

Lame Deer
Ch. 3
“The Green Frog Skin”

A Sequence for Learning

Informal Writing

Reader Response/ Journals: In journal, record responses to the following questions, as preparation for class discussion, and as part of the information-gathering phase for the formal writing assignments (mini paper and paper).

Questions for Analysis:

1. What is the meaning of the chapter’s title? Why do you suppose Lame Deer chose it? What does it reveal about Lame Deer’s narrative style? His view of the world?
2. How does Lame Deer make effective use of a “definitional” beginning?
3. In one sentence, summarize the *focus* of Lame Deer’s critique in “The Green Frog Skin.” What is his “thesis”?
4. If Lame Deer’s argument is based on a *comparative analysis*, what is he comparing?
5. Find and record several examples of the *practices* associated with Euro-American attitudes toward the environment that Lame Deer cites to support his thesis, to develop his comparison. What specific practices does he critique to concretely develop his comparative analysis?
6. Find and record several examples of the *impacts* associated with these practices that he cites to develop his thesis?
7. Find and record several examples of the underlying *attitudes* toward the environment, reflected by the practices of the two cultures.
8. Assess the strengths/weaknesses, the quantity/quality of the evidence he presents? Is it convincing?
9. Find and record examples of Lame Deer’s appeals logos, ethos, pathos (logic, ethics, emotions).

10. In his comparative analysis of Euro-American and Native American attitudes toward the environment, what does Lame Deer cite as the biggest difference?
11. What historical example does he use to dramatize this fundamental difference? Which of Aristotle's appeals is evidenced here, in your opinion.
12. What historical evidence does Lame Deer present to show that the fight over the environment has historically involved conflicting attitudes toward money?
13. What contemporary evidence does he present to develop his thesis that the fight over the environment is rooted in conflicting attitudes toward money?
14. Regarding the "prairie dog" evidence, which of Aristotle's three appeals is relevant here?
15. Can you find a quote from Lame Deer to support your own words?
16. What impacts does Lame Deer cite to document the harmful effects of Euro-American cattle-ranching practices? Which of Aristotle's three appeals is relevant here?
17. How does Lame Deer justify his Granpa's attitude toward money in the anecdote about the "buttons"?
18. How does Lame Deer, "a real Sioux, an ikce wicasa, a common, wild, natural human being . . . survive in frog-skin land?"
19. How, according to Lame Deer, has the rodeo circuit become "a green frog-skin business"?
20. What other "careers" does he experience, as part of his "find out?"
21. What aspects of Euro-American culture does he embrace?
22. How has the "Green Frog Skin World" invaded the most sacred ancient rituals of the Sioux?
23. What is his motivation for becoming a "tribal policeman"?
24. What does Lame Deer find problematic about his war experience?
25. What was significant about his release from the Army at 39?

Critical Reflection:

1. Is Lame Deer's use of historical evidence in general and of a dramatic historical anecdote in particular an effective means of introducing and developing his thesis? Is his use of a dramatic event an effective attention-getter?
2. After reading this passage, can you succinctly summarize the respective attitudes toward money and the environment held by Euro American and Native American cultures?
3. If you were to construct a counter argument to Lame Deer's position, a defense of ranching practices, what might be its major "talking points?"
4. Is his reference to the bald eagle an effective one? Which of the three appeals might be relevant here?
5. How do Native American beliefs about "relatives" differ from Euro-American beliefs? What might be the implications of this different value system for concepts like "private property," "personal wealth," "the acquisition of material wealth," "rugged individualism."
6. The cultural emphasis on spirituality, visions, & dreams has resulted in what negative stereotype of the Native American, according to Lame Deer?
7. Why, according to Lame Deer, do Indians make "lousy farmers"? How are cultural differences reflected in different attitudes toward the land?
8. How are Native American attitudes toward money reflected in their communal value system? What anecdotes from his personal experience does Lame Deer use? How does this differ from Euro-American values. Can you find a quote to support your answer?
9. In his odyssey through both cultures, what attitudinal adjustments does Lame Deer make to keep his sense of self in tact?
10. How does his attitude toward hunting reinforce the conflict between two cultures?
11. How does Lame Deer resolve the conflict between the impossibility of living like a "real Sioux" and his refusal to seek "a steady job in an office or factory"?
12. What do the various "careers" Lame Deer pursued reveal about him, about his nature? How do they reconcile the conflict between his need to survive and his refusal to surrender his status as a "real Sioux." How do these careers enable him to survive while retaining his identity as a Sioux?

13. What does he do periodically to reclaim or reinforce his Sioux heritage?
14. How is Lame Deer's desire to be a "Real Sioux" reflected in his final attitude about the peyote cult? How might this cult conflict with his notion of being a "real Sioux"?
15. What do you suppose Lame Deer gained from his years of cross-cultural experience, of "hopping back and forth across the boundary lines of the mind"?
16. Lame Deer makes effective use of his work experience to develop his cross-cultural analysis. How many careers in all does he describe, in developing this focus? Does this constitute a relevant and/or effective body of evidence, in your opinion?

Reflective Free-Writes: In your journal, free write responses to the following:

1. What is the fundamental lesson to be learned regarding the environment, and the efforts to eradicate a single "pest, such as the prairie dog?
2. What, if any, might be the solutions to this problem, and this conflict, between ranching and Native American attitudes toward the environment, between utility and preservation of the environment, between economic and ecological interests? Can you discover a common-ground in this debate? What are the implications for the reintroduction of wolves into American ranch-lands? Is there a solution to the profitability vs preservation debate?
3. "Americans are bred like stuffed geese—to be consumers, not human beings." Respond to this quote? Do you agree? If so, how is this true? Is consumerism the only legitimate role American citizens have left to play in American society? What might be the impacts, consequences of mass consumerism? What are the implications for the environment? For the individual? For the society? Can the culture survive without mass consumerism? In consuming products are we consuming ourselves to death? If capitalism is predicated on mass consumerism, is capitalism compatible with a sustainable environment—with our survival as a species? If not, is there an alternative—or solutions that reconcile the needs of consumer capitalism with a sustainable environment?
4. What stereotype of Artists and Native American does Lame Deer address? What is Lame Deer's response to these stereotypes?
5. Would you agree or disagree that the conflict between the two cultures stems from an emphasis on materiality vs spirituality? Develop your view in a journal entry.

6. Respond to the following quote: “That is the world from which I get my visions. I tell you, this is the real world, not The Green Frog-Skin World. That’s only a bad dream, a stream-lined, smog-filled nightmare.”
7. How might the conflict between Native Americans and American Pioneers be seen as a collision between opposite value systems?
8. How does the example of the man who received a workman’s compensation settlement for a lost leg underscore Native American attitudes toward money and status?
9. If status in Euro-American culture is determined by wealth, what is the determining factor in Native American culture, according to Lamé Deer?
10. “Indians chase the vision, white men chase the dollar.” Develop in a journal free-write.
11. Can you find a quote that resonates with environmentalist’s attitudes toward nature? How does the environmental movement reflect “this Indian point of view”?
12. American culture has been influenced by Native American from its founding to contemporary times. Respond in journal with examples.
13. “Trying always to remake people in one’s own image is a white man’s disease.” Respond. Agree/Disagree?
14. What negative stereotype does the custom of the “give away” reinforce? Why does Lamé Deer defend the custom of the “otuhan”?
15. Why does Lamé Deer have to be “two persons living in two different worlds”? What might be some of the effects of this? Is it possible to live in solidarity with two cultures? Is it necessary? What is gained, what is lost? Is there a way to reconcile two cultures in one life—to form an identity that is not divided between the two, but a synthesis of both? An amalgamation? Is the “melting pot” notion of cultural assimilation a reality or myth? Is estrangement from a native culture too high a price to pay for assimilation into a host culture? Are there ways to mitigate the adverse effects of assimilation—and if so, what might they be? Is it possible to remain Native and be American—is the hyphen in Native-American a link between two cultures or a barrier that keeps them apart?
16. “Dreams are dangerous to the frog-skin world.” Respond in journal. Why? How?

Rhetorical Analysis:

1. Lame Deer makes effective use of metaphor. Find and record several examples.
2. In a comparative analysis, why might metaphor be an effective device.
3. Lame Deer makes effective use of irony, humor, and satire. Find and record several examples.
4. Lame Deer makes effective use of strong language, which gives his narrative an emphatic voice. Find and record several phrases that best exemplify his effective use of strong language. (Quote and cite, using MLA parenthetical page reference).
5. Lame Deer uses Native American terms, selectively and for effect, to develop his comparative analysis. Record several examples? Is this effective and if so, why?
6. How does Lame Deer use satire/humor to develop his attitude about contemporary food practices?
7. How does Lame Deer infuse humor into the account of his work experience, while still developing his focus of a cross-cultural analysis?
8. What metaphor does Lame Deer use to express his final attitude toward the peyote cult, in describing it?
9. How does Lame Deer's use his personal work experience to further develop his thesis/focus? How does his experience relate to his need for "finding out"?
10. How/ where does Lame Deer use his personal experience to develop his analysis of the different cultural attitudes toward money? Is this an effective means of developing a thesis?

Formal Writing Midterm Themes

Questions for Inquiry:

Textual Analysis/Assessment: Analyze and assess Lame Deer's critical comparative analysis of Euro-American and Native American Attitudes toward the environment. Agree or disagree with his thesis. Fully assess the various elements of his argument, drawing on your reader-response journal entries. Conclude by posing solutions to the conflicting cultural attitudes toward the environment, and its uses.

2. Rhetorical Analysis: analyze and assess the elements of Lame Deer's narrative style, drawing on your reader-response journal entries.

3. Position Paper: the economy vs the environment, ranching vs preservation. Which interests should take precedence? Using Lame Deer's text as your principal source, and drawing on your reader-response entries, take a position in this debate/conflict, and concretely develop it, offering an action plan to resolve it.