another girl. She wanted to catch them, and they were successful. However, the mother came and started running at them.

The mother then began to beat a rock ledge and sing, and Pretty-Shield recounted the song. Pretty-Shield was so moved by the song she let the antelope babies go. To this day, Pretty-Shield sings the songs to her grandchildren. She notes that the antelope are



a strange 'people' (apparently she does not mean the animal) and that they lead men off to the deaths or drive them mad.

Pretty-Shield then tells another story about the antelope. One day, four girls were kicking the ball and then two other girls came out and invited them to come to their lodge. These girls were very beautiful. The four girls consent. The mother of the two girls welcomed them and gave them berries. When the four girls went home, the two girls went with them. The four girls began to find something odd about the two girls and the two girls would not enter the village, believing there to be too many dogs and boys there. The four girls walked half-way back with the two girls and then realized that they were deceitful antelope.



Chapters Nine and Ten

Chapters Nine and Ten Summary and Analysis

Pretty-Shield asks Frank if animal-people ever talked to him. When he declines, she insists that they do. To demonstrate, she tells him another story, one about a woman and a mouse; the mouse was a woman-mouse.

In the summertime, the Crow moved their lodges to the plains to follow the Buffalo. Pretty-Shield was in a lodge of sixty. Everyone was hungry and when a man asked his wife for food, she opened a pouch to find a woman-mouse and her children. In a dream, the mouse-woman warned Little-face, the woman, that in four days they will be attacked by the Lacota. Little-face then told the chief, who had a weaker but similar premonition. One of the chief's men had spotted some people in the distance.

Later in the night, two of the tribe's men, Red-bear and Muskrat-that-shows returned to camp with two Crow women and a little girl who had been slaves to the Lacota. The three had suffered.

Afterward, the group reached the Crow village. Little-face kept the woman-mouse, feeding her and her children, and allowing them to play. Eventually the children left to find places for themselves. The woman-mouse wished to be returned to the mountains.

Pretty-Shield claims that before she was born and even some time afterward, her people saw strange things, but now they see nothing. She then claims she had a vision but she advises him not to write it down. When Pretty-Shield was eight, her village was at Deer creek. One day, an old woman needed help to pick berries and asked Pretty-Shield to bring her water.

When she got to the creek, she saw three naked women with unbraided hair. The women then slid into the water and were sucked into a hole; they were gone. The water that was deep was then shallow. Now at the bottom of the pool, she saw a woman staring up at her. She was unlike any woman she had seen; she was a sprite. Pretty-Shield screamed and then woke up. She then claims no one will believe the story.

Finally, she claims that when she went into the mountains to mourn her sister's death, she traveled for four days. She then saw animal tracks unfamiliar to her. She came upon two black animals and they helped her.

In Chapter Ten, Frank asks Pretty-Shield to discuss her husband. She was sixteen when she married Goes-ahead. She was not in love with him when they were married and they rarely spoke before they were married. He loved her, however, and was always kind; she fell in love with him soon after. She said that in those days, young women did not fall in love or get married to make themselves happy. Instead, they married men selected for them, which Pretty-Shield believes is best. She also thinks men and women were happier.



Goes-ahead also had Pretty-Shield's older sister, Standing-medicine-rock, as a wife, before her and then he took her younger sister, Two-scalps. But she was the only one who had children with him. She rode with him in battle and painted her face. Pretty-Shield notes that her older sister liked other men but Pretty-Shield never told on her. Her brother was supposed to do this. She could not convince her sister not to cheat.

Two-scalps and Pretty-Shield got along, however. They helped each other and their mother. Pretty-Shield is sad that today the young do not help the elderly. The Crows do not often speak of the dead, but she decides to talk about Goes-ahead to Frank. Goes-ahead was a small man but brave in battle. She then discusses how Goes-ahead fared in the battle hierarchy and how since he saved a Crow's life he got ahead of the game in rank.

Frank and Pretty-Shield then discuss how she made pemmican and how the Crow tanned robes and skins. Pretty-Shield told him that a woman's place was within the home. She then discussed the roots she dug. She also helped to cut lodges. Few people could paint lodges, only medicine men. Visitors had special places in the lodge as well. The Crow also have regular meals but they differ from white people. They mostly ate when hungry. They then discuss how the Crow made dry meat and fire.

The Crow men butchered Buffalo, not the women. The women also have to work quickly on the Buffalo and make sure that it is dead first. She also noted that many Buffalo were weird, just as people are weird.



Chapters Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen

Chapters Eleven, Twelve and Thirteen Summary and Analysis

The next day Pretty-Shield tells Frank about caring for newborns. Pretty-Shield had three girls and two boys, but lost a boy and girl when they were babies. Her girls are all dead. Her boy, Good, is alive and he is a good child. She will discuss her daughters Pine-fire and Little-woman. Pretty-Shield then recounts her first time giving birth in a lodge pitched for her by others. The birth involved the use of robes, coal, smoke, paint and grease. They rarely washed newborns until later on.

Babies were not put into back-cradles until they were six months old. The women would take some time off from work after giving birth, but usually only for a month.

As Chapter Twelve begins, Pretty-Shield announces that she has become tired and may wish to stop telling stories at any time. Frank looks for a way to rekindle her interest and so asks her about chickadees. She then tells him about the chickadee tongue. The Crow used it to tell which month of winter they were in. Frank later examined chickadee tongues and found them fascinating.

Pretty-Shield's grandmother was named Seven-stars and was wise. Her medicine was the chickadee. In one of Pretty-Shield's stories, her grandmother and another woman, Buffalo-that-walks, hear a chickadee tell them that summer was near. When Buffalo-that-walks expressed annoyance with the chickadee, it predicted that she would be wrapped in the robe she was making when she died and indeed, she died that night. In the night, the dead woman's husband made friends with the chickadee and it told him that a 'Person' will come to him the next day and that he should listen.

The next day a large bird came, named Big-claws-on-both-sides. Because the dead woman's husband was sorry for her mistreating the chickadee, it promises to be his Helper for the remainder of his days. This and another chickadee story demonstrated their special powers and illuminated why they are worth of respect.

The next day was cold, but Frank interviewed Pretty-Shield again anyway. He asked her what the Crow did when they were bitten by rattlesnakes. She said they gave them little trouble and no one died from bites. She then discusses three close encounters.

Frank next asks about her 'medicine-dream'. Pretty-Shield had lost her little girl and had been in mourning for two months. She ate little and wanted a vision to help herself and others. During a trip home after spending a morning on a cliff, she saw a woman ahead of her. The woman, though, was an apparition; she instructed her to rake up the edges of an ant hill and ask for what she wished. Then the apparition disappeared. Pretty-Shield did as she asked and wished for good luck and a good life. In her lodge, she had

a medicine-dream in a beautiful white lodge. The war-eagle there didn't speak to her but she has seen him since. And the ants listen to her too. The ants became her medicine.



Chapter Fourteen

Chapter Fourteen Summary and Analysis

The other tribes would never let the Crow rest and when they were not bothering the Crow, Crow warriors were bothering them, so fighting was always going on. Men simply fought due to pride. Often due to war all the men in camp would be gone. Once before Pretty-Shield's time, the Lacota almost wiped out the Crow. Pretty-Shield's husband was a member of a warlike secret society, the Foxes and Pretty-Shield supported them.

When Pretty-Shield was eight, her tribe had so much meat that they were almost lazy. She and her mother stayed behind to dig roots. They found themselves alone on the plains and then saw the Lacota coming in the distance, so they had to ride and hide. Her mother then donned a wolf-skin and sang her medicine-song, which ran off the Crow.

The next morning, the Crow warriors found the Lacota and took many of their scalps. No Crow were killed, but the Lacota got even later. The two tribes often captured each other's women. Sometimes blood between the tribes would be mixed, and Pretty-Shield did not care for this.

Frank asks to hear a story about a slave-woman. Pretty-Shield tells him about Feather-woman, one of one hundred Lacota women brought to their village by Crow warriors. Each man could take a slave and they picked them off one by one. One day, a Lacota man brought a peace pipe to the Crow chief and reminded him that as a boy he spent two years with the Crow and he preferred life with them. He then petitions for the release of their women and promises them good horses and clothing in exchange.

The chief agrees but says that the Crow holding the women must agree. The warriors listened and then allowed only Lacota men with women there to come for them. When the Lacota came, the Crow worried that they might fight. Two hundred Crow warriors left to meet them, but the Lacota did not lie. The trade took place and the women exchanged, all save Feather-woman. No one asked for her because she killed her own man and was evil.

Pretty-Shield says that she once hated the Lacota but now she hates nothing and wants to tell Frank more about Feather-woman and her daughter, Comes-herself, who died with the Crows. Feather-woman changed and many pitied her. She grew then from not eating but fed her daughter. She then looks for helper-animals. A mountain lion came to her and acknowledged her repentance. He promised to help her if she would be kind to others.

The next day, a brave and good Crow, Two-faces, asked her to live with him as his sister. He and his wife had none of their own children. Feather-woman became greater and the mountain-lion helped her. She was a very kind woman. But eventually she

forgot her promise to be kind and was killed by the Lacota in 1866. He daughter died only two years before.



Chapter Fifteen

Chapter Fifteen Summary and Analysis

Pretty-Shield had an aunt captured by the Lacota, though she escaped. Instead, Pretty-Shield decided to tell Frank about another Crow-escapee from the Lacota. Pretty-Shield's grandmother knew her.

One day in the fall, a boy playing with other boys was chased into his mother's lodge, stumbling and falling face-first into the fire. He was scarred for life and he ran away at only eleven years of age. For years, no one saw the boy. One day the Lacota captured eighteen Crow women, one who had a young daughter with her. The woman and her daughter began planning escape once they reached the Lacota village. They then found an opportunity to run, taking a cache of pemmican with them and took it.

The woman and her daughter traveled for three days until they saw two parties of Lacota looking for them. They then climbed into the mountains and continued to run for another day. While digging for turnips, they saw a bear-person and thought he might help them. After the two fell asleep, the woman awoke and called for Helpers and went back to sleep. When she woke again, a white bear was lying with her.

The bear woke up and then advised the woman and her daughter to follow him. The two traveled, digging roots along the way and reached a place where the bear had said to meet them. He had killed a buffalo, leaving part of the meat for them, which they ate. The two then waited there and dried meat for four days.

At the end of the four days, the bear came again and told them to travel for four more days to the Bighorn River where he would meet them again. They eventually found the bear at the river; he had been in the mountains looking at the country. He saw flood water rising and said that the mother and daughter would not be able to return home for four years, and then he shows them that he speaks the truth.

The bear points out that he saw a Crow man on another mountain that can help them, but as for the bear, he must leave. He takes his leave of them but suggests he may see them again. The next day, the two began to climb the mountain; when night came, she cried to the Helpers. The next morning, the woman saw a man walking on the rim of a canyon with a pack on his back, which turned out to be a bull-elk. The man laid down the elk, cut meat for them and then walked off the canyon's rim into the air. Then the man disappeared. The man's face had scared them as it was badly scarred.

Four days later, the man came to them; he said he was Lost-boy and invited them to be his neighbors. He promises to kill meat for them and help them. When they reached his cave, he gave them elk hides to build a lodge. Little people then brought them poles to build the lodge. The mother, grateful to Lost-boy, then encouraged her daughter to be Lost-boy's wife. In four years, Lost-boy and his new wife had a son and the Crows found

them. When Lost-boy returned, his father recognized him. The Lost-boy, his wife and mother-in-law returned to the Crow and lived into old age.



Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen

Chapters Sixteen and Seventeen Summary and Analysis

Pretty-Shield never helped a slave woman because she was too young when her tribe still had slaves. Frank then asks about her opinion of Sitting-bull. Pretty-Shield was twenty-eight when she saw Sitting-bull; she then tells Frank the story.

At the time, the Crow and Lacota were at peace. One time in the summer, Sitting-bull and his people came to visit the Crow and the Crow and Lacota feasted and danced together. On the fourth day, Sitting-bull gathered both tribes together. Crazy-head, a Crow chief, then suggested - in Crow - that Sitting-bull was not brave. He asks Sitting-bull how a great man can be unkind to his people. Crazy-head then pushed Sitting-bull over. The Lacota men did not love Sitting-bull but feared him. Sitting-bull, however, possessed a great power.

Pretty-Shield then tells Frank a story of how a fight between the Lacota and Crow was won by a woman. A skirmish between Crow and Lacota had begun and mothers and their children packed up to get out of the way. Pretty-Shield was carrying her lodge equipment. She decided to pitch her lodge between two wide lodges to block the path into the camp.

The battle raged and several horses were wounded. Then Strikes-two, a sixty year old woman, carrying her root-digger rod around the village singing her medicine-song. She then rode straight at the Lacota and singing her song. The Lacota were afraid of her medicine and ran. Pretty-Shield then discusses the fate of a wounded man. A tribal woman, His-gun, attempted to use the medicine of the bull to heal him, but she ultimately failed.

The next day, Pretty-Shield tells Frank a story about Plenty-coups, a eighty-nine year old Crow man. It begins with a widow, Sitting-heifer, who had lost her husband in a war with the Lacota. She was inconsolable and decided to do a Sun dance for healing. The Sun dance is dangerous because, while pleasing to the All High, must be danced by one who is morally clean. This was the last time the Crow gave a sun-dance.

Sitting-heifer fasted for four days while her tribe prepared. She was painted with white clay, including her dress. She must then dance for four days. On the fourth day, she could barely stand. The men simulated a battle while she danced. She had to dance four times a day for four days. Part of the Sun-dance occurs during the reenactment when a warrior must give a war cry and pretend to attack the Sun-dancer. The warrior in this case was Plenty-coups and he actually fired at Sitting-heifer. She died and her new husband believed this was her deserved fate for sins in her past.



Next Frank asked Pretty-Shield to tell him about Long-hair, a famous Crow chief. Long-hair, apparently was a Sore-lip, like Pretty-Shield and also an orphan whose parents were killed by the Cheyenne. He was difficult to get along with. She then tells of a competition over a game Long-hair had with another boy, which he won. Then Long-hair left into the mountain. When he reached the foot of the mountain, he cut off his first finger on his left hand.

Long-hair then fainted from blood loss and had a vision in which a Man-person came to him and a Woman-person stood next to him. The Woman-person did not want the Man-person there. The Woman-person then pulled Long-hair into a beautiful lodge and Long-hair could hardly see. Next Long-hair saw the Man-person sitting in the lodge with six Women-persons. Seven persons in seven generations sat before him.

The Man-person instructed him to not speak words that will wound his people; he also tells him that if the boy he had the competition with, Bird-comes-back, challenges him again, he is to wait until the fourth request. Then if he plays, he will win everything Bird-comes-back owns, including his wife. The Man-person then gives him other instructions. Then the Woman-person summoned a mountain-lion to take Long-hair back to his people.

A Crow hunter then helped Long-hair back to the village. There Long-hair followed the Man-person's advice, waited for the fourth request, prepared appropriately and won everything Bird-comes-back owned. Then Long-hair stated that if Bird-comes-back apologizes to him that he will return his property, including his woman. Good-calf, Bird-comes-back's wife refused to return to him, however.

Long-hair died of smallpox, along with forty lodges of people. Had he let his hair grow truly long, Pretty-Shield thinks he would not have died that way. Some of his hair is in possession of Crow still living, including Plenty-coups.



Chapters Eighteen and Nineteen

Chapters Eighteen and Nineteen Summary and Analysis

Pretty-Shield's husband, Goes-ahead, was with General Custer on the day he died. She notes that she receives money from Washington for his service. In June 1876, General Custer and his troops died, to the last man. Pretty-Shield does not know whether they were buried. At the time, Pretty-Shield was a young woman when Son-of-the-morning-star (General Custer) fought the enemies of the Crow, the Lacota and Cheyenne. Some Crow went with The-other-one (General Terry) and some went with Three-stars (General Crook).

The story begins with several American troops visiting the Crow, asking for scouts and the men feasted together. Some Crow volunteered, including Goes-ahead, as did an interpreter. Later, after Pretty-Shield's village moved, a Shoshone came to the village to ask for more Crow to help Custer defeat the Lacota and Cheyenne. Two women fought with Three-stars, but one was neither man nor woman. Yet, she had the heart of a woman, despite looking like a man and doing woman's work. Her name was Finds-them-and-kills-them. The other woman was wild and without a man. The-other-magpie was bad and brave. The women did great things in battle.

All Pretty-Shield knows of the battle is what Goes-ahead told her.

It was a fine sight to see the Crow troops returned; Pretty-Shield was proud of the women. The village rejoiced and had a scalp-dance, having taken ten scalps besides the one The-other-magpie took. They had a feast. But Goes-ahead was not with them, because he was with Son-of-the-morning-star. Pretty-Shield missed him.

Goes-ahead and many other Crow were part of the battle. The country had many Lacota and Cheyenne in it. The Crow scouts knew that there were Lacota and Cheyenne ahead and told Custer, but he sent them back out and drank from a bottle on his saddle. Pretty-Shield was implying that the widespread rumor that Custer was an alcoholic was true. When Goes-ahead and the other Crow search again, they reported the same story back to Custer but he was determined to go forward.

Goes-ahead told Pretty-Shield that Custer drank too often and made a tactical error by dividing his soldiers into three parties. Then Goes-ahead prepared for battle and then heard a Lacota yell to Two-bodies, another wolf, to turn or they would die; but Custer did not turn back.

Goes-ahead said the fighters were many and crazy. He and the other wolves ran up a little creek and found other wolves in the midst of fighting. Pretty-Shield said they killed more Lacota and Cheyenne than the American troops. He ran when he saw Custer die. Pretty-Shield then tells Frank that Custer died in the water, not where Americans had



built the landmark. After some fighting, Goes-ahead and two other wolves decided to flee. They kill several Lacota wolves on the way. They then met up with two other Crow wolves who reported on other troops.

When Goes-ahead and the other scouts came home, the village was not happy because they brought terrible news. Several beloved village members had died. Pretty-Shield then emphasizes that Custer's foolishness was probably do to his drinking. She then said that many of the Crow had developed a liking for alcohol.

In Chapter Nineteen, Frank wanted to get Pretty-Shield to talk of the later days, when the Crow were adjusting to their current conditions. Plenty-coups refused to talk of the days that followed the passing of the Buffalo. When they left, he claims, the spirits of the Crow died. Pretty-Shield had not seen a buffalo in forty years. Her happiest days were spent following the buffalo herds. Her parents and Goes-ahead were kind and everyone was happy. When she had children, everyone had food to eat.

Goes-ahead died twelve years ago and Pretty-Shield is sad to be alone. However, she says that she hates no one, not even the white man who she believed had severely wronged them. She then told Frank that some white cowboys met a deaf-mute Crow boy on the plains; when he couldn't answer their questions, they dragged him to death.

After the buffalo disappeared, everyone developed a strange sickness. No one could be healed any longer. Both of her living daughters died of the disease, and this would not have occurred if the Crows lived as they were intended to. She hated to see dead buffalo all over the country, but had no idea that the white man would kill every last buffalo. The Crow grew hungry, sick and scared all at once. Even if Washington had helped them, they would have been wiped out.

As time progressed, white men fenced in the plains and they could not travel, although there was nothing to travel for. The Crow grew lazy and sick. The Crow fought hard to repel the white men but failed and the Crow leaders let the Crow drink, destroying them. They had nothing else to do.

She admitted that they were given a fine reservation and had many horses and cattle. If the "White Chief in Washington" had not leased their lands to white stockmen, they would have been fine. The stockmen shot their horses on their lands to keep grass for themselves.

Pretty-Shield then says she will soon die but her grandchildren will be around a long time. She has no idea how they will fare, but she hopes the money from Washington will be paid to them.

Frank thought his work was done. He left the Agency, saying goodbye to Goes-together and Pretty-Shield. Pretty-Shield and Frank had become friends and Frank ends the book by wishing her well.



Characters

Pretty-Shield

Pretty-Shield lived from 1856 to 1944 and is the main character of the book, *Pretty-Shield*. She was an elderly woman of the Crow Nation at the time she was interviewed from the book by Frank Linderman. She provided the first record of Native American life from a woman's perspective.

Pretty-Shield was born to her mother, Kills-in-the-Night and her famed warrior father, Crazy-sister-in-law. She was one of eleven children, the fourth. Her grandfather named her at four days old. When she was three, she left her mother to live with her aunt, Strikes-with-an-Ax because her aunt had lost her two daughters. She grew up going back and forth between River and Mountain Crow.

Pretty-Shield claimed to have a happy childhood, during the days when the Crow roamed among the buffalo herds. She grew up happy and married Goes-ahead when she was sixteen, after Goes-ahead had taken her older sister in marriage; he would later take her younger sister as well. However, Pretty-Shield developed a special relationship with Goes-ahead such that only she was allowed to accompany him in battle.

Pretty-Shield was unusually forthright for Crow women, who were usually exceedingly reserved. She enjoyed recounting her stories to Linderman enormously, although her memories often made her sad. In old age, she is saddened by the decline of the Crow and oppression. She is also burdened with looking after an enormous number of grandchildren, but she is widely considered wise and saintly.

Frank Linderman

Frank Bird Linderman was a famous author and sculptor who recorded many of the Plains Indians' folklore, customs, stories and history, not only in his writing but in his sculpture as well. He was interested in preserving a forgotten Native American history in art and word.

Linderman was born in 1869, the son of James and Mary Linderman. He went to Oberlin College and moved to the Montana Territory in 1885 when he was sixteen. He spent the next six years working as a trapper and met his wife in 1891; they were married in 1893 and had three children. In 1917, Linderman moved his family to Helena and became a full-time writer, starting to do bronze sculpting in 1927.

In 1915, Linderman published his first book of Indian stories, *Indian Why Stories*. He had favorable reviews but made little money, having to run an hotel in the meanwhile. Linderman's focus was on the Native Americans of Montana and attempted to aid them



materially, sometimes giving them money. He would publish thirteen books and produce seventeen intricate sculptures.

In *Pretty-Shield*, Frank Linderman is the narrator. We do not learn much about him in the book, however. We only come to know him through his observations of and thoughts about *Pretty-Shield*, along with the few events surrounding the mornings before and evenings after he spoke with her. That said, he is a constant presence in the book.

Goes-together

Goes-together is the interpreter Frank uses to speak with *Pretty-Shield*. She is a sturdy, large but emotional woman.

Goes-ahead

Goes-ahead was *Pretty-shield's* husband who made her very happy. He lived through the Battle of Little Bighorn and told *Pretty-shield* many details of historical importance.

Kills-in-the-night

Pretty-shield's mother, who she did not know terribly well.

Strikes-with-an-ax

Pretty-shield's aunt, who she lived with as she grew up.

Crazy-sister-in-law

Pretty-shield's father, a proud and famous warrior.

The Crow

Also known as the Absaroka, they are a tribe of Native Americans who live near the Yellowstone River valley. *Pretty-shield* and her family were Crow.

The Sore-lips

An elite clan amongst the Crow, *Pretty-Shield* was among its members.



The Lakota

A Native American tribe, one of the Sioux, who were major enemies of the Crow and outnumbered them significantly. Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse were Lakota.

The Cheyenne

The Cheyenne are a Native American people in the Great Plains who are composed of two small tribes. They are related to the Dakota Sioux and allied with the Lakota in the Black Hills War.

Animal-People

The animal-people were sentient beings that could appear as animals; they appeared to be spirits and feature prominently both in Pretty-shield's stories and Crow lore generally.

Plenty-coups

Plenty-coups was chief of Pretty-shield's tribe during her old age but was a prominent warrior when Pretty-shield was young.

Crow Warriors

The Crow had some of the fiercest warriors of all the Native Americans. Their small numbers required this fierceness to fend off neighboring Native American tribes.

Pretty-Shield's Children

Pretty-shield had several children, and many of them died long before she did, two in childbirth. They are not featured prominently in the story.

Pretty-Shield's Grandchildren

When Pretty-shield was interviewed as an old woman, she was in charge of a wide array of grandchildren who often overwhelmed her.

General Custer

The famous, tragic American General killed by the Sioux during the Battle of Little Bighorn. Pretty-shield's husband, Goes-ahead, was a scout for Custer and told Pretty-shield that Custer's alcoholism probably did him in along with his troops.



Objects/Places

Southern Montana

Southern Montana is the area where the Crow lived for generations and where their reservation was formed. It was where Pretty-shield spent her life.

The Missouri River

The Crow called the Missouri River the 'Big River' and spent several seasons out of the year there.

The Montana Plains

The Crow roamed the Montana Plains from year to year.

The Village

Pretty-shield's tribe had a large village that they moved from place to place throughout the year.

The Agency

Crow Agency, Montana is where the Crow capital is.

The-beyond-country

'The-beyond-country' is the Crow name for heaven.

Little Bighorn

The Little Bighorn River is where the Battle of Little Bighorn took place and where Goes-ahead saw General Custer die. Pretty-shield's tribe spent time there before and after the battle.

Medicine

The Crow concept of medicine more or less means power or energy-force. Crow would have 'strong medicine' when they exhibited good luck, healing power, victory in battle, etc.



Lodges

The Crow lived in lodges made of wooden poles and animal skins; they would move the lodges constantly as they followed the buffalo.

War-Paint

The Crow used war-paint on their faces as strong medicine.

Coup-sticks

Coup-sticks were weapons the Crow used during battle, often to scalp their enemies.

Peace-pipe

Native American tribes would hold peace-pipes to symbolize non-aggressive intentions to other, potentially hostile groups.

Buffalo

Buffalo were the staple of life for the Crow. When Americans eliminated the buffalo, the Crow way of life was totally destroyed and their spirits crushed.

Persons

Persons were spirits that interacted with the Crow in Crow legend; they often brought good fortune, prophesy and warnings.

Visions

Pretty-shield often spoke of the visions had by the Crow that would often give them important life information.

Scalps

Native Americans often scalped the men they killed in battle as trophies.

Roots/Turnips

The Crow women often dug for roots and turnips for good.

Guns

The white man introduced the Crow to guns, which they liked to use in battle.

Smallpox

Smallpox ravaged the Crow population.



Themes

The Happiness of Youth and the Pride of Women

Pretty-shield concerns mostly Pretty-shield's experiences as a young girl during the crest of the history of the Crow Nation before its long decline due to American expansion. Pretty-shield tells many stories of her youth to Frank Linderman and nearly always speaks of these events happily. Many of the stories themselves are simply happy ones, ones intended to bring joy to the listener. Other stories recount tribal practices and still others are mystical stories, meant to inspire or teach a lesson. Finally, some of Pretty-shield's stories were tragic, but she still told them happily.

The stories indicate the deep happiness Pretty-shield experienced as a youth. She claims over and over again that her happiest days were when her tribe moved across the Montana plains from season to season, from watering place to watering place and from buffalo herd to buffalo herd, rarely stopping, and always nomadically wandering.

Another related theme is the pride of women. Pretty-shield grew up admiring her mother, her aunt and the leading women of her tribe. She loved the life of a little girl and looked forward to marriage and motherhood. She was most proud, however, of the accomplishments of women during war. She beams when she tells Frank that her husband let her assist him in war and she eagerly tells stories of when Crow women either won battles for the Crow or about the heroic participation of two Crow women in the Battle of Little Bighorn. She likes to tell these stories because while the men remember them their pride will not let them tell them.

The Tragedy of War

Many imagine that Native American life prior to the colonization of North America by Americans and Canadians was peaceful and harmonious. However, this is far from the case. Native American tribes were as brutal to one another as Europeans were. And the Crow were no different. They were surrounded by larger tribes, such as the Lacota, Shoshone, and Cheyenne. Pretty-shield grew up within constant skirmishes between the Crow and Lacota.

The Lacota were the enemy of the Crow in Pretty-shield's youth. The two tribes would routinely kill each other's men, sack each other's villages and capture each other's women and enslave them, along with their children. Pretty-shield tells numerous stories of these skirmishes later in the book. In fact, so many of these events occurred that many stories of Crow lore involve some skirmish with the Lacota.

However, the largest battle was the Black Hills War in 1876-1877 when the United States refused to honor its treaty with the Native American tribes to preserve their land rights in Black Hills, Montana. Several troops from the United States army, along with some Shoshone and Crow fought against the Northern Cheyenne and Lakota (among



other tribes), led by Sitting Bull and Crazy-Horse. The battle is legendary in part because of General Custer's 'last stand' where he was killed by Native American troops. Pretty-shield recounts the story of the Battle of Little Bighorn to Frank by means of the testimony of her husband, Goes-ahead.

Throughout all these tragedies, there was pain and sorrow. Crow men were gone to war constantly and there was always a family that had recently lost a loved one to war or enslavement. Pretty-shield deplores the horror and sadness of war time and time again in the book.

The Decline of the Crow

There is a reason that Pretty-shield is primarily a set of tales from Pretty-shield's youth; this is because the time after her youth was not only uninteresting but depressing as well. When Frank Linderman meets with Pretty-shield, the Crow are confined to their reservation in Southern Montana in the Montana territory at Crow Agency, Montana, the headquarters of the Crow Nation.

The Crow had been forced onto their reservation by the United States government and were still harassed by American businessmen who wanted to use their natural resources. Not only this, but the United States government had time and time again refused to honor its treatise and commitments to the Crow people, which bred bitter resentment.

What's worse, the United States' people had killed off the buffalo. This was nothing short of an incredible decimation of hundreds of thousands of buffalo killed en masse in an incredibly wasteful fashion. The Crow's form of life surrounded the buffalo and when the buffalo disappeared, the Crow form of life was destroyed and the spirits of the Crow Nation were crushed, according to Pretty-shield.

Thus, after the buffalo disappeared, the Crow began a long decline. Pretty-shield fears for the fate of her grandchildren and she believes that the Crow have become lazy and Crow men are addicted to alcohol. The days of Pretty-shield's youth were the happy ones, because they occurred before the decline of the Crow.



Style

Perspective

Pretty-shield has two perspectives, that of Frank Linderman and Pretty-shield. Frank Linderman was a famous sculptor and writer who tried to immortalize the Montana Plains Native Americans in word and art. He would publish thirteen books and produce seventeen intricate sculptures in his lifetime.

Frank Linderman is the narrator in the book. The reader does not learn much about him in the course of the book, but only comes to know him by means of his thoughts about Pretty-shield, his observations of her, and, of course, his conversations with her. While he is a constant presence in the book, he is in the background. It is hard to detect his biases. He clearly admires Pretty-shield and her tribe; he also regards their present situation as tragic, but it is not clear to what extent he holds the United States' people and government accountable for their situation.

Pretty-shield provides the second major perspective in the book. Nearly all of the talking is done by Pretty-shield through an interpreter, Goes-together. She tells many stories from her youth that cover a variety of topics. Pretty-shield is an old Crow woman who grew up during one of the peaks of Crow civilization. She grew up in a noble, high-class family for the Crow and had many children. She loved her family and the old practices of her tribe, not only in retrospect but at the time as well.

Her main biases seem to come through in her strong belief in Crow folklore and her claims to have experienced the entities within it, her deep hostility towards the Lacota and her strong attempts to avoid hating Americans for the state of her tribe.

Tone

The tone of Pretty-shield is simultaneously upbeat, wistful, magical and tragic. Pretty-shield is telling Frank Linderman stories that mostly occurred when she was a young girl when the Crow Nation was near one of the climaxes of its existence. As a result, Pretty-shield remembers her childhood fondly. Further, Pretty-shield is an elderly woman with a strong spirit and she eagerly and forcefully recounts the events of her childhood and is often eager to tell Frank her stories, with each day usually beginning with some merriment from Pretty-shield.

The tone is also wistful, however, because Pretty-shield is recounting a faraway time, her youth, when she is a very old woman when Frank is interviewing her. Possibly her childhood memories are tainted with the stain of nostalgia, but Pretty-shield is probably right to believe that Crow life was better during the day when the buffalo roamed the Montana Plains. Pretty-shield believed her people to be proud and noble and felt that at the time of the interview her tribe was in decline.



The tone of Pretty-shield has strong magical elements. Pretty-shield's stories are shot through seamlessly with Crow lore. She discusses the animal-people, spirits that had both human and animal elements. She also includes a discussion of various Persons, or spirits beyond the animal-people that were connected to the 'All-High.' Pretty-shield speaks constantly of good and bad 'medicine,' an essentially theological concept which refers to an individual's energy, innate or acquired.

Finally, the tone of Pretty-shield is tragic because the life of the Crow has been destroyed by American expansion into the West. First, American hunters and businessmen basically killed off all the buffalo that roamed the American West, which was no small accomplishment. The buffalo were required in order for the Crow to maintain their form of life and when the buffalo disappeared, their tribal life disappeared.

Furthermore, the American government forced Native American tribes onto reservations, often removing them from their native lands and trapping them in small areas. As a result, Pretty-shield has had to struggle not to despise the white man, and she believes that she has succeeded. That said, she deliberately does not speak of her adult life, as during this period 'nothing happened' due to the fact that the Crow form of life had been destroyed.

Structure

Pretty-shield runs around two-hundred and fifty pages and is not a dense book. Many of its pages contain artwork and most of the text is dialogue and the recounting of stories. These stories are rarely complicated and often simply relate the spirit of a particular time or the emotions running through a particular incident. Most of Pretty-shield's stories are childhood stories; as a result, her explanation of the stories is largely straightforward and simple.

The book is full of these stories and they cover a variety of different issues relating to Pretty-shield's family, her tribe, the relationship between the Crow and the Lacota, local skirmishes, Crow spirituality, having children, getting married, avoiding buffalo herds and the Battle of Little Bighorn.

The book has nineteen chapters which are not named. They are not in a strict chronological ordering, although the first chapter discusses Pretty-shield's birth and birthplace and the last chapter covers the tragedy her tribe experienced in Pretty-shield's adulthood. Each chapter usually focuses around a particular topic that Frank has chosen to ask Pretty-shield about.

In the first chapter, Pretty-shield is introduced and she tells Frank about her birthplace, parents, her name and her youth with her aunt, along with the movements of her tribe across the plains. The second chapter outlines the split between Mountain and River Crow; it also covers Pretty-shield's interactions with other young girls. The third chapter talks about Pretty-shield's parents and the fourth chapter discusses Pretty-shield's first observation of the white man.



The fifth chapter partly covers the story of how Pretty-shield lost another woman's baby and the sixth chapter recounts the death of a young boy due to the misfire of a medicine gun. The next chapter includes stories about buffalo herds, whereas the eighth chapter discusses interactions with grizzly bears and animal-people. The ninth chapter adds detail to the idea of the animal-people.

Pretty-shield's marriage is discussed in the tenth chapter. The eleventh chapter is about caring for newborns and the twelfth is about the magical powers of the chickadee. The fourteenth chapter begins the discussion of the Crow's relationship with the Lacota, which ranges to the seventeenth chapter. The seventeenth chapter analyzes the past of Pretty-shield's tribe's chief, Plenty-coups.

The climax of the book is chapter eighteen, Pretty's shield's retelling of the Battle of Little Bighorn from her husband's perspective. The final chapter has Pretty-shield discuss the sad state of her tribe at present.



Quotes

"Many things have happened to me. I am an old woman, Sign-talker." (Chapter One, 16)

"I did not doubt that Pretty-Shield had always 'made people notice' her." (Chapter Two, 31)

"I am going to The-beyond-country now." (Chapter Three, 42)

"Stop! Stop! We have lost the baby!" (Chapter Five, 67)

"I'm sorry. I did not mean to kill you, my friend." (Chapter Six, 81)

"Running buffalo was a man's business, anyhow." (Chapter Seven, 95)

"Yes, Mr. Linderman, she is a good woman. I do not know how some of these people could have lived without her. She is charity itself." (Chapter Eight, 96)

"Did any of the animal-people ever talk to you, Sign-talker?" (Chapter Nine, 118)

"See. There is great power in little things." (Chapter Twelve, 160)

"Give me good luck, and a good life." (Chapter Thirteen, 166)

"Daughter, we have not always lived together, but before this sun touches the world we may die together." (Chapter Fourteen, 171)

"Yes, a woman won that fight, and the men never tell about it." (Chapter Sixteen, 202)

"Yes, the Sore-lips have furnished many great men and women." (Chapter Seventeen, 221)

"But Son-of-the-morning-star (General Custer) was going to his death, and did not know it. He was like a feather blown by the wind, and had to go." (Chapter Eighteen, 235)

"When the buffalo went away the hearts of my people fell to the ground, and they could not lift them up again. After this nothing happened." (Chapter Nineteen, 248)

"I do not hate anybody, not even the white man. I have never let myself hate the white man, because I knew that this would only make things worse for me. But he changed everything for us, did many bad deeds before we got used to him." (Chapter Nineteen, 249)

"I have not long to stay here. I shall soon be going away from this world; but my grandchildren will have to stay here for a long time yet. I wonder how they will make out." (Chapter Nineteen, 252)



Topics for Discussion

What events of Pretty-Shield's youth made her the happiest?

Describe the relationship between the Lacota and the Crow.

Is there any rhyme or reason to Linderman's scheme of questions? Give a theory that unifies his questions.

To what extent was Native American life different than you expected it to be after reading Pretty-Shield's perspective?

To what extent were Pretty-Shield's discussions of animal-people, apparitions, Persons, etc. mythical in her mind? To what extent did she think of herself as telling the actual truth?

Recount the details that Pretty-Shield recounts of the Battle of Little Bighorn and discuss Pretty-Shield's theory about the failings of General Custer.

How did the loss of the buffalo affect the Crow?

Pretty-Shield has to struggle not to be angry with 'the white man' in Chapter Nineteen. Why would she be angry with Americans? What did the American government and others do to her people that would make her angry? To what extent is her anger justified?