

Spider Woman's Daughter Study Guide

Spider Woman's Daughter by Anne Hillerman

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Plot Summary

Spider Woman's Daughter, by Toni Hillerman, is the 19th book in the Navajo Mysteries series. The story focuses largely on Navajo officers Bernadette "Bernie" Manuelito and her husband, Jim Chee, who are trying to solve the mystery of who shot their mentor, retired police detective Joe Leaphorn. Leaphorn is shot shortly after a meeting with the police. Bernie witnesses the shooting, but she is unable to get to Leaphorn in time to stop the assailant. She's wracked with guilt over her failure and is determined to solve the crime, even though she is specifically told not to handle the case.

The case officially goes to Chee, who considered Leaphorn a mentor. Chee and Bernie end up tackling the case together, discovering that Leaphorn was afraid of someone from his past. They try to learn more from his possible girlfriend and roommate, Louisa, but she's nowhere to be found. All they know is that she left an angry message on Leaphorn's answering machine, but they don't know what the fight was about.

Bernie discovers that Leaphorn had been working as a private consultant for the American Indian Resource Center (AIRC). They had recently received a donation of several rare and valuable Native American pots. Leaphorn was hired to make sure that all of the insurance information about the Native pottery was correct and each piece was accurately appraised. Bernie keeps digging and discovers that the initial report Leaphorn sent was never received by Dr. John Collingsworth, who is in charge at AIRC. Bernie agrees to help Dr. Collingsworth with the report, believing that it will lead to more details about Leaphorn's shooting.

Bernie is also dealing with troubles at home. Her sister is acting out and has started to drink, leaving their mother alone at home with no one to take care of her. Also, Bernie's relationship with her husband is starting to suffer because of the case. They hardly get to see one another, and Chee is jealous of an FBI agent who is also working the case, someone who clearly has feelings for Bernie.

After following several dead ends, Bernie finally gets a lead. She finds the original report which details that the pots were appraised at an incredibly low price, something which doesn't add up with how rare they're supposed to be. Bernie tries to find the appraiser, Ellie Friedman, but she doesn't have any luck. Chee and Bernie eventually stumble upon the appraiser's body in the Chaco ruins.

With more leads to follow up on, Chee and Bernie discover that Ellie was working with Dr. Maxie Davis. Dr. Davis hated Leaphorn because he had gone after her husband in a previous case. In the end, her husband died, and she placed the blame on Leaphorn. Dr. Davis was also working with Ellie. They didn't want the pots to be taken away from Navajo land, so Ellie would make convincing fakes and keep the actual artifacts. Dr. Davis killed Ellie and intended to frame her for Leaphorn's murder; trying to make it look like Ellie committed suicide from the guilt of Leaphorn's death.



Chee tries to stop Davis, but he gets kidnapped in the process. Bernie is able to track both of them down. Davis is about to destroy Ellie's storage unit which contains evidence of their past crimes. Bernie is able to stop the explosion and save her husband. The police track down Dr. Davis and arrest her. The book ends with Leaphorn slowly starting to recover from his injuries and Bernie being awarded the Leaphorn Award of Valor for her actions during the case.



Chapters 1-2

Summary

Chapter 1 - The book opens with Officer Bernadette Manuelito, affectionately referred to as Bernie, having breakfast with some of her fellow police officers. Officer Largo frequently hosts these events, using it as a chance to catch up with the other officers and to work on cases. He always invites the legendary retired detective, Joe Leaphorn. Everyone looks up to Leaphorn and treats him like he is still on the force. He has trained many of the officers and has an amazing arrest record. After the meeting, Leaphorn leaves the restaurant. Bernie is getting ready to leave as well since she has just gotten a call from her husband and fellow officer, Jim Chee. Before she can react, she sees someone quickly get out of their car, shoot Leaphorn in the head, and run off.

The other officers quickly call for help, and an ambulance arrives. Leaphorn is still alive when they take him away, but he is in critical condition. The FBI arrives shortly afterward to investigate what happened. Agent Jerry Cordova questions Bernie about Leaphorn. She tells him he doesn't have any enemies, but he's been working as a private investigator after retiring, so he might have angered someone doing that. She also tells him that Leaphorn has no family, and lives with a friend named Louisa. After giving her statement, she calls her husband and tells him how powerless she feels. Finally, she breaks down and cries now that she's had a few minutes to fully process what has happened.

Chapter 2 - Bernie continues to feel guilty about not being able to do more to help Leaphorn, even though everyone around her assures her that she did everything she possibly could. When she gets to the station, Largo tells her that she needs to take a few days off to recover. Bernie pleads with him to let her work the case. He forcefully declines, telling her that her husband, Jim Chee, has been assigned to be the lead investigator. He adds that he knows she's going to work on it anyway, but urges her to at least try and be discreet about it. He asks her to drive Leaphorn's truck back to his house and to tell Louisa about the shooting.

Bernie drives the truck back, but she doesn't find any trace of Louisa. She looks through the house, hoping to find something that might help identify who would possibly want to go after Leaphorn. Chee eventually arrives, and the two briefly discuss how much Leaphorn means to them. Chee tries to comfort Bernie, assuring her that Leaphorn is too tough to die. Neither of them can find any trace of Louisa, and Chee suspects that she might have recently left. The two are pulled away when they get a report that the police have found the vehicle and they need Bernie to identify it.



Analysis

Chapter 1 - Many of the characters and their relationships are established very early on in the chapter. Leaphorn is immediately made out to be a respected cop, even despite his retired status. This is important since the department's feelings for Leaphorn are a large part of why they're as driven as they are to solve the case. Bernie's personal investment is also shown when she laments about how she didn't do more to save Leaphorn. She places the majority of the blame on herself even though everyone assures her there was nothing she could have done.

Louisa is mentioned for the first time and Bernie hints that there might be more to the relationship with Leaphorn. This later ends up being partly true, as Leaphorn and Louisa have strong feelings for one another, but they aren't officially dating. In the hospital, Louisa does express her love for him, and Bernie believes that the feelings are returned.

Bernie and Chee's relationship is established as well. Chee is very supportive and truly cares for Bernie. It's important that readers see this early on since their relationship begins to suffer. They are a caring couple from these early scenes, but they are just going through a rough period in their relationship.

Several kinds of love are introduced in this scene. There is the love that the force feels toward Leaphorn as an honored and beloved former policeman. Bernie and Chee have feelings for Leaphorn that propel them into the investigation of his murder. There is the love that Bernie and Chee feel for one another. Also, there is the hint that Leaphorn and Louisa have feelings for each other.

Chapter 2 - The theme of Breaking the Rules is briefly brought up through Largo. He tells Bernie that she can't do anything on the case except locate the next of kin, but he also goes on to admit that he knows she's going to get involved. He advises her against it and recommends that she keeps her involvement at a minimum to avoid getting into trouble. Bernie feels like she's being personally punished. She later realizes that Largo truly is sympathetic and wants her to be able to help. However, as a police captain he also has to acknowledge proper protocol.

The relationships between the characters are once again stressed in this early chapter. Readers get a clear indication of how much Chee and Bernie feel for one another and how important Leaphorn is to both of them. Chee's appointment as lead investigator comes into play later on during the story, lending to some of the tension that Chee and Bernie have in their marriage. He's willing to work the case with her. However, since he's the lead and she's not officially allowed to work, he ends up doing a lot of the investigation alone. This fuels their separation issues.

The theme of Guilt is demonstrated in this chapter. Bernie once again expresses how guilty she feels, wishing she had been quicker so she could have gotten to Leaphorn sooner. Chee points out there was nothing she could have done, and it might have made things worse if she had been faster because she would have been shot, too.



Then, there would have been no one to immediately tend to Leaphorn. Guilt is clouding her judgement and interfering with Bernie's ability to view things objectively.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Love as it is introduced in the first two chapters.

Discussion Question 2

Describe Bernie as she is depicted by the author in these early chapters.

Discussion Question 3

Describe the relationship between Chee and Bernie.

Vocabulary

fatigue, loom, prowling, sterile, terraced, ostensibly, bureaucracy, humdrum, peripheral, tangible, belligerent, anthropologist, disgruntled



Chapters 3-4

Summary

Chapter 3 - Chee and Bernie arrive at the marketplace where the car was spotted. The car belongs to an older woman, Mrs. Benally. Mrs. Benally is uncooperative at first, but Bernie is able to calm her down and talk to her. Mrs. Benally says the car was dropped off by her son, Jackson. Jackson is 19 years old and goes to the nearby college. She says that he used to have trouble with gangs when he was younger, but he's turned his life around since then. Bernie asks about Jackson's friends. Mrs. Benally tells her that he's friends with someone at college named Leonard Nez, who is nicknamed Lizard. She doesn't know anything more about him.

Largo arrives and chastises Bernie for getting involved. He doesn't want anyone to use her involvement to throw the case out because she's also one of the key witnesses. Bernie is upset and once again tries to argue with him. Largo makes it clear that if she doesn't follow orders she'll be thrown off the case. The only thing he wants her to do is find Louisa and any family members of Leaphorn. She gives Chee some of Leaphorn's old cases from when he still worked with the police. She wants Chee to go through them and try to find any possible suspects, just in case the leads with Jackson and Leonard don't pan out.

Chapter 4 - Bernie returns to Leaphorn's house, hoping to find Louisa. She's still not there, and nobody knows where she is or has her number. She listens to a message on the answering machine, which turns out to be from Louisa. It's very short, and she only says that she wished Leaphorn would have changed his mind. Bernie has no idea what it means, wondering if perhaps Louisa and Leaphorn were in a relationship.

The other officer who is with her, Big Man, helps her access the old computer that they find there. They decide that they should unplug it and take it back to the station. As Bernie crawls under the computer desk to disconnect the wires she tells Big Man that she is reminded of the Navajo tale about Spider Woman, and she tells him that her mother calls her Spider Woman's daughter all of the time. After they take the computer back to the station, Bernie drives to see her mother and her sister.

Darleen, her sister, was supposed to be taking care of their mother; but, when Bernie arrives, she's nowhere to be found. The house is a mess. Bernie spends the day with her mother and helps tidy the place up. Darleen briefly shows up, smelling of alcohol. She only stops by to get a hat and quickly leaves, reminding Bernie that this is her day off and Bernie was supposed to have been there earlier to take care of things.

Bernie is upset, but when she talks to Chee on the phone, he tells her to push it aside. She explains what happened earlier in regard to her mother. Her mother does what she can to comfort Bernie and to reassure her. Bernie feels a little better after talking about it. She returns home and lets her anger toward Darleen subside.



Analysis

Chapter 3 - The first real suspects are brought up in the investigation. Both Jackson and Leonard are suspects for the majority of the book, and right from their initial appearance it looks like they're guilty. They clearly aren't at school where they claimed to be, and it looks very suspicious that Jackson would use the car in the morning and then drop it off for his mother. Through Jackson, Chee does eventually learn about the ranch, which puts him on the course of finding the real killer.

The theme of Breaking the Rules is brought up again. Bernie talks to Mrs. Benally and is ultimately the one that is able to calm her down and get her to talk in the first place. Bernie isn't actually allowed to be part of the investigation, as Largo points out when he arrives. Despite that, it was her initial involvement that got Mrs. Benally to cooperate, and if it weren't for her there's a very real possibility that she would have never been so willing to work alongside the police.

Chapter 4 - Bernie hears the mysterious message from Louisa which makes Louisa look like a suspect. The fact that nobody is able to get a hold of her only adds to that suspicion. This will later lead to one of the themes, Appearances Can Be Deceiving. However, at this point, she is another suspect.

The theme of Culture and Tradition is introduced at this point with the discussion about the Navajo tale about Spider Woman. Bernie's mother calls her Spider Woman's daughter because of Bernie's ability to put all of the various threads of information together to weave the truth and solve the crimes. This shows how the past and the present culture and tradition of the area still influence Bernie and her family.

Bernie's family is introduced for the first time. The tension between Bernie and her sister is a continuing plot point throughout the book. At this point, it isn't made clear why Darleen isn't there to take care of their mother. While Darleen is gone, Bernie stays to take care of her mother. This demonstrates the theme of Family, and the expectations that members of a family group are expected to take care of one another.

Bernie is frustrated with her sister because her sister lives with their mother and should have been there until Bernie arrived. However, it isn't as clear cut as all of that because according to Darleen, Bernie showed up late to relieve Darleen. What can be assumed from this dialogue is that the sisters, while they care for one another, also have an almost adversarial relationship, where one believes that the other is getting a better deal than the other.

Discussion Question 1

Describe the dynamic between Bernie and her sister, Darleen.



Discussion Question 2

Discuss the theme of Family as it is demonstrated in Chapter 4.

Discussion Question 3

How is the theme of Breaking the Rules demonstrated in Chapter 3?

Vocabulary

granulated, bristled, ample, coerced, neurology, yowling, solicitation, scenic, fragrance, turbulent, debilitation, gnarled, tenacity, meticulous, omen



Chapters 5-6

Summary

Chapter 5 - When Bernie gets home, Chee tells her that Darleen has called. He tells Bernie that she sounded upset, but Darleen didn't tell him why and insisted that she was fine. Chee and Bernie get another call, this time from Louisa. She explains that she had a fight with Leaphorn earlier, but she insists that she would never shoot him. Bernie can tell how concerned she is when she hears more about what happened. Louisa tells them that she left early that morning for a conference she's attending in Houston. She also mentions that Leaphorn had been obsessing over an old case, but she doesn't know which one. He had told her that a ghost had come back to haunt him. She leaves her number so Bernie and Chee can reach her if anything changes.

Bernie has a hard time believing that Louisa would be involved because she cares about Leaphorn. Chee and Bernie spend the evening going through Leaphorn's old case files, but they don't find a probable suspect. The police are still unable to track down either Jackson or Leonard, who still seem like the best suspects. The next morning, Bernie decides to go for a run, wanting to get back in shape because of the guilt she feels over not being there for Leaphorn. When she returns, Chee is on the phone and Bernie can tell that he's just received bad news.

Chapter 6 - Bernie heads off to the hospital so she can visit Leaphorn. In her car she spots some envelopes that they took from his house, earlier. She knew one of them was addressed to a doctor, but she didn't know anything more about it. She drives to the hospital and finds out that Leaphorn is still in critical condition. They have operated and removed the bullet, but they had to put him into a medically induced coma so he can rest. The doctor tells Bernie that the next 48 hours are critical. He informs the staff that, for the time being, Bernie is considered next of kin until they find someone closer to Leaphorn. Bernie speaks with Leaphorn and then goes to get the rest of his items from security. She's hopeful that there's something in Leaphorn's notebook that will help them identify the killer.

At the station, Chee follows up on the vehicle they found. The vehicle is full of different prints, but so far none of them link to any possible suspects. Chee is interrupted by a panicked Darleen, who can't find her mother. Chee walks her through the panic, and Darleen finds her mother at the neighbor's house. Chee reports that he just found a lucky break with the fingerprints.

Analysis

Chapter 5 - Louisa gets in touch with Bernie and Chee, and she once again looks suspicious. They both know that she's lying about something. She's intentionally vague on the details of her whereabouts. This continues to demonstrate the theme of



Appearances Can Be Deceiving. Later, it will be revealed that she had a very good reason for being vague; but, at this point in the novel, it only serves to make her look guilty.

The theme of Guilt is also demonstrated in this chapter as Bernie's guilt is brought up once again. She continues to blame herself for not being fast enough, despite many people insisting that she did everything possible. Bernie decides to take up running again to get in better shape and to be quicker. The symbolism of Bernie running is emphasized again in this chapter and continues to be representative of her desire to run from her problems.

Chapter 6 - Bernie goes to the hospital. Going to the hospital is uncomfortable for Bernie because it is a reminder of everyone's mortality. Also, a hospital makes her think of her mother's failing health. She wears her police uniform to the hospital, even though she is not on official duty. She does this to honor Leaphorn and his time dedicated to the service. He is not aware enough to notice, or so she thinks. While at the hospital, Bernie discovers the letter that will eventually lead her to Dr. Collingsworth and the AIRC. This is important because she meets the actual shooter during her visit. In the meantime, Bernie obtains Leaphorn's notebook, which helps to guide her toward the AIRC.

Chee is following up on his own leads back at the police station. He's interrupted by Darleen, who is panicking because she can't find her mother. This is important since it tells readers that despite the way she was acting earlier, Darleen does care about her family. It also touches upon the theme of Family as when she's in distress she reaches out to Chee. It's very telling that Darleen calls Chee instead of reaching out to Bernie. This comes up later when Bernie and Darleen finally get the chance to talk to one another. Darleen reveals that she doesn't feel like she can rely on Bernie.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Guilt.

Discussion Question 2

Why do hospitals make Bernie feel uncomfortable?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Louisa's character.

Vocabulary

domestic, resonate, tedious, torrent, cynical, vigorous, supine, swathed



Chapters 7-8

Summary

Chapter 7 - Bernie goes to a nearby restaurant and looks through Leaphorn's notebook. She feels a little guilty going through her former captain's private journal, but Louisa had told her that his next of kin and contact information would be in it. As Bernie opens the journal she is discouraged by what she sees. Leaphorn wrote in a complicated code, so it is difficult to figure much out. There are some letters, numbers, and symbols in the back of the journal. She doesn't know what they mean, but she feels as if she has seen them before now. She does get the address of someone she is able to later identify as Austin Lee. She has no idea about what kind of relationship exists between Leaphorn and Austin Lee, but she calls anyway and leaves a message explaining the situation. Since she is in Santa Fe, she decides to hand deliver Leaphorn's letter to Dr. John Collingsworth. She sends off a copy of the symbols in the back of the journal to the manager back at the station to see if the database might shed any light on what they are.

She tracks the doctor down to the AIRC (American Indian Resource Center) building. He works in a section of the museum dedicated to beautiful Navajo crafts. Bernie is overwhelmed with the quality of the items they house. She speaks with the doctor, who is quite surprised to hear about Leaphorn. At first, he's angry with what he reads in the letter. He quickly explains to Bernie that he had hired Leaphorn as a consultant. They were getting newly discovered items in for a new display, something that was going to be very big and very expensive. Leaphorn was hired on to make sure that all the insurance information was correct and to make sure the items in question were genuine.

The doctor is upset, he tells her, because the letter doesn't contain the report, which Leaphorn was supposed to have sent out. Bernie notes that the doctor acts suspiciously about the new items. However, given how surprised he was when Bernie announced the news of Leaphorn's shooting, she doesn't suspect him.

Chapter 8 - Bernie and Chee share the events of the day with each other. Chee had been with Mrs. Benally again. When he drove her home, he found Jackson in the house. Jackson was taken into custody, even though Mrs. Benally kept insisting that he hadn't done anything wrong. Chee began to interrogate Jackson, who claimed that he was at school yesterday during the shooting. Chee kept pressing him, knowing that Jackson was lying since the officers searched the school and his teachers corroborated that Jackson hadn't shown up.

Chee continues to share that Jackson lied to him and said that he was doing an extra credit project with his friend, Leonard Nez. Chee again tells Bernie that he knew it was a lie. Jackson finally told the truth and said that he did not go to class. Instead, he went out with Nez, but he didn't elaborate on the details. He insisted that they didn't shoot or even know the cop. Jackson went on to say that he regularly rented his car out to other



people, acquaintances that he would meet at the gym. He only needed the car two days a week, and he'd been struggling to pay his way through college. Out of fear of being the only suspect, Jackson had given Chee a rather large list of contacts, everyone that he could think of who had rented the car.

Chee tells Bernie that they have finally received a message from Louisa. He had tried to call her back, but he couldn't get in touch with her. The FBI was unable to find her, and she never made her flight to Houston. Bernie agrees that it looks suspicious. Chee is interrupted by a phone call, having apparently received good news from Largo.

Analysis

Chapter 7 - Leaphorn's association with the AIRC is introduced for the first time. This remains a major plot point. Bernie learns that Leaphorn was working with the AIRC to investigate insurance claims. She finds it very suspicious that his report is missing, since she knows how detail oriented Leaphorn is. Bernie also very briefly is introduced to Dr. Davis, who becomes a much more important figure by the end of the book.

The theme of Appearances Can Be Deceiving is demonstrated in this chapter, as well as the theme of Culture and Tradition. The AIRC is collecting ancient pottery from the Navajo. At the offices of the AIRC there are many rare artifacts and Bernie is amazed by the workmanship. She knows that they must be worth a lot of money. Culture and Tradition is shown to be something that is recognized and appreciated, even honored, by Bernie and most of those who live in the area where she lives. There is something about the pottery and the weaving on the walls that strike Bernie as odd, though she can't put her finger on it, thus demonstrating that Appearances Can Be Deceiving.

Chapter 8 - In this chapter, Leonard (Lizard) is brought up once again, and made to look like the prime suspect. Jackson is clearly hiding something about him, and the fact that nobody has been able to find him just makes him look even more suspicious. Jackson eventually comes clean and tells Chee almost everything. The theme of Culture is focused upon as it is shown that many of the Native American young adults have a difficult time affording schooling.

Louisa is made to look suspicious again when the FBI are unable to find any trace of her, and it's clear that she didn't make the trip to Houston like she earlier claimed. The author is laying the groundwork for misdirection to occur and the theme of Appearances Can Be Deceiving to be demonstrated. Those who look guilty might not be, and those who look innocent might be the guilty ones.

Chee finds out that Jackson was renting out the car in order to make money to go to school. This is actually a relevant detail to the mystery that comes into play much later.

Discussion Question 1

At this point in the story, who are the main suspects in the murder case?



Discussion Question 2

Why did Dr. Davis become angry when he read the letter from Leaphorn?

Discussion Question 3

Discuss the theme of Culture and Tradition as it is demonstrated in both chapters.

Vocabulary

plaintive, mellowed, furnished, savory, populous, affiliations, contemporary, vetting, dolt



Chapters 9 - 10

Summary

Chapter 9 - Chee finishes talking to Largo on the phone and tells Bernie that the police went through the list of contacts and they have found a possible suspect, Garrison Tsosie. Leaphorn had arrested a brother of his shortly before retiring, and Garrison himself already had a police record. He is a likely suspect, and they have a motive for him. Neither Chee nor Bernie is entirely convinced, but they recognize that it's at least a worthy lead to follow.

They get another call, this time from Agent Cordova. He wants Bernie to come down to FBI headquarters the next morning to see a hypnotist that might help her remember more of what happened. Chee gets jealous after hearing this, remarking that it seems like Cordova has a crush on Bernie. She teases him about the remark and insists that Cordova is married; but, that does little to put Chee at ease. He's upset for the rest of the evening and leaves early in the morning to investigate Garrison.

Chapter 10 - Bernie reschedules her appointment with the hypnotist for the next day. She tells Cordova that her husband will likely be accompanying her. She goes for a run and thinks about the trouble that she's having with her sister. When she gets back, she gets a call from AIRC. Dr. Collingsworth is still trying to find out what happened to the report, but Bernie has nothing new to tell him. She also gets a quick call from Chee, who apologizes for being gruff with her the previous evening. After that, she decides to spend the day visiting her family, since she's still technically not allowed back at work.

Chee, meanwhile, follows up on his lead with Garrison. He speaks to Garrison's mother, who insists that he's a good boy and wouldn't be affiliated with any criminals. She explains how no one in the family harbors ill will toward Leaphorn; they didn't even know he was the arresting officer. Garrison's brother who had been arrested admits that he had been spiraling out of control. He's used prison to turn his life around. He obtained his GED and started to do work within the prison.

Chee manages to track down Garrison, who has the same sentiments as the rest of his family. He admits to renting the vehicle, but he insists that he hadn't used it that day as he was down at the market selling some of the jewelry he had made. Chee follows up on the lead and finds out that Garrison is telling the truth, eliminating him as a suspect. He buys some of Garrison's jewelry to give to Bernie as an apology.

Analysis

Chapter 9 - Garrison Tsosie is brought up as another possible suspect. It seems like he has the most compelling motive of revenge, since his brother was directly involved with Leaphorn in the past. The theme of Appearances Can Be Deceiving is demonstrated in this false lead, as Garrison looks completely guilty. Chee eventually learns that the



family is actually happy about the arrest because it allowed Garrison's brother to turn his life around and get the help that he needed.

The relationship troubles between Chee and Bernie are brought up for the first time, demonstrating the theme of Love. Chee is jealous at the way that Cordova seems to be interested in Bernie and the fact that she's being playful about it instead of trying to push him away. It also shows the reader that Chee values his relationship with Bernie and doesn't want to lose her. He begins to realize that both he and Bernie work too many hours, which touches on the theme of Appreciating Life.

Chapter 10 - In this chapter, Chee discovers that his potential lead is just another dead end. Garrison has a perfect alibi, and it's clear that he and his family harbor no ill will toward Leaphorn. In fact, they're grateful because Garrison's brother has gotten help in prison. He's managed to get his GED and is even working on getting trade skills so he'll be able to start over once he's out of prison. The theme of Culture and Tradition is explored as attention is focused on the fact that many young Native Americans end up on the wrong side of the penal system. Fortunately, Garrison's brother had used his time in prison to straighten himself out.

Bernie gets a call from the AIRC, once again stressing the importance of Leaphorn's work on the project. This foreshadows the importance of the pottery pieces. It also gives Bernie more reason to pursue the reports since it's becoming clear that whatever Leaphorn was involved in with the AIRC likely played into the reason that he was shot.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss how the theme of Culture and Tradition is presented in these chapters.

Discussion Question 2

What would make Chee jealous of Bernie's involvement with the FBI's hypnotist?

Discussion Question 3

What suggests that Garrison is not guilty?

Vocabulary

incarcerated, excavates, appraisal, introspective, belligerent, baleful, doleful, precipitated, unremarkable, astonished, excise, neurology



Chapters 11-12

Summary

Chapter 11 - Bernie spends the day with her family. Darleen eventually comes home, having once again been out drinking. Bernie talks to her about how she isn't helping out around the house or doing anything with her life. Darleen argues that she's too frustrated and feels like nobody cares about her. Bernie is too busy to help her, and Darleen is exhausted from being the caregiver for their mother. Bernie is annoyed, but feels bad for Darleen and promises to make herself more available. She encourages Darleen to start taking classes to get her GED, and even offers to take care of their mother more so she has more time to use for herself.

Bernie returns home, but Chee is nowhere to be found. Chee comes in much later, exhausted, but still working on the case. He explains that his lead fizzled out and they're back to investigating Louisa and trying to track down Leonard. He does have some good news; the police recovered the AIRC report from Leaphorn's computer. Chee gives the report to Bernie to look over, then tries to get some sleep since they have to go to the FBI later in the morning.

Chapter 12 - Bernie goes over the extensive report that Leaphorn wrote. For the most part everything is what she expected, but then she notices that Leaphorn noted that some of the pieces were incredibly rare and valued much lower than expected. She copies down exactly which pieces Leaphorn had mentioned before sending the report off to the AIRC. In the morning, Bernie and Chee drive into the city together. They discuss the case and the apparent lack of leads outside of Leonard and Louisa. When they arrive at the FBI headquarters, Chee notes that Bernie seems to be trying to impress Cordova when he greets them.

Bernie undergoes the hypnosis, but she only remembers one additional detail. The killer wore a silver bracelet that looked like it had hearts on it. After their meeting at the FBI, Bernie and Chee go to visit Leaphorn. He's in better condition, but still unable to talk because of the pathway that the bullet took. They do their best to listen to his nonverbal cues. He indicates he knows who the shooter is, but has no way of expressing who it is. As they're leaving, Chee asks if Leaphorn would like to have a healing song performed. Leaphorn indicates yes, and Bernie thinks Leaphorn wants Chee to do it.

Analysis

Chapter 11 - The theme of Family is briefly touched upon in this chapter. It is explored in more detail the next time Bernie talks with Darleen. It's established now with what Darleen says, indicating that one of the reasons she's so unhappy is because she feels like she's all alone in taking care of their mother. Whenever she tries to reach out to Bernie, Bernie isn't available. The few times that they are able to talk, Darleen feels like



Bernie is always judging her, or simply telling her what to do instead of listening to what she needs.

The theme of Appreciating Life is also set up in the way that Chee and Bernie interact back at home. They continue to miss one another and never get the chance to just be husband and wife. Most of their time spent together is spent working on the case together and trying to follow up on leads. This time, Chee provides Bernie with the missing report, which ends up being a key piece of evidence in solving the case.

Chapter 12 - Bernie discovers that the valuable ceramics being brought in are actually appraised at a far lower price than their actual worth. At first, this seems like a mere curiosity; but, it is one that continues to nag at her until she begins to follow up on that bit of information in the upcoming chapters.

Bernie gets another clue in the form of the recovered memory about the silver bracelet. While she's with the FBI, Chee's fears are confirmed with the way that Cordova acts around Bernie. This leads to Chee feeling jealous when he's later working alone with Cordova.

The closeness of Chee, Bernie, and Leaphorn is shown when they go to visit Leaphorn in the hospital. Leaphorn manages to show how much he cares for Chee by indicating that he wants Chee to be the one to perform the healing song. This demonstrates the theme of Tradition and Culture. In the Navajo culture, traditions connect people to each other and offer comfort during times of trouble.

Discussion Question 1

What does the author indicate through Leaphorn's request that a healing song be performed?

Discussion Question 2

Discuss the significance of Bernie's discovery about the devaluation of the rare artifacts.

Discussion Question 3

Discuss Darleen's situation with her sister, Bernie.

Vocabulary

gaunt, effigies, acculturate, apprehension, discrepancy, contingency, provenance, protuberance, acquiescence



Chapters 13 - 14

Summary

Chapter 13 - Bernie and Chee leave the hospital. They decide to drop off the report at the AIRC, but Dr. Collingsworth has already received a copy. Apparently it had just been misplaced. Bernie asks him about the undervalued items, but Collingsworth is confused. Bernie pieces together that the first and last page were removed from the report, which strikes her as odd. Leaphorn isn't the type to make a mistake like that. She gives the doctor an updated copy that includes the missing pages. Collingsworth admits that it's odd for an item to be undervalued; usually the problem is that they're overvalued. Bernie offers to follow up on it for Collingsworth, who is happy for the help. Bernie points out to the secretary that one of the surveillance cameras isn't working.

Chee and Bernie go to visit Dr. Davis to ask about the differences in the reports and the discrepancies between the values of the vases. Chee notes that Davis seems like someone he should know, but he can't place where he's met him before. Bernie spies a vase on Davis's desk and remarks about it being a Zuni vase. Davis corrects her by telling her that it is a nice fake and that the vase holds the ashes of her former fiance. She bitterly explains that the person who murdered her fiance was never caught.

Chee calls a contact, Rocko Delbert, who is a former Navajo Police officer. Chee wants to find out more about the pieces, hoping it might lead to additional clues about what happened. Rocko directs him to Ellie Friedman, who is in charge of the group that does the appraisals, the EFB. Chee recalls that Ellie was rescued by Leaphorn several years ago. Apparently, he also finds out that she has been trying to get in touch with him recently. Chee and Bernie go to Ellie's office and discover that her car has been there for several days, but no one has seen her. Her office looks like it has been ransacked. Bernie and Chee immediately go to her home and find a similar scene. Chee decides to tell the FBI about it, since Ellie could be another suspect, or at least have some sort of lead for them.

Chapter 14 - Chee gets a call from Jackson. He tells Chee that he's thought of more people that might have used the car at the Double X Ranch where he works. Since employees leave their keys in the car in case the ranch staff needs to move the vehicles for their work, he thinks that someone might have made a duplicate copy of the keys because of having easy access to them. Chee tries to ask about Leonard again, but Jackson doesn't say anything and quickly hangs up.

Chee and Bernie discuss the marital problems they've been having lately. They decide that once the case is over they're going to take some time so they can focus on just being husband and wife. Chee decides to start a little early, since he doesn't have to get to work until much later the next day. He takes Bernie to the Chaco ruins, the source of some of the beautiful pottery that Bernie had seen at the AIRC. They have a good time



camping and run into another camper. The camper tells them about a fight she witnessed a few days ago between a man and woman who were hiking.

Bernie and Chee go to tell the rangers about it, but they have no idea who it could have been. While there, Bernie asks about Ellie. Ellie was apparently supposed to stop by the ruins about a month ago, but she never did. Apparently that wasn't too strange because Ellie was known to be flaky. Bernie starts thinking about Ellie again and remembers a number she saw in her office. It belonged to the same ranch that Jackson had called about earlier, meaning there could be a connection between the two. Chee remembers that he knows Davis from a case many years before regarding Ellie, who had been attacked.

Analysis

Chapter 13 - Bernie discovers that the copy of the report that Dr. Collingsworth received isn't correct. This means that someone must have intercepted the original report and then altered it so Dr. Collingsworth wouldn't find out about the pots being appraised at far lower than they were worth. This all becomes clear at the end of the book when Bernie and Chee discover that Dr. Davis was working with Ellie to falsify the Navajo artifacts. The theme of Culture and Tradition is demonstrated, but in a different way in this chapter. The trading in cultural artifacts for gain is shown to often be a type of exploitation of the system and the very culture it supposedly supports.

Ellie Friedman is mentioned for the first time. Although the characters never meet her when she's alive, she ends up being a major player in the crime. For the time being, Ellie looks like she's definitely involved because she has a past connection with Leaphorn. However, it is unlikely that she is the one who shot him.

Chapter 14 - The Double X ranch is introduced for the first time. This is later explored in much greater detail when Chee and Bernie are putting everything together and they discover that Dr. Davis used her opportunity at the ranch to get a copy of the keys. This also leads to Bernie investigating the ranch and discovering more information about Ellie. Leonard is again made to be a major suspect with the way that Jackson keeps trying to protect him.

Chee and Bernie address the theme of Appreciating Life. They realize that they've barely actually spent any time together as husband and wife because both have been too focused on the case. They decide to take some time to be together as a couple, both putting aside their jobs and the investigation so they can spend time camping at the Chaco ruins. While they're at the ruins, they discover there was a fight between two hikers. They later learn that one of those hikers was the deceased Ellie.

Discussion Question 1

Discuss the theme of Appreciating Life in Chapter 14.



Discussion Question 2

Why would some of Leaphorn's report be removed or missing from the report that was sent to Collingsworth?

Discussion Question 3

Why would Davis not admit to knowing Chee?

Vocabulary

rheostat, reverie, lout, hodgepodge, quirky, ambled, quarreling, introverts



Chapters 15-16

Summary

Chapter 15 - Bernie goes to the Double X ranch to talk to the owner, Slim Jacobs. She asks about Ellie and he tells her that the two had a romantic past. She was supposed to meet with him earlier in the week, but she stood him up. He hasn't been able to get in touch with her since, which he admits is odd. When asked about Jackson, Jacobs states that he's a good worker and he doesn't believe that he would be involved in anything like Leaphorn's shooting. He does tell Bernie that Leonard can usually be found performing in the rodeo, and that Jackson typically acts as his manager. He also says that Jackson sometimes moonlighted by working for Dr. Davis down at the dig. The dig, he tells them, is a new settlement that was found by Davis, and that it runs right through the ranch.

Bernie asks for more information about Jacob's past with Ellie. He mentions that he used to work with Ellie as well as Dr. Maxie Davis from the AIRC. Bernie had spoken with Dr. Davis during her past visits and knows that she's an associate of Dr. Collingsworth's. Slim mentions that Ellie had appraised some pots that were eventually sent to Japan and that she was very displeased when they were sent off. He has a picture of them that he shows Bernie. The pots, tall cylindrical pots, look exactly like the pots described in Leaphorn's documents. Jacobs tells Bernie that Dr. Davis recently got in touch with him asking if he knew anything about the records that Ellie kept. Bernie finds this suspicious and calls Chee to get more information about Dr. Davis. Chee responds they need to get more information about her, and also about Dr. Collingsworth.

Chapter 16 - Chee heads into work, preparing to speak with Mrs. Benally again. He never gets the chance as Largo intercepts him with new orders. The rangers have investigated the argument they reported the other night and have found a body. Cordova is handling it, but he wants Chee there to help. Chee goes out to meet Cordova. They investigate the body together and discover that the victim had on the same bracelet that Bernie, under hypnosis, remembers seeing on the shooter. They aren't sure who she is, but both are determined to work with their respective stations to properly identify the victim. They finally do identify her as Ellie Friedman.

Analysis

Chapter 15 - In this chapter, Bernie discovers a little more about the missing Ellie when she goes to the Double X Ranch. She finds out that Ellie has been missing for some time and she has a connection to Leaphorn, Davis, and Collingsworth. The fact that she was upset about some vases being sent to Japan begins to offer Bernie enough evidence to begin to formulate a theory.



Critical to the investigation is Bernie learning that Dr. Davis also had a past connection with Ellie. Dr. Davis is looking into the records that Ellie used to keep. This raises the detectives' suspicion and causes them to reevaluate their consideration of Davis as a suspect.

Chapter 16 - Chee discovers the truth about Ellie and how he knows her. He heads out to meet Cordova, managing to put aside some of his differences that he has toward the FBI agent. Cordova even makes a point of mentioning his wife when he's around Chee, which is likely his way of saying that he isn't any sort of threat to Chee and his relationship with Bernie.

Finding Ellie only adds more fuel to the theory that Davis or Collingsworth are somehow connected to Ellie's death and the missing report pages. How they are connected or why is not clear.

Discussion Question 1

Outline the investigative path that Bernie and Chee have taken.

Discussion Question 2

What is the most likely reason that Ellie was killed?

Discussion Question 3

For what reason(s) do Chee and Bernie suspect Davis?

Vocabulary

jurisdiction, paunchy, patrimony, diatribe, prestige, turbulent, rancid



Chapters 17-19

Summary

Chapter 17 - Bernie decides to spend the day with her mother. When she gets there, Darleen is once again missing. Bernie goes into her room and sees that, as she suspected, the room is trashed. The only area that is kept pristine is Darleen's art space. The carefully placed pots of supplies and art items are out of place against the disheveled look of the rest of the room. Bernie closes the door.

Darleen soon returns, and Bernie is upset to find that Darleen drove home completely intoxicated. Darleen only lingers for a few moments before a friend, Charlie Zah, comes to pick her up. Bernie's mother is upset at how angry Darleen always is, and urges Bernie to help her.

Bernie spends the rest of the day doing research on the pots that have been appraised so low. She is starting to wonder if the pots are possibly fake and the appraisal could have been correct, as everything her research shows indicates they should be very rare and thus very valuable. Bernie is interrupted by a call from Largo, telling her that she can come back into work in four days. He also adds that they've finally tracked down Leonard, and that Chee is going to speak with him.

Chapter 18 - Chee gets in touch with Mrs. Benally again. She says she knows where Leonard is, but she wants her son and her car to be released. Chee agrees to let them go free the next day since they finished searching the car and can't legally hold Jackson longer than that without formally charging him. The hospital calls Chee and informs him that Leaphorn's condition has worsened and he's caught pneumonia. Chee and Bernie rush out and in the evening Chee performs a healing song for Leaphorn.

Leaphorn is awake enough to draw them a picture of what looks like mountain peaks and a valley. He indicates that this is a clue to who shot him. Bernie and Chee stay the night at the hospital. In the morning, Chee wakes up and finds Louisa there. She explains she still travels under her married name since that's what's on her identification. That's why the FBI couldn't find her. She says that she was having trouble dealing with what happened, so she blew her conference off to come back to see Leaphorn. She tells Chee she'll talk to the FBI and whoever else to clear herself as a suspect.

Chee heads back to the AIRC to get a picture of some of the items in the museum, since Bernie had told him earlier in the day that her mother would love to see them. The building isn't open yet, but Chee sees Dr. Davis's car in the parking lot and one of the doors is open. Chee goes to investigate and the chapter ends with Dr. Davis closing the door behind Chee, pointing a gun at him.



Chapter 19 - Chee identifies himself, and Dr. Davis lowers her gun. She says she comes here early to work, which means having to turn off the security system, so she likes to be prepared. Chee is clearly on guard and starts to question her. She explains how she used to be friends with Ellie, but their friendship ended when Ellie got into a fight with her husband, Randall. Chee remembers Randall, he had kidnapped Ellie years ago, and Leaphorn had been the one to save her. In the process, he killed Randall. Chee tells Dr. Davis that they believe Ellie is dead, killed in the Chaco ruins.

Dr. Davis says she thinks it's a suicide. She explains how Ellie would take real items whenever she was doing appraisals. She didn't like the idea of them being taken from the Native American people and stored in some museum outside of their lands. She would go to the Chaco ruins and use the clay there to make exact replicas. She did this with the newest AIRC shipment, and Dr. Davis believes Leaphorn found out so Ellie shot him, then killed herself out of guilt.

Chee doesn't buy it and keeps her talking. He asks about storage containers he knows Ellie has, and Dr. Davis seems surprised. She tricks him into going deeper into the museum, then shoots him with a Taser. Chee realizes as he goes down that he just gave Dr. Davis the exact information she needed.

Back at the hospital, Bernie, who has fallen asleep in Leaphorn's room, wakes up and talks to Louisa. Louisa shares with her that she had really been at a specialist hospital to be treated for an autoimmune disease. Her fight with Leaphorn had been about that, since he was upset she didn't tell him sooner. She confesses that she loves him and just wants to be with him until he gets better. Since Leaphorn's first wife had died from a chronic illness, Louisa hadn't wanted to worry Leaphorn. She says that is the reason for the secrecy.

Bernie goes for a run and gets a call from Cordova who wants to know Chee's whereabouts. They also looked into Dr. Davis and found out that she had an ex-fiancé that was shot several years ago by Leaphorn after the ex-fiancé kidnapped Ellie. They believe that to be the work of Dr. Davis, too. Bernie tries to get in touch with Chee, but she's unable to reach him. She thinks that he is already on his way to meet Cordova back in town.

Analysis

Chapter 17 - Bernie spends more time with her family, demonstrating the theme of Family and the importance of making time for them in one's life. She continues to have trouble with Darleen, something that upsets not only Bernie, but also her mother. Her mother understands that Darleen is having a difficult time. Bernie tells her mother that she's going to try and do more to help Darleen to deal with the anger that she is feeling. From an appraisal of Darleen's room it is evident that Darleen values her artwork and perhaps sees it as a way to free herself from various stresses, and represents the freedom that she craves.



Bernie continues to investigate the pots, getting closer and closer to discovering the truth. At this point readers know that the pots have something to do with Leaphorn's shooting, since so many of the other leads have fizzled out and gone nowhere.

Chapter 18 - Chee and Bernie rush off to see Leaphorn, once again demonstrating the theme of Family, even though Leaphorn is not a true blood relative. The stakes are raised even higher given his critical condition, but by the end of the book Leaphorn has managed to survive. Leaphorn is coherent enough to try and draw Bernie and Chee a clue to the investigation. They believe it is a mountain ridge of some kind, but they later realize that it was supposed to be a letter. This once again briefly touches upon the theme of Appearances Can Be Deceiving. The theme of Culture and Tradition is touched upon as Chee performs a healing song for Leaphorn. It is suggested that remembering and honoring traditions of the past are important.

Additionally, the theme of Bending the Rules is demonstrated as Chee performs the ritual, which is against hospital policies. Because the request was for Leaphorn, the administrators look the other way. The theme is also shown in the way that Chee performs the ritual. His version greatly differs from the traditional one because they are trying to meet as many hospital regulations as possible. Things finally come together at the end of the chapter when Dr. Davis appears behind Chee, pointing her gun at him.

Chapter 19 - Dr. Davis tries to pass herself off as being innocent. She slips up when she starts to talk about the relationship that she used to have with Ellie. Chee is able to put together the fact that she's trying to find the evidence that Ellie left behind in her storage bins. He unfortunately doesn't realize that he's the one who provides Dr. Davis with the location of Ellie's bins. Everything with Dr. Davis in this chapter demonstrates the theme of Deceptive Appearances, since she has been deceiving the majority of the characters and continues to try and do so with Chee. At the end of the chapter, Chee is taken hostage, which raises the stakes even higher once Bernie confronts her.

Bernie gets a chance to finally find out the truth about Louisa. Louisa was being vague about the conference because she was actually at the hospital being treated for a rare autoimmune disease. She returns to visit Leaphorn because she wants to be there for him. It becomes clear that the two are very close and had danced around beginning a relationship with one another.

Discussion Question 1

How is the theme of Culture and Tradition explored in Chapter 18?

Discussion Question 2

Why might Darleen value her artwork above anything else that she does?



Discussion Question 3

What decision does Bernie make about her sister?

Vocabulary

gait, premonition, mesmerized, solace, sanctum, opulent, influential, conical, estuary, muzzle, adhering, maudlin



Chapters 20-22

Summary

Chapter 20 - Bernie checks her phone and sees that Chee had sent her pictures from the museum hours before. She goes there looking for him. She spots his car and has the security guards let her in. She finds Chee's phone and traces of his blood in Dr. Davis's office. Bernie alerts the police and goes looking for Chee, deciding to check Ellie's storage unit. She finds Chee, who is tied up, and Dr. Davis. Davis manages to shoot Bernie with the Taser. As Bernie is incapacitated, Davis explains that she's going to take all of the original ceramics that Ellie stole, and destroy any evidence that could be used to link Ellie to her. She says everyone will believe that Ellie killed Leaphorn. Then, she killed herself out of guilt. No one would suspect her as the killer at all.

Davis ties Bernie up next to Chee, then rigs the entire storage unit to explode. Bernie manages to get free and attempts to turn off the timer that Dr. Davis set for the demolitions.

Chapter 21 - Bernie manages to turn off the timer. The manager of the storage unit eventually arrives with the police and lets the two of them go. Bernie and Chee update the police and the FBI on what happened, telling them to go after Dr. Davis. They return to the hospital where Leaphorn is still in critical condition. They sit with him and he wakes up long enough to draw a heart, indicating his love for Bernie and Chee. They get a call from Cordova shortly after, telling them that they have arrested Dr. Davis.

Analysis

Chapter 20 - Bernie is able to piece together that Chee was at the AIRC. She searches the building and discovers that Chee was taken. Bernie pieces together that Chee must be at the storage unit. Dr. Davis explains that she wants to get away with all of the original artifacts that Ellie stole. She's going to destroy all of the evidence, along with Chee and Bernie. She leaves the two of them to die in the explosion, but Bernie is able to escape her bonds enough to get to the detonator and turn it off, ultimately saving both herself and Chee.

Chapter 21 - The bond among Chee, Bernie, and Leaphorn is emphasized one last time, as are the themes of Love and Family. Leaphorn draws a heart, indicating the strong feelings that he has for Chee and Bernie, as well as his appreciation for all of the hard work that they did solving the case. Things are wrapped up with Dr. Davis when Cordova tells them that Davis was caught before she was able to escape with the artifacts.



Discussion Question 1

How is Davis implicated in Ellie's death as well as Leaphorn's shooting?

Discussion Question 2

Why was Ellie keeping the real artifacts hidden and making fakes to sell to the collectors?

Discussion Question 3

What statement is the author making about culture and tradition as they pertain to ancient artwork?

Vocabulary

monologue, galvanized, cacophony, pristine, abhorrent, infantilized



Characters

Bernie Manuelito

Bernie is one of the main characters of the book. Bernie works as a police officer with the Navajo Police Department. She's shown to be a very skilled detective, often putting together the evidence before any of the other characters. Bernie is also very good when it comes to interviewing possible suspects. She always knows the right things to say, and she seems to come up with the right questions to ask.

Bernie is very close to her family, and she constantly takes time out of her day to go and visit them. She's very protective of her mother, and she wants her sister to start doing something with her life because she recognizes the potential that she has. These feelings are extended to the Navajo people, and Bernie is very proud of her heritage.

Bernie is wracked with guilt at the beginning of the book because she blames herself for what happened to Leaphorn. She spends the majority of the book dealing with this guilt, but eventually comes to accept the fact that she did everything she possibly could for Leaphorn.

Jim Chee

Jim Chee is married to Bernie and acts as the second protagonist in the book. Like Bernie, Chee is a very dedicated detective, although he's not quite as shrewd as Bernie. Chee cares greatly about his wife, and he's the one to point out that they need to take more time together because he feels like they're starting to drift apart because of the weight of the investigation.

Chee is initially very jealous of the relationship that Cordova has with Bernie. He lets his temper get the better of him and initially acts upset when he finds out that she's going to see him. Chee quickly gets over this and apologizes to Bernie for the way that he acted.

Like Bernie, Chee is very proud of his heritage, and he even performs a healing ritual for Leaphorn toward the end of the book.

Joe Leaphorn

Joe Leaphorn is the driving force of the book, but he's only present in a few chapters. He's shot in the very first chapter of the book, which puts him in the critical care unit at the hospital. Joe is shown to be one of the best and most respected detectives to ever serve with the Navajo police. He was a great mentor to both Chee and Bernie. He has familial feelings toward the couple.



Joe is also shown to be involved with a woman named Louisa. Their relationship is shown to be one of mutual friendship that has the potential to be more. Joe's first wife died of a chronic illness. Louisa had hoped to spare Joe worry when she was diagnosed with a potentially chronic illness.

Louisa

Louisa is another character who appears very briefly, but she is mentioned quite a bit. She lives with Leaphorn, and it is implied that they are very close to one another. Louisa suffers from a rare autoimmune disease, which is why she is missing for the majority of the book. She returns near the end because she wants to be with Leaphorn just in case he isn't able to recover from his injuries.

Jerry Cordova

Cordova is one of the FBI agents who is assigned to work with the Navajo police department. He's very charismatic and comes off as flirty whenever he's around Bernie. When he's around Chee, he makes it clear that he's in a relationship, suggesting that he's just being playful and not actually serious in the way that he talks to Bernie. Cordova is a good judge of character and always seems to be aware of the skills of everyone around him.

Captain Largo

Largo is the boss of Chee and Bernie. He's shown to be a very skilled leader in that he recognizes that Bernie is going to get involved in the case, anyway. He tries to protect her so she won't get into trouble or legally jeopardize the case with her actions.

Mrs. Benally

Mrs. Benally is an eccentric old lady who tries to aid Chee in the investigation. Her car was used in the murder, so she and her son, Jackson, are the initial suspects. She's determined to prove that Jackson had nothing to do with the case. She wants to help in solving the case to remove any suspicion from her son.

Jackson Benally

Jackson is Mrs. Benally's son. He's shown to be very intelligent and makes good grades at school. He spends some of his time working at the Double X Ranch. It is during that time that Dr. Davis gets the opportunity to make a copy of his keys.



Bernie's Mother

Bernie's mother is never referred to by name, only by her title of Mama. She's an older woman who has trouble getting around because of her arthritis. She loves both of her daughters and often tries to share her wisdom with them. It is she who coins the term "Spider Woman's Daughter" when describing Bernie.

Darleen

Darleen is Bernie's younger sister. Darleen spends most of the book dealing with her drinking problem. She feels like she has nothing to look forward to in life, and she's frustrated by the fact that she has to spend so much time taking care of their mother. Despite that, she is shown to care about her family.

Dr. Collingsworth

Dr. Collingsworth works at the AIRC. He comes off as very arrogant and impatient when Bernie first meets him. Despite that, he does seem very passionate about his job and the objects in the museum.

Ellie Friedman

Ellie works as an appraiser. When she was younger, she was abused. Eventually, she was kidnapped by Dr. Davis's husband, Randall. She was rescued by Leaphorn. She's very passionate about her Native American heritage, so much so that she takes artifacts that are intended for the museum. She makes replicas so she can return the artifacts to what she believes are their rightful homes. She's killed by Dr. Davis.

Dr. Maxie Davis

Dr. Davis is the main antagonist of the book. Her husband, Randall, was killed by Leaphorn years ago, which is part of why she wants to see him dead. She worked with Ellie to falsify Native American artifacts. She arranges for Leaphorn's and Ellie's deaths to keep from being caught. Her plans are foiled by Chee and Bernie.



Symbols and Symbolism

New Computer

When Chee and Bernie are investigating Leaphorn's house, they notice that he has an ancient computer. They decide that they are going to get him a new one when he gets out of the hospital. This represents the hope and optimism that they have for Leaphorn's recovery.

Wedding Picture

Leaphorn has few possessions in his office. One of the only pictures that he has is of Chee and Bernie on their wedding day. This represents the closeness that Leaphorn has for both of them.

“Spider Woman's daughter”

Bernie's mother refers to her as Spider Woman's daughter because Bernie has the ability to see the threads of all the cases. This is her way of praising Bernie's abilities as a detective, as well as showing her pride.

Running

Bernie starts to run again very early on in the book. This represents the guilt that she has, since she keeps saying that if she had been faster and in better shape she might have been able to stop the shooter.

Police Uniform (Bernie's)

When Bernie is going to visit Leaphorn in the hospital, she decides to wear her police uniform, even though she's outside of her jurisdiction and technically on forced leave by Largo. This is her way of paying respect to Leaphorn's years of service with the Navajo police.

Hospitals

Bernie is uncomfortable whenever she goes to the hospital. To Bernie, hospitals represent mortality. When she first goes, she talks about how it makes her think about everything that her mother is going through. Bernie would never set foot in one under normal circumstances.



The Real Pottery

Ellie keeps all of the actual Native American artifacts because it is her belief that they belong to the Native American people. They are a symbol of her pride for her heritage . She wants to steal them away because she's afraid that the White Man is destroying her culture.

Darleen's Art

Darleen's room is trashed, except for her table where she keeps her art. Darleen cares a lot about her art because it represents hope. Her art is also a symbol of the freedom she craves.

Urn with Randall's ashes

Dr. Davis keeps the urn containing Randall's ashes in her office. She cares a great deal for Randall and harbors ill will toward both Ellie and Leaphorn for the role they played in his death. Holding onto the ashes is her way of expressing her feelings for Randall, as well as believing that he was innocent.

Leaphorn Award of Valor

The Leaphorn Award of Valor is given to Bernie at the end of the book. It acknowledges all of the hard work that she has done during the investigation. The award is also a sign of respect for Leaphorn, honoring all of the hard work that he's contributed to the Navajo Police Department.



Settings

Navajo Inn

The Navajo Inn is where the beginning of the book takes place. Largo and several other police officers gather here every week for breakfast along with Joe Leaphorn. This is also where Leaphorn is shot at the end of the first chapter.

Window Rock

Window Rock is the town located in the Navajo Nation where the majority of Chee and Bernie's investigation takes place.

Leaphorn's/Louisa's House

When they begin the investigation, both Bernie and Chee investigate Leaphorn's home, trying to find any possible evidence while also looking for Louise.

Navajo Police Station

Chee spends a good deal of time working at the Navajo Police Station. It's here that he interrogates Jackson. Bernie also spends a little bit of time here at the start of the book when Largo tells her that she can't be assigned to the case.

Bashas

Bashas is the shopping center where the police find the car that was used in Leaphorn's shooting. It's also where Chee meets Mrs. Benally for the first time.

Mother's House

Bernie visits her mother several times during the course of the book. Each time she's unhappy with the state of the house because she discovers that Darleen hasn't been doing a good job taking care of their mother. She also studies Navajo pottery when she's at the house, which helps her with the investigation.

Bernie's/Chee's House

Bernie and Chee only spend a little time at the house, mostly using it as a place for them to go over the evidence they've gathered and a place to rest.



Chaco Ruins

The Chaco ruins are a famous location where many Navajo pots and other ceramic pieces are found. Chee and Bernie spend the evening there and discover that a confrontation took place between a pair of hikers. Bernie and Chee eventually learn that Ellie and Davis were there and that Ellie was murdered.

Double X Ranch

The Double X Ranch is where Jackson works. Bernie goes there when she's investigating the case. She learns more about Ellie from a former lover of hers, Slim Jacob.

Storage Unit

The storage unit is where Ellie keeps all of the evidence and the artifacts that she and Dr. Davis have stolen. Dr. Davis tries to destroy it at the end of the book, leaving Chee and Bernie in the unit when she tries to blow it up.



Themes and Motifs

Guilt

The theme of Guilt is displayed as early as the first chapter of the book, and it is established more over time. Bernie immediately blames herself after Leaphorn is shot. She's convinced that if she had been faster she would have been able to reach the shooter before they were able to fire off a shot, thus saving Leaphorn. Of course, this is not the case. Bernie had acted as quickly as she could, even treating Leaphorn before the paramedics officially arrived.

Despite that, Bernie continues to blame herself for everything that happened with Leaphorn. When Largo takes her off the case, she believes that it's as punishment for her failure. Bernie beats herself up so much that she takes up running again, trying to force her body to get into better shape to make up for what she perceives to be a failure.

Bernie also shows how dangerous guilt can be with her family members. She blames herself for all of the anger that Darleen is experiencing. While she recognizes that Darleen is also partially responsible, she still unfairly shoulders a lot of the responsibility. Darleen says Bernie is hard to get in touch with, but that's because Bernie is busy with her job as a police officer, especially now that she's actively investigating the shooting of her mentor and friend. Despite that, Bernie still reaches out to her family and checks up on them, invalidating many of Darleen's claims.

The guilt gets in the way of the case and makes it harder to focus on the investigation. In turn, this lowers Bernie's self esteem. Eventually, through Chee's words and being able to solve the case, Bernie is able to get over her guilt

Breaking/Bending the Rules

This theme of Breaking/Bending the Rules is shown very early on through the way that Largo treats Leaphorn's investigation. Initially, Largo must take Bernie off of the case. Bernie believes it's because she's being punished for letting Leaphorn get shot, but the truth is Largo has to give her time off because of the fact that she witnessed a shooting. He tries to make it clear that he's just following procedure, but Bernie has a hard time believing him.

The author seems to be making the point that breaking the rules isn't always a bad thing when a greater good may come from it. Though Hillerman isn't expressly telling the reader to go out and break the law, there is definitely the suggestion that following the rules blindly and without thought to morality and ethics can often stand in the way of learning the truth.



Largo is well aware that Bernie is going to want to work on the case anyway. He advises her that she should keep it on the low down, not wanting any legal trouble to crop up because of her involvement. Largo makes a point of assigning her husband, Chee, onto the case. Largo hints that this was a deliberate choice precisely because he knows that Chee would share information with Bernie, and in turn Bernie would share her insight with him. It is the two of them working together that makes it possible to solve the case, even though officially Bernie isn't supposed to have any hand in it.

Largo shows a similar mindset with his relationship with Leaphorn. Leaphorn is still invited to the police gathering because he's a respected officer despite being retired. He's still allowed to offer his insight on cases, something that many officers rely on to solve their cases, including Chee. Largo is bending the rules by inviting Leaphorn, but he knows it's for the betterment of the Navajo community since his expertise helps keep them safe. Later, even the hospital bends the rules to allow Chee to perform a healing ritual for Leaphorn.

Appreciating Life

The theme of Appreciating Life is demonstrated throughout some of the later parts of the book after the investigation is underway. It's first hinted at earlier on with Leaphorn. Despite everyone claiming to be close with and having great respect for Leaphorn, few people know anything about his personal life. After he's shot, nobody knows how to get in contact with his family members. When they investigate his home, they find that even as a retired cop, he was still busy pursuing cases. Despite that, it's revealed much later on that even with all of his work, Leaphorn still took some time to get closer to Louisa, and the two had nearly established a relationship with one another.

It is ironic that in the middle of a murder investigation (which is what it becomes when they find Ellie), the protagonists are taught an important lesson about living and appreciating it. When Chee and Bernie begin to appreciate each other and those in their lives, they realize that life is short and spending it in worthwhile pursuits is important.

The theme is more prominently shown through Bernie and Chee. By the middle of the book, Bernie and Chee have become swept up in the investigation. They barely have time for one another, and in those few instances where they are together, they're usually discussing the case. Chee even points out how stressed they've both become, and he takes the time to take an impromptu trip to the Chaco ruins so he and Bernie can just be together as husband and wife instead of letting the case consume their lives.

The theme is touched upon with Darleen as well. Darleen claims she is miserable because she has to spend so much time taking care of their mother and never gets to do anything for herself. Darleen has let his frustration bottle up inside of her, so when she does finally snap it all comes out at once. Bernie tries to help Darleen, creating a schedule that allows Darleen to take some time just for herself without Darleen feeling like she has to completely abandon the family.



Family

This theme of Family is first demonstrated by Bernie's mother toward the end of the book. She's referring to Bernie's relationship with Darleen. Bernie feels frustrated because she thinks that Darleen isn't doing enough for the family. Darleen has the exact same feelings towards Bernie, feeling like Bernie is trying to control everything that she does. The truth of the matter is that they both need to work together.

Bernie needs to be aware of Darleen's needs. At the same time, Darleen needs to recognize that her mother needs her help and Bernie is only able to offer so much assistance. Both of them need to share the responsibility and not just try and pass it all off on one person.

While that's the first time the theme is formally introduced, it's shown much earlier in the book. Chee and Bernie are constantly demonstrating the theme. Even though each one handles the investigation alone, they still find time to come together and share the information that they've learned. If Chee had tried to tackle the case alone, he would have been killed by Dr. Davis when she took him hostage at the AIRC. Similarly, Bernie would have never been able to solve the case if it weren't for Chee's help, since he was the one that provided her with the reports that led her into investigating the insurance claims.

The theme is shown through Leaphorn's relationship with the rest of the police department as well. Many of the officers look up to Leaphorn because he was always there to help them with the cases. Leaphorn never outright took over the cases though. He'd always wait for the officers to come to him with the information that they had gathered, and then he'd help them piece it together. He made sure that they were still doing the work themselves and learning from the experience so they would become better officers themselves.

Appearances Can Be Deceiving

Since Spider Woman's Daughter is a mystery novel, the theme of Appearances Can Be Deceiving is explored throughout the course of the book. The first time that the theme prominently comes up is with Jackson Benally and his friend, Leonard. Jackson and Leonard are immediately made to look suspicious because the police are unable to find them at college, where they're supposed to be. Jackson had used the car and then left it at the marketplace, making it look like he was trying to run.

When Jackson is found, he's extremely vague about what had happened. He is hiding something about Leonard. While it appears they're both guilty, the truth is that Jackson is doing very well in college and just trying to earn extra money to pay for his books. Leonard has no affiliation with Leaphorn. He's trying to work at a rodeo, with Jackson acting as his manager.



As with Jackson, Louisa is immediately made to look suspicious. The FBI is unable to find her, and it's apparent that she's lying about the conference she attended. She was also arguing with Leaphorn before he was shot. This makes it seem like she could have been the shooter. After making up a story about a business trip, she immediately fled. The truth is Louisa is in love with Leaphorn and would never hurt him. They fought because she had hidden that she had an autoimmune disease because she didn't want him to feel like she was going down the same path as his wife when she got sick and passed away from cancer.

The theme of Appearances Can Be Deceiving is also displayed with Dr. Davis and Ellie. Their entire plan hinges around passing off fake Native American artifacts as authentic. This is the reason that Dr. Davis had to shoot Leaphorn, since he was figuring out not everything was what it seemed with the newest set of pottery that was being brought to the AIRC.

Culture and Tradition

The theme of Culture and Tradition runs throughout the novel as it is set in the Southwest and involves the Navajo people and the Navajo Nation. The entire conflict of the book, in fact, happens because Ellie Friedman has determined that the artwork and history of her people shouldn't be available to be sold to the highest bidder. She believes that it needs to stay with the people of the Navajo Nation.

Bernie's interaction with her family also reemphasizes this theme as she shares with Big Man that her mother always calls her the Spider Woman's daughter. This is a direct reference to a Native American tale about a very wise woman who supplied answers and weapons to two heroes in the story. Bernie's mother uses it as a metaphor for her daughter, who is able to string together all of the information that she receives and is able to see the bigger picture.

Leaphorn's illness and his request for Chee to perform the healing ritual underscore the theme of Culture and Tradition. Throughout the novel, the author focuses on the plight of Native Americans trying to survive economically. This is true in the case of Jackson, who resorts to doing several jobs in order to make money to go to school. There is the reference to a Native American boy going to jail and using that time to straighten himself out. Then, there is the reference to Darleen's alcoholism, something that is an ongoing issue for the Native American community.

Styles

Point of View

Spider Woman's Daughter is told from the third person, omniscient view. The story primarily follows the thoughts of one of the two main characters, Bernie and Chee. Though most of the chapters focus primarily on Bernie's part of the investigation, from time to time Chee's actions are explored. A couple of the chapters are split between Bernie's and Chee's efforts in the investigation. This form of narration allows both of the characters to express their thoughts to the reader and share their different insights into the investigation.

Language and Meaning

Because the book is set in the Navajo region, many Navajo phrases are used, and their beliefs frequently mentioned. For example, the Navajo prefer to refer to one another by their titles and positions to one another instead of their names. That's why Bernie's mother is never referred to by name. Bernie usually calls Darleen by her title, Sister. Most people refer to Leaphorn as the one who was shot instead of by his name. All of these beliefs and phrases are always very clearly explained to the reader. The common phrases are repeatedly defined, so readers don't have to worry about going back to find out what something means.

Structure

As previously mentioned, most of the chapters follow Bernie's part of the investigation. Many of the chapters are told in a straightforward fashion; but, prior to a change from the perspective of one character to another, it will end on a cliffhanger. Many chapters also end like this, such as when Bernie sees Chee get a phone call and has a sudden nervous look or Bernie is surprised at something she read in a report. Sometimes after these cliffhangers, the book will jump to the viewpoint of what the other character was doing. The section will then jump back to the other character and either continue right where the last section left off, or there might be a small jump in time, with the character summarizing what they did. This is usually done to cover up uninteresting travel when characters are moving back and forth during the investigation.

Quotes

The person extended an arm toward the lieutenant. Bernie saw a gun. Heard the unmistakable crack of the shot. Saw Leaphorn stagger back, falling against his pickup. Crumple to the asphalt.”

-- Narrator (chapter 1)

Importance: The shooting of Leaphorn is what sets off the main plot of the book. Bernie witnessing it also makes her feel guilty for not doing more, which haunts her throughout the rest of the book.

I heard Lieutenant Leaphorn could look at evidence and read it to discover stuff no one else saw” he said. “I heard he could make a few phone calls to his contacts and shake things up. That he could take an investigation that had been stalled and move it forward.”

-- Chee (chapter 1)

Importance: This quote establishes the respect and admiration that the police department has for Leaphorn, as well as Chee. It helps to explain why they are all so invested in solving his shooting.

Her upbringing conditioned her to avoid negative thoughts, even as questions. Her Navajo name was Laughing Girl, but she didn’t feel like laughing now. She noticed the start of a headache. She thought of how the Holy People advised the Dine not to focus on conflict or sorrow. But evil surrounded her, too, some days as much as beauty.

-- Bernie (chapter 2)

Importance: This gives the readers an insight into the way that Bernie sees the world and also touches upon some of the Navajo beliefs which are mentioned several times throughout the rest of the book.

Largo pressed his hands together, looked grim. “The way I see it, this is the most important case we’ve ever handled. You’re not being involved is routine procedure. Routine. It’s not personal. It’s not punishment. It’s the way we do things. I am not saying this again. Clear?”

-- Largo (chapter 3)

Importance: Bernie not being allowed to work the case is something that adds to her guilt. Largo stressing the importance of the case also goes to show just how much Leaphorn was valued by the other officers, not just Chee and Bernie.

Whoever did it must have been the Spider Woman’s daughter,” Bernie said. “Who? I never heard Grandma talk about that one,” Bigman said. Bernie said, “She’s the one my mother always joked about when she had to redo a section of a rug. Mama told me she helps with life’s unexpected complications, untangling messy situations.”

-- Bernie/Bigman (chapter 4)



Importance: This quote is where the title of the book comes from, with Bernie being the Spider Woman's Daughter who is able to untangle all of the clues and piece together what happened with Leaphorn's shooting.

Bernie climbed out of the car with that tight feeling in her belly she noticed more and more now when she talked to Darleen."

-- Bernie (chapter 4)

Importance: This section foreshadows the trouble that Bernie has with her sister, which is a reoccurring plot throughout the course of the book.

Go ahead," Chee said. "Why don't you just take charge? I'll keep looking through files, tracking down dead ends, spinning my wheels. Your new pal at the FBI would rather work with you anyway.

-- Chee (chapter 14)

Importance: This highlights the growing tension between Chee and Bernie, as well as Chee's jealousy toward Cordova.

Then there's you," she said. "There's us. Not enough time for that, either. If we didn't work together, we'd hardly see each other."

-- Bernie (chapter 14)

Importance: This passage highlights one of the themes of the book, Appreciating Life. Bernie and Chee realize they need to slow down and find some time to spend together as husband and wife.

Slim said, "That's what I thought, too. But when Maxie was out just lately to work on her dig, she started askin' me questions about Ellie's records. Did I know where she kept 'em, things like that."

-- Slim (chapter 15)

Importance: This is one of the final clues that Bernie needs to piece together what happened and why Dr. Davis committed the crime in the first place. It also allows her to track her down at the end of the book since she knows Dr. Davis has to destroy the evidence that Ellie had collected.

He walked to where the victim's cheeks, eyes, lips, and nose would have been. Predators love soft tissue. He noticed brown hair with grey at the temples. A glint of light caught his eye, something on the wrist reflecting the sun. He pushed the shirtsleeve away with the toe of his boot. Beneath it, a wide silver bracelet. Sand-cast with a heart design."

-- Chee (chapter 16)

Importance: Chee has just discovered the body of Ellie, who had been missing for



several days. He later discovers that Dr. Davis had Ellie killed, hoping to frame Ellie for Leaphorn's shooting and then taking her own life out of guilt.

You shouldn't drive when you've been drinking. You could die. Die or kill somebody."
Darleen laughed. "I'm gonna die anyway. Whatsa difference? You're a cop. Arrest me."
-- Darleen (chapter 17)

Importance: This passage highlights the growing tension between Bernie and her sister Darleen. It shows just how low Darleen has fallen and how angry she's become.

You are her big sister," Mama said. "You have to take care of her. That is why we have families, relatives. We have to take care of each other."
-- Mama (chapter 17)

Importance: This highlights one of the major themes of the book, that of Family.