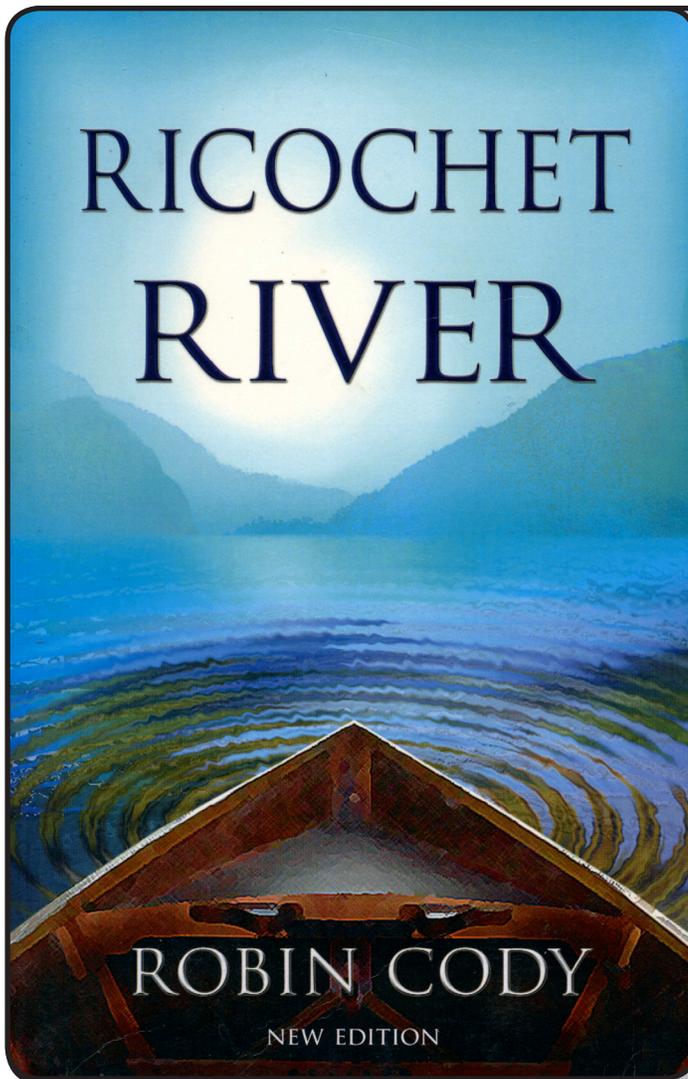


An Ooligan Teacher's Guide

Ricochet River by Robin Cody



Genres: Young Adult, Historical Fiction

Grade Level: 9th–12th

Topics:

- Coming of Age
- Friendship
- Native American Culture
- Pacific Northwest Fishing and Logging Industry
- Intergenerational/Intercultural/Interclass Relationships

Ricochet River

by Robin Cody

Book Description

Draw students into the diverse yet interconnected lives of three teenagers in the fictional small town of Calamus, Oregon. A recipient of the Oregon Book Award, *Ricochet River*, set in the 1960s, explores what it means to grow up—with Wade, the local sports hero; his friend, Jesse, a Native American with an innocent disregard for local convention; and Lorna, Wade's sweetheart, who longs to break free of her small town ties and set out into the world beyond.

A contemporary companion to J. D. Salinger's classic, *The Catcher in the Rye*, this novel encourages students to discover that the thoughts and dreams of fictional characters can closely resemble their own.

About the Author

Robin Cody is a freelance writer of both fiction and nonfiction. He is a winner of the Western Writers of America Silver Spur Award for short nonfiction. In 1995, he won the Oregon Book Award for *Voyage of a Summer Sun*, an account of his canoe trip from the headwaters of the Columbia to its mouth at the Pacific. In 2005, *Ricochet River* was selected as one of top one hundred literary works produced in Oregon in the last two hundred years. Mr. Cody lives in Portland, Oregon, with his wife Donna.

Introduction: Celilo Falls

Celilo Falls (or Wyam, meaning "echo of falling water") was once the sixth largest waterfall by volume in the world. Located east of the Cascade Mountains on the Columbia River (the waterway that separates Oregon and Washington), the falls were primarily used by Native Americans for salmon fishing. For 15,000 years, tribes such as the Yakama, Umatilla, Warm Springs, and Nez Perce congregated around the majestic falls to catch salmon from wooden platforms with dip nets and spears. Celilo was also a thriving trading post and attracted Native Americans from as far away as the Great Plains and Alaska. Some historians have even called Celilo the "Wall Street of the West."

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The arrival of settlers in the 1800s brought about great change. Since many of them lost their lives navigating up the Columbia River, the Army Corps of Engineering built a fourteen mile long portage around the falls in 1915. By 1940, with the arrival of many more settlers, civic leaders proposed a plan for a dam that would improve navigation, provide hydroelectric power to the area, accommodate farmland with irrigation systems, and prevent the flooding of cities downriver. It was an idea that satisfied many settlers, but it was devastating to the original inhabitants of the land.

With the proposed dam looming, tribes continued to catch salmon in Celilo under the 1855 Treaties that guaranteed their ancient right to fish the area. A 1947 government hearing, however, dictated that the dam was not in violation of tribal fishing rights, and building commenced. A monetary settlement of \$26.8 million was reached and was to be paid to the affected tribes for the loss of their fishing grounds. They never received the money. Today a small community of about one hundred people still resides in nearby Celilo Village. It is on a bluff that overlooks what was formerly the majestic waterfall. Although they still fish there, the rush of the falls remains a distant memory for the tribes that once called Celilo home.

Robin Cody's *Ricochet River* provides access to this piece of history, blended with the coming-of-age story of three youths affected by its outcome. As a general textual discussion strategy, this lesson guide is meant to engage students with the text and its themes, allowing them to pursue a connection within their own lives, whether in relation to characters from the book, or in discovering the origins of their own ancestors, as Jesse has done in *Ricochet River*. This guide is not meant to be comprehensive, and should be used to supplement classroom material already in place. Please feel free to adapt or alter this lesson to better meet the needs of each classroom.

Chapter-by-Chapter Summary and Analysis

Lesson Plan by: Katie Grone (Introduction and Chapters 1–5), Ian Ogden (Chapters 12–17),
Kayla Price (Chapters 6–11), Jesse Wray (Chapters 18–25)

Grade Level: 9th–12th

Estimated Time: Twelve class periods.

Materials Needed:

- One copy of *Ricochet River* for each student.
- Discussion sheets for each student to prepare a short chapter summary, write down quotes that they found important, answer prompted questions, and analyze important themes for the week's chapter assignments.

Background Knowledge Needed: Students will have performed a close reading of the novel, *Ricochet River*, as per each week's chapter assignments.

Purpose: To develop skills in critical thinking and literary analysis through class discussion, thesis writing, and a close reading of the text.

Procedure: Three class sessions per week will be allotted over the course of four weeks to meet and discuss the twenty-five chapters of *Ricochet River*.

Week one: Students will read and prepare discussion sheets for chapters one through five.

Week two: Students will read and prepare discussion sheets for chapters six through eleven.

Week three: Students will read and prepare discussion sheets for chapters twelve through seventeen.

Week four: Students will read and prepare discussion sheets for chapters eighteen through twenty-five.

Assessment: Weekly discussion sheets will be graded on a complete/incomplete scale. Students will also complete a five to six page thesis-style paper regarding the characters, the plot, thematic elements, or the setting of *Ricochet River*, to be due at the end of week five of this unit.

Oregon State Standards:

EL.08.RE.17 Identify and/or summarize sequence of events, main ideas, facts, supporting details, and opinions in informational and practical selections.

EL.08.RE.22 Determine the author's purpose and perspective and relate them to specific details in the text.

EL.08.LI.12 Analyze the importance of the setting (place, time, customs) to the mood, tone, and meaning of the text.

EL.08.WR.25 Write responses to the literature; demonstrate careful reading and insight into interpretations; support interpretations through references to the text, other works, other authors, or to personal knowledge; draw supported inferences about the effects of a literary work on its audience.

EL.08.WR.27 Write persuasive compositions; include a well-defined thesis that makes a clear and knowledgeable judgment or appeal; present detailed evidence, examples, and reasoning to support arguments, differentiating between facts and opinions.

Chapter One

Summary:

The novel opens with a conversation about *déjà vu* between Wade and Jesse as they are rowing down the river. Wade explains the meaning of *déjà vu*; Jesse explains its inverse, “*vouja de*.”

Wade begins his story by narrating his first encounter with Jesse at baseball practice. Arriving at the field, he sees Jesse, a Native American boy, on the pitching mound hurling strikes and wonders who he is. Coach Palermo, getting practice started, tells Jesse to “throw right,” meaning throw easier, because he is pitching too fast for batting practice. Jesse, who has been pitching left-handed until that point, misinterprets him, and impresses everyone by throwing right-handed with equal facility.

After practice, Wade, and a few teammates head to the barbershop and café where Lorna, Wade’s girlfriend, waits tables. They discuss their new teammate, Jesse. Wade is curious if an Indian would have a birth certificate. Jesse shows up, uninvited, and joins them. As they speak for the first time, Jesse tells them he is a Klamath Indian from Celilo. When Lorna takes their order, Jesse makes a joking remark about her attractiveness, and although he means no harm, Wade is infuriated. Getting up to fight, Wade throws a wild punch at Jesse who catches his fist, causing Wade to fall. The loggers at the shop mistakenly see this as an attack on Wade and kick Jesse out.

Important Quotations:

“Another thing about the Entering Calamus sign. There’s only one. The only Entering Calamus sign is where you come into town from Portland.” (13)

“Anyway, the topic in our booth, of course, was the Indian. We’d seen he could hit too, and he had that dark gift of speed... But more than that he had a way of carrying himself, or just being there—him and his eerie grin—as if he belonged.” (15)

“‘Peace,’ said Jesse. He stuck out his hand. ‘Peace,’ I said. I mean, what do you say? Like I should have doffed my cavalry hat, set my Winchester aside? I shook his hand, which was leathery and warm, with long fingers. There was this crooked grin about him, like now I should explain what we were doing here.” (16)

Discussion Questions:

1. The book opens with Wade and Jesse floating down the river on a boat, a scene in which some important information can be inferred about our two main characters. Based on this opening conversation, what can be inferred about Wade? About Jesse?
2. Discuss the social dynamic between Jesse and the townspeople in Calamus. Is he an “insider” or an “outsider”? What specific evidence supports your argument?
3. How do the loggers react to Wade’s attempt to punch Jesse in the barbershop? What does this suggest about the townspeople?

Themes/Analysis:

The opening chapter of the novel reveals Wade’s first impressions of Jesse, someone who is ironically seen as an “outsider,” now living in the area his ancestors were forced away from. Jesse tries to overcome Native American stereotypes by playing into them, making jokes about himself and his heritage in an effort to fit in with the boys his age. It is clear that in Calamus, things are done by unspoken rules and tradition, which will be an obstacle for Jesse.

Chapter Two

Summary:

Wade recounts Jesse's story of Coyote, a Klamath Indian trickster figure who is always goofing up and making mistakes. In the story, Coyote mistakes cattails swaying in the wind at night for dancers and joins them, thinking they would be happy that he showed up to entertain them.

Wade resumes his own story, picking up at the barbershop on Friday night following the fight with Jesse (about which the local loggers have been gossiping). Wade finds out that Jesse's mother, Reno, is from Celilo and has a questionable past. The loggers also discuss the money that the Celilo inhabitants received from the government for being displaced.

The next day is the baseball game against West Linn. Everyone in town comes to watch, including Wade's father, Duncan, who honchos the field, and Link, his grandfather, who sits among the loggers superstitiously eating honey. Wade is surprised that Coach Palermo starts Jesse on the mound and himself at shortstop. At bat, Wade hits a single. Jesse is up next and gets a solid hit, which drives Wade around third. Heading toward home plate, Wade gets clobbered from behind: Jesse ran so fast he caught up to Wade. At the barbershop, the locals tell the story again and again, impressed with Jesse's athletic ability, which earns him some respect in Calamus.

Important Quotations:

"Celilo Falls is over on the Columbia River, by The Dalles. It is—it was—a big fishing place. The Indians netted salmon from the rocks. I'd seen it, before they put in the big dam. Now Celilo is a wide, silent lake where the village used to be. They moved the Indians out, I guess. I'd never thought about where the Indians went." (20)

"Duncan works in Portland, but he grew up in Calamus. He used to log, before he went to college, so folks don't hold college against him." (22)

"I guess sometimes—at least at the barbershop—reality has to adjust to the story." (27)

Discussion Questions:

1. In the beginning of Chapter Two, Wade recounts Jesse's story of Coyote, a Native American legend, and for a brief moment the tense is switched. What is implied about Jesse and his relationship with Wade by this narration? Do you think there is any other significance to this story?
2. On page twenty, Wade mentions Celilo Falls, but does not go into great detail about the area's history. Look up Celilo Falls on the Internet and consider Wade's remark: "I'd never thought about where the Indians went." Why might this comment be meaningful in regard to Jesse's arrival to town?
3. Robin Cody, through Wade's narration, paints a very distinct picture of the townspeople at the baseball game and at the barbershop. How are they characterized in this chapter? Use specific examples from the text.
4. Wade mentions at the end of the chapter that "... sometimes—at least at the barbershop—reality has to adjust to the story." What does this mean, and what does it imply about the locals?

Themes/Analysis:

In Chapter Two, Wade characterizes the townspeople of Calamus in more depth. We see that the town is rooted in tradition—the sentiment is that things have always been a certain way here, and that is the way they will always be. We also see that the people value local legends, stories, and gossip. When Jesse makes the incredible play on the baseball field, he is automatically inducted into Calamus's culture by way of legendary athleticism. As an outsider, this is his ticket to possible inclusion in the small, exclusive town culture.

Chapter Three

Summary:

Wade describes the landscape in and around Calamus—the woods, the reservoir, and the canyon that surrounds and runs through it. He notes the smell of smoke from the slash burner and the diesel fumes from the logging trucks as they discard their loads into the millpond.

On his way to Austin Hot Springs on an errand for his job at Northwest General Electric (NWG), Wade sees Jesse on the side of the road and picks him up. The two drive along the river road, Jesse investigating items in the truck and making jokes. They stop at a spot along the river, split Wade's lunch, and take a swim. Wade's inquiry about Jesse's father is met with a vague reply. Jesse instead tells him about, "He-Who-Died, the last of the Dreamers," who foresaw the flooding of Celilo Falls. They play a baseball-like game with golf balls and a stick, and they lose track of time. They are late to make the delivery to Austin Hot Springs, and Jesse makes up a story to excuse their tardiness.

Important Quotations:

"Austin Hot Springs doesn't have a store?" This information shook Jesse to the roots. "Why are we doing this?" he said. "I thought Austin Hot Springs was one of those resorts for fat white people. Eat fry bread and sit on hot rocks." (32)

"He-Who-Died was the last of the Dreamers, I think," Jesse said. "Him and Lawrence White Fish... He dreamed the big lake over Celilo Falls before the dam went up, and he said it. When the dam went up, people saw what a great Dreamer he was. So he didn't have to work. He just grew his hair. That was all he did."

"So this He-Who-Died, what did he die of?"

"The dam. Old age." (35)

Discussion Questions:

1. In Chapter Three, we learn more about Jesse through dialogue. Describe Jesse in terms of his conversation with Wade and the references to his family and Native American folklore.
2. Wade observes a crow and views it as a kind of sign: "It seemed like, you know, I mean if you were an Indian... you might be kind of worried about a big black bird like that, so upset. But Jesse didn't pay it any mind." (35) What does this indicate about Jesse's personal beliefs with regard to his Native American heritage? What about Wade's take on Native American beliefs?

Themes/Analysis:

In Chapter Three, Wade and Jesse's characters become more developed. We start to see funny, friendly, and witty aspects of Jesse when he plays with the items in the truck and cracks jokes about himself. It also reveals an awareness of how he is perceived by others. He is obviously defining himself as Native American, as he constantly refers to his heritage. However, he also seems to contradict the stereotype—he is surprised and disappointed that Austin Hot Springs does not have a store, he misinterprets Native American words, and he even wears a Cleveland Indians ball cap. Wade is becoming intrigued by his enigmatic new friend.

Chapter Four

Summary:

Wade discusses his mother and her discomfort with the “West,” noticing the family silver, crystal, and close attention to manners. It “makes her more East than West.” He describes her hobby of painting and mentions her inability to accurately paint fir trees.

Wade picks Lorna up from the barbershop, and she breaks into a rant about how much she dislikes Calamus, how small and gossipy the town is. Wade, who does not necessarily agree with her, cites the books she reads as the source of her bitterness. In an effort to calm her down, he offers to tell her a story (a strategy he uses often) and proceeds to tell her about a trip his family took down the Columbia River Gorge to Celilo Falls when he was a child. He vividly describes the huge waterfall, the activity of the Native Americans, and their modest dwellings.

Important Quotations:

“Maybe she’d be nervous even if she’d stayed Back East. What she brought to Calamus was some fine old family silver and crystal for special occasions. And a close attention to manners. Which makes her seem more East than West.” (37)

“Mother and Duncan were ready to leave, but I was not. Duncan explained how only Indians could fish like this... Treaty rights. I was ready to cash in my citizenship, whatever it took. I’d never seen anything like this.” (42)

“I don’t see how money would do it,’ she said... you try to think what would do it, and there isn’t anything. Once the falls are gone, they’re gone. It’s not an easy thing to think about.” (43)

Discussion Questions:

1. What does Wade mean when he says that his mother’s close attention to manners, “makes her seem more East than West”? What might this have to do with her inability to paint fir trees?
2. Why does Lorna feel the way she does about Calamus? Cite specific examples.
3. When Lorna says, “I don’t see how money would do it,” what does she mean?
4. Why does Lorna not like “true stories”? Why would the story of the raft mean so much to her?

Themes/Analysis:

The theme of East versus West is explored, as Wade characterizes his mother as more refined and cultured—representative of Eastern values. On the other end of the spectrum is the wildness and freedom of the West, where Wade seems to belong. We can plot each character along this continuum according to their values, behavior, and beliefs. Lorna, who wants nothing to do with Calamus, wants to escape to school back East, far from the uncivilized townspeople; Wade, however, would prefer to set out even farther West. Robin Cody makes a very poignant commentary on civilization versus nature with this symbolic representation of East and West, noting how the “civilized” Easterners overtook Celilo Falls and forced the Natives from their land.

Chapter Five

Summary:

Wade wants to cut down a fir tree from Link's property to decorate as a Christmas tree. Link does not allow it. Instead, he makes Wade agree to find another tree from out in the forest and dig it up, as opposed to cutting it down. After two days of digging the enormous roots, Wade finally gives up.

Wade describes Link's bunkhouse, which used to be part of Link's father-in-law's mill. This mill established the town of Calamus and had been fully operative until Northwest General Electric built the dam and created the lake. The company allowed Link to occupy the bunkhouse after the mill was drowned, where he continued to sharpen saws and sew leather.

Wade goes to Link's house, as he does every Saturday, to watch a game on television. Jesse has recently moved in with Link and is there when Wade arrives. Since the baseball game gets rained out, Link fries some venison for dinner. During dinner, Wade asks Jesse if he is right- or left-handed, to which Jesse replies, "Both." He goes on to explain that fishing from both sides of the river made it necessary to be able to do it with both hands, as the angle of the wall determined which one a spear-thrower used. Link decides that the three of them will go salmon fishing together on Labor Day.

Important Quotations:

"Which handed are you, left or right?"

"Both," Jesse said... "Over in Celilo, see, you do better if you're right-handed. That is, if you live on the Oregon side. If you live on the Washington side, it's better to be left-handed. And Momma, she... we lived on both sides of the river. Sometimes on one side and sometimes on the other." (52)

"You never get one if he's that strong. Moving too fast."

"That's right!" said Link... "Yessir, the best of them salmon get through."

"The best of them stay out in the strong current," said Jesse, nodding. "Too far from the bank. Nobody gets those." (54)

Discussion Questions:

1. Why do you think Link was happy about the building of the dam, aside from providing flood relief?
2. What is significant or symbolic about Jesse being ambidextrous (being able to use both hands equally well)?
3. Why is Link's name appropriate? What or who could he "link" together? List two or more ideas.
4. Throughout the book, salmon hold great symbolic value. In this chapter, the three characters talk about the "strong" salmon swimming upstream in the powerful current, away from either bank. What could this symbolize?

Themes/Analysis:

This chapter relies heavily on symbolism. Jesse, being ambidextrous, is a living dichotomy: he exists in two worlds—the world of his Native heritage and the modern one created by those who have forced his people from their land. As a young man, growing up in opposite worlds must be very difficult. His situation insists that he learn the ways of both, as he learned to fish from both sides of the river. As he and Link talk about the "strong" salmon that swim the most difficult waters in the middle of the river, we see a connection between these fish and Jesse, who resides in between the two worlds and must deal with the difficulties of being a part of both.

Chapter Six

Summary:

Wade mentions bubbles that come up from the bottom of the lake. He recalls a time when he and Lorna saw a family that he assumes is from Portland set up for a picnic. They mistake the bubbles for raindrops on the water and pack up and leave.

Summer is coming to an end and Wade narrates his days with Jesse. While Wade is busy with his maintenance job at the dam, Jesse doesn't have much to do, so he meets Wade at his house for breakfast and then rows him to and from work each day. Jesse is curious about Wade's job, so one time when Jesse picks Wade up from work, Wade offers to give him a tour of the dam. Jesse hesitates, but decides to take Wade up on his offer. Wade takes him through the dam but Jesse seems nervous about being there and won't follow him out onto a suspended catwalk. Jesse becomes contemplative and Wade regrets bringing him on a tour.

Back on the water Jesse seems shaken up, so Wade rows them back toward home. Jesse asks about the bubbles in the lake and Wade shares Lorna's theory of "reverse rain," trying to convince Jesse that it's true, and then he launches into another theory about the bubbles being spirits. Jesse concludes that the bubbles are reverse rain. The boys see a goose on the shore and decide to shoot it. Jesse misses, but when they find it again Wade shoots and kills it. They're excited to take the bird to Link until, noticing its clipped wings, they realize that it is a tame goose. Wade decides that they will leave the goose and tells Jesse to not tell anyone about the incident.

Important Quotations:

"Jesse can go into a kind of trance, where his black eyes turn inward. It was my fault for taking him there. What a dumb idea." (60)

"There was a lot I didn't know about Jesse. Rumor had it that he had avoided Wasco County Juvenile Court by taking his act elsewhere, and that was why he'd come to Calamus. But that was just barbershop talk. I hadn't even bothered to ask Jesse about it. What if it was true if he got in some trouble, so what? Jesse was unpredictable, but I hadn't seen anything to make me think he was dangerous." (61)

"The point had more to do with a vague sense I carry with, here confirmed, of having arrived on the planet too late for something, although I couldn't have told what. Call it the Link factor." (65)

Discussion Questions:

1. What does Wade say about people from Portland? What attitudes and beliefs can be inferred about Portlanders from what Wade says?
2. How does Jesse react to Wade's offer to show him the dam? How does Jesse act during the tour of the dam? Why do you think he reacts this way?
3. What is the "Link factor"? (64) Why do you think Wade refers to this feeling as the "Link factor"?

Themes/Analysis:

The idea of the outsider plays an important role in this chapter. Wade talks about the family that intends to have a picnic, but leaves because they think it is raining. The opening vignette ends with "They didn't get it," which reinforces a separation of people in Calamus and outsiders, in this case the people from Portland. Wade also talks about a fly-fisherman they see while rowing on the lake and says, "You get these fly-fishermen from Portland. It isn't something a Calamus person would do. Fly-fishing is dainty." (62) Again, he gives the impression that there are things that people on the outside just don't understand.

The chapter also offers insight into Jesse's character. Something about the dam makes Jesse uneasy and even seems to scare him. Up until this point, Jesse has been depicted as wild and rough, but this chapter reveals a more vulnerable side of Jesse, as he clings to a rail and refuses to walk out onto a suspended catwalk. Soon after his vulnerable moment, his more unpredictable nature is reinforced when Wade feels the need to check on Jesse and mentions a rumor that Jesse came to Calamus to avoid the trouble he was in with the Wasco County Juvenile Court.

Chapter Seven

Summary:

Chapter Seven begins with Jesse asking why the river is green. Wade tells Jesse that the water gets its color from whatever it is reflecting and realizes that this was not the answer Jesse wanted. Wade and Jesse decide to drift down the river from below the dam to Oregon City. They borrow a raft and ask Lorna to drop them off and then pick them up. Initially, she is annoyed that Wade invited Jesse instead of her, but with the suggestion of spending the day in Portland and then all getting lunch together, she gives in.

As Jesse and Wade float down the river, Wade asks Jesse about He-Who-Died and Jesse talks about the search he was sent on when He-Who-Died died. Jesse went out on his own into the hills in order to search for his guardian spirit. He broke some of the rules by eating and taking his radio. He didn't find his guardian spirit, but when he returned, he pretended as though he had. The chapter ends with Wade and Jesse running into a boulder in the river that punctures the middle section of the raft and causes them to lose their belongings, including an oar and Wade's wallet.

Important Quotations:

"Smart me, I gave him a scientific explanation... Correct is wrong, I saw, as the focus drained from Jesse's eyes." (67)

"I'd forgotten that a river doesn't exactly take aim at things. It winds through a lot more country than a road does. A river ricochets down the valley, deflecting and echoing what it wants to say. Maybe it'll get you thinking about the salmon and all that, but the river won't take you straight there, either." (70)

"It was interesting to think about, and I felt good that Jesse would tell me all this. Maybe I was encouraged, also, that Jesse had failed at his search, or that he had failed at anything." (73)

"To Jesse it was probably like heaven or something. Like you say your prayers every once in a while, just in case. I wished I had asked him that question differently." (73)

Discussion Questions:

1. Jesse is dissatisfied with Wade's answer to his question about the color of the water. What answer do you think Jesse was looking for when he asked Wade the question?
2. A reference to the book's title is made in the sentence, "A river ricochets down the valley, deflecting and echoing what it wants to say." (70) Why do you think the author chose this title? How does it relate to the content of the book, both literally and figuratively?
3. How does Jesse respond to Wade when asked whether or not he believes in having a guardian spirit? Do you think he is being truthful in his answer? Why or why not?

Themes/Analysis:

This chapter has a direct reference to the title of the book, and explains the unpredictable nature of a river, which can be inferred as a metaphor for life. When Jesse talks about his search for his guardian spirit, it is hard to tell how seriously he takes it. However, when Wade asks him if he believes it, his response leads Wade and the reader to think that Jesse believes more than he says, but is ashamed of his "outsider" views of life. Wade struggles to understand Jesse's beliefs and equates it to believing in heaven.

Wade reveals a sort of jealousy of Jesse when he mentions that he feels encouraged because Jesse had failed at something.

Chapter Eight

Summary:

By the time Wade and Jesse are supposed to meet Lorna, they are only about halfway there. They stop at a store and Wade calls home to leave a message for Lorna, in case she calls. When they get back to the raft, Jesse brings out a selection of food that he stole from the store. Wade is surprised and appalled, and Jesse is shocked at Wade's reaction. Reluctantly, Wade gives into hunger and eats the food. They eventually meet up with Lorna just before dark and head to Lani Louie's, a nearby restaurant. They have a rude waitress and Lorna suspects that it is because they're from Calamus, which makes them "a form of lowlife." (79) Jesse thinks that it is because he's Indian. Lorna rejects his supposition and when they finish dinner, they head to The Speck, "a drive-in which is mainly a showcase for custom cars." (80) Wade and Lorna are nervous about not fitting in with their old pickup, but Jesse insists that they go. Jesse manages to start joking with other people, and because of his open personality they fit in well enough. Jesse then inquires about a friend's workplace, ultimately leading the group to a bar. Jesse goes in and comes out with beer and they sit around in the truck and drink, although Lorna refuses to. After a while, someone from the bar comes out and kindly tells them to head home. On the ride home Wade professes his love for Lorna and apologizes for not taking her down the river.

Important Quotations:

"We were Calamus, Lorna explained, a form of lowlife that no amount of suave or clothes could hide. The Calamus in us, like an unsettling odor, would seep through at Lani Louie's no matter what we did." (79)

"He said, not kidding, 'It's because I'm Indian. If you guys were alone, you wouldn't get treated like this.'" (79)

"I was beginning to get the idea that Jesse's world was a little more complicated—or a lot less complicated—than my own." (80)

Discussion Questions:

1. How does Wade respond to Jesse when he finds out that he had stolen food? How do their individual perceptions of stealing reflect the differences in their characters?
2. "I was beginning to get the idea that Jesse's world was a little more complicated—or a lot less complicated—than my own." (80) How might Jesse's world be more complicated than Wade's? How might it be less complicated?
3. How is Jesse both an insider and an outsider at The Speck?

Themes/Analysis:

Wade is once again surprised by Jesse when he steals food from the store. Both are shocked by the other person's reaction and Wade expresses a clear idea of what is right and what is wrong, baffled that Jesse doesn't see his actions in the same light. Wade is continually intrigued by Jesse and his "otherness." Wade is trying to figure Jesse out, but has not come to any particular conclusions.

Lorna and Jesse both make assumptions about why their waitress is rude, which further reveals the things that they are self-conscious about. For Lorna it is being from Calamus and for Jesse it is being a Native American.

While Jesse seems to be excited about the prospect of standing out at The Speck, he has a way of using all the things about him that stand out to his advantage and can find his own way to fit in.

Chapter Nine

Summary:

Wade recalls the first time Link took him to where the Columbia River meets the ocean in order to see the fish gather to swim up the Columbia. When Wade was seven or eight, Link showed up early in the morning and took Wade against his parents' wishes. Wade recalls yelling and being dressed and pulled out of the house by Link. They took a long drive to the coast and got in the boat to head out to the ocean. Wade was terrified at first, but as the day went on, he fell in love with the experience. Link has a special intuition when it comes to the ocean and can sense what the conditions will be like. Wade has gone out each year with Link since that first trip and now they are taking Jesse with them. Jesse gets incredibly sick on the way out, but once he catches his first fish, he brightens up. To Link's and Wade's surprise, Jesse picks up his fish, hugs it, and then puts it back in the ocean. Jesse explains that this fish is called the First Fish, and that you always put the fish back so that it will go tell the other fish that it's okay to swim in the water. When he lived in Celilo they had a huge event each year for the First Fish, but he doubts that they still have the ceremony.

Important Quotations:

"We crossed the bar on the same terms Link had settled with it, long before. Link's terms. In that fourteen-foot open boat the two of us were good enough. Maybe, now that I think about it, that's a source of the Link factor. Link could read the tides and rips like scanning *The Oregonian*, and he had a sixth sense about danger." (88)

"The feeling I did get was that Link was in touch with larger forces in a way that I, with all the books of a lifetime, could never match." (88)

"Jesse was in no mood for Link. He was far, far away. Although he was enormously pleased with himself, the way it came out was not in words but with a welling of tears in his eyes before he looked away." (92)

"A lot of things changed," he said. "But you always put back the First Fish." (93)

Discussion Questions:

1. Wade talks about how he and Link are different from the others who go to the mouth of the Columbia for the salmon. Do you think he is proud or ashamed of their differences? Cite specific examples.
2. What does Wade say is a source of the Link factor? How does this relate to Wade's mention of the Link factor in Chapter Six?
3. What can you infer about Jesse's feelings toward Native American traditions from his story about the First Fish?

Themes/Analysis:

This chapter gives insight into the bond between Wade and Link. Wade is in awe of, and also has great respect for Link. Link has an element of mystery and unpredictability that causes him to seem "untamed." Jesse shows respect for his heritage by following the tradition of First Fish. There is a sense of loss as Jesse tears up and recalls the event that may no longer take place. Once again, we see a more vulnerable side of Jesse that seems to contrast his wild and unpredictable nature. Wade demonstrates acceptance of Jesse's tradition when he doesn't question it as he often has in the past when Jesse talked about Native American folklore.

Chapter Ten

Summary:

Wade wonders about going up to a remote area about an hour past Link's place. He thinks about how it is likely that he can walk around and step where no one has stepped before. While it may feel like this, he's found arrowheads—evidence that Native Americans were once there. Wade talks about how he used to throw a football through a tire swing for practice. Although Jesse has never played football, he joins Wade in throwing the ball, and at no surprise to Wade, is a natural. They invent a game called "Impossible Catches" where Wade throws the ball so that it is intentionally hard to get and Jesse catches it, getting extra points for style. When they move the game to the school field, Jesse's talent is noticed and when he joins the team there is talk of him replacing Wade as the quarterback. They have their first practice where they goof off toward the end. After practice, the coach asks to talk to Wade and shares his concern about the attitudes of the team. He says that they need to be driven and serious, and that he has concerns about Jesse because of his history. Palermo mentions that Jesse was arrested, kicked out of school, and had his driver's license revoked. While Wade had heard rumors, he never knew if they were true. He assures the coaches that they have nothing to worry about.

After showering, Wade meets up with Jesse and some of their teammates. When Wade and Jesse leave, Wade asks Jesse what happened in regard to the trouble he has been in. Reluctantly, Jesse tells Wade that he and some friends were drinking one night when a game warden tried to sneak up on them, so they stole his car and ended up crashing it. He was arrested and lost his license. Then, about a year later, he was kicked out of school for not going. Jesse insists that his moving to Calamus was his mom's idea.

Important Quotations:

"Inside him, just waiting to get out, were all these skills I'd spent years trying to get right. He made all the feints and cuts, and he had terrific hands. The football loved Jesse's hands." (96)

"'Because you couldn't,' Lorna said Judge said, 'have an Indian calling the plays.' Lorna was plenty steamed, telling me this. 'Everybody nodded,' she said, 'like Yup, that's right[i], like Judge was the best thinker in town.' She poofed her bangs in disgust. 'Gad,' she said. 'Maybe, on second thought, he is.' I let this pass. Lorna doesn't know much about football. Judge Moore had a point, I thought. It's hard to imagine Jesse running the team. He's not exactly level-headed, not what you want as a leader." (97)

"Momma was fed up with the reservation anyway. A dove among vultures, was what Momma said. She hated that place. I was a dove among vultures, and I better go learn about vultures." (104)

Discussion Questions:

1. How does Wade react to Jesse joining the football team?
2. How does Jesse feel about his crime? How does Wade react to Jesse's story about his crime?
3. "I was a dove among vultures, and I better go learn about vultures." (104) What might Jesse's mom have meant by this?

Themes/Analysis:

Jesse's natural skill at sports contributes to his "otherness," while also helping him to fit in by joining the football team. Wade expresses jealousy as Jesse effortlessly exerts skills that Wade has worked on for years. However, even as Wade desires to keep his position as quarterback, there is no sense of animosity toward Jesse. While Jesse's skills make him an asset, there is still hesitation about the role he is to play; as Judge puts it, "... you couldn't... have an Indian calling the plays." (97) While he's accepted, he is not fully considered an "insider." The chapter reveals more of Jesse's background, further developing Jesse's untamed nature. While Wade is curious and shocked at Jesse's past, Jesse talks about it as though it isn't a big deal.

Chapter Eleven

Summary:

The chapter begins with a discussion on loggers; Wade mentions the permanent dent on their heads from their hard hats, how they are considered “high-born” in Calamus, and how one would never hear a logger called a lumberjack in Calamus. On the first day of school, Wade points out that Lorna doesn’t do well in classes because they don’t move fast enough for her; she usually just sits in class and reads on her own. Jesse is one of the few Indians to attend the school, and the other students stare at him. Wade and Jesse find out that they have a few classes together and begin their day. After lunch, they hang out on the senior steps. When a younger student approaches the steps, one of the seniors gives him a hard time. Wade stands around and watches, and eventually Jesse gets up and pushes the bullying senior. When another senior steps in and grabs Jesse by the arm, Jesse hits the student and no one else approaches Jesse. In English class, Jesse mistakes the teacher for a student and confidently hits on her. When class begins he realizes that she is the teacher, however, he continues to flirt with her. The chapter ends with Jesse answering a question with “I love you very much.” (112)

Important Quotations:

“Loggers are high-born in Calamus. The ugliest name you can call a logger or his son is a farmer. You farmer. Nobody gets any respect for growing things.” (105)

“The trouble with Lorna is she could be a good student if she just paid attention. School goes way too slow for her. She and her murder mysteries, reading in class. Drives teachers crazy.” (106)

“Jesse stood facing the senior steps with his brown fists clenched and his arm muscles tensed and twitching. Nobody moved against him. Even Buzhardt thought better of it.” (109)

Discussion Questions:

1. Jesse is the only one to stand up for the freshman on the senior steps. What do you think this says about Jesse’s character?
2. In school, how might Jesse be perceived as an insider? How might he be perceived as an outsider? Do you think the students will eventually accept him?
3. How does Jesse interact with Miss Drees? Based on his interactions, what kind of student do you think Jesse will be?
4. At Wade’s school, there are a number of unwritten rules like particular parking areas for certain groups of students, and steps that only seniors are allowed on. What types of unwritten rules exist at your school?

Themes/Analysis:

In this chapter, the main characters are depicted in a new setting, their school. The chapter gives new information about Lorna. She lives in a trailer that she’s ashamed of, her dad has a drinking problem, and she is not a good student even though she’s very intelligent. The reader gets to see the main characters in a new light as they interact with new people in a new setting. Jesse’s character is seen as even more confident as he stands up to someone that Wade was unwilling to stand up to and flirts with a teacher. Wade falls into his role as a student while Jesse pushes boundaries, exuding unpredictability and a sort of wildness.

Chapter Twelve

Summary:

As Chapter Twelve opens, Wade describes what is wrong with the fish ladder at the dam. He says that there are 126 steps, each about a foot in height, but there are no pools for the salmon to rest. Although the ladder isn't something a fish would find in nature, a salmon could make it up the ladder if they had the mind to. Wade then describes a time when he saw a big old humpback male smacking into the side of the concrete dam, over and over. The sight was too much for Wade to watch.

Wade then describes how Jesse "puts some odd dents in the everyday shape of school." (114) He questions whether or not Jesse is a "natural screw up," and then goes on to say, "but you couldn't really dislike Jesse, and people didn't." (114) Wade tells a few stories about Jesse's behavior in the cafeteria and in English class, about how Jesse disrupts the natural flow of things as he seeks to be the center of attention. Jesse tells a "coyote" story about Wishroosh the monster Beaver, and how the huckleberries were put high away in the mountains. The chapter ends with Wade helping Jesse write a coyote story of his own for English class. Jesse gets a C+ on the paper, but Wade is discouraged because Jesse just doesn't quite fit into life in Calamus.

Important Quotations:

"Jesse put some odd dents in the everyday shape of school, but he got along just fine. In fact he was a big hit among other students, mainly because he did whatever he felt like doing, and trouble couldn't catch him." (114)

"But that's not the point, I tried to tell him. With literature you get metaphors. Symbols. It's not about what happens. Building the cabin on the pond was like making your own way on nature's terms." (116)

"He got a C+. The point—and I don't push it after this—was that Jesse's stuff didn't really apply." (120)

Discussion Questions:

1. How is the fish ladder at the dam a metaphor for Jesse's experience in Calamus?
2. Why are the townspeople so reluctant to accept Jesse, despite his likeable personality?
3. What is the significance of Jesse's coyote story about Wishroosh, the monster Beaver?
4. What about Jesse's "stuff" just doesn't really apply to life in Calamus?

Themes/Analysis:

Wade is beginning to see how Jesse is different from the rest of the Calamus people; he's an outsider in more ways than one. Not only is Jesse new to Calamus, but his Native American heritage differentiates him from the rest of the townspeople. Jesse is out of place in Calamus, much like the fish ladder is out of place in the natural flow of the river. Jesse's personality makes him hard to dislike, but people are skeptical of him because he is a Native American.

Jesse's coyote stories can be seen as a connection to his Native American heritage. The stories blur the line between humanity and nature, much like Jesse does. As Wade is beginning to realize, the coyote stories are another reminder of how Jesse doesn't fit into Calamus life.

Chapter Thirteen

Summary:

Wade is fishing alone on the deep part of the lake. He feels a tug on his line, but can't reel the fish in before the line snaps. The experience is so out of the ordinary that it is enough to make Wade believe in ghosts.

Wade describes the latest football game and how easy the sport comes to Jesse and himself. After the game, Wade meets Lorna at the school dance, where they get into an argument. Lorna is upset because everyone one in Calamus fits into a stereotypical box, including Wade. Lorna is discouraged as she finds herself in the box labeled, "Wade Curren's girl."

After their fight, Wade takes Lorna home, and he and Jesse go to the barbershop diner for a bite to eat. Wade tries to talk to Jesse about his fight with Lorna, but all Jesse wants to do is discuss how far Wade and Lorna have gone sexually. The chapter ends with Jesse telling a story about how, when he was younger, he died after getting run over by a pickup truck.

Important Quotations:

"It was the kind of thing that happens every once in a while in sports, but seldom in real life. You're in complete control and can make things happen any way you want." (123)

"In his jeans and black T-shirt, with his white Chinook-bone necklace, Jesse danced everything. Sometimes with a partner, sometimes not. He just let himself go, as if the music came from his spinal cord." (125)

"This was the difference between Jesse and me—the type of thing we worried about, or didn't. I worry about a game coming up, or whether I got an assignment all correct, or what Lorna might think. As far as I could tell, Jesse didn't have a thing in the world to worry about." (131)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the significance of Wade's fishing fable at the beginning of the chapter?
2. How is Wade's experience in the football game an extension of life in Calamus and its townspeople?
3. Why is Lorna so upset about the predictability of Calamus?
4. At the end of the chapter, Jesse tells Wade a story about how he died when he was younger. What is the significance of Jesse's story? Is there any truth to it? Why or why not?

Themes/Analysis:

Robin Cody juxtaposes Wade, Jesse, and Lorna, showing the reader the various perspectives his characters have on life in Calamus. After the football game, Wade is elated as he draws a comparison between sports and the real world. Lorna, on the other hand, is disgusted by the predictability of the small town of Calamus, and the little boxes that everyone is placed in. Here Lorna expresses her feelings as an outsider, in many ways drawing a comparison more closely aligned with Jesse than with Wade. At the dance, Jesse lets himself go and becomes one with the music. This expresses Jesse's individuality and shows the important role that dance and music play in Native American culture. The interaction between the three main characters in this chapter creates a division between them, commenting on the social ideologies that are challenged throughout the novel. While Wade finds himself fitting nicely into the box that Calamus has created for him, Lorna and Jesse continue to be at odds with the social structure and beliefs of the town.

Jesse's story of dying as a child continues to draw into question his sense of reality. He projects the idea that life is just one big story to him, and he is dancing his way through the story.

Chapter Fourteen

Summary:

Wade describes the millpond and the landlocked salmon that reside there. Link points out that the salmon could escape the millpond and head out to sea, but they would not be able to follow the natural cycle and return to their spawning ground. Wade later describes a passion that he has only seen once or twice in the eyes of his father, Duncan. He wonders where the Link factor resides within his father.

Jesse and Wade help Link chop some firewood to prepare for the winter, using the same technique that Link has used for many years. When Wade counts the age rings in the tree, he thinks of the explorers who found America. He explains to Jesse why the Native Americans were called Indians.

When they finish chopping wood, Jesse and Wade follow Link's advice and head up to the lower millpond to see if there is any fishing. When they finally make their way through the thickets, they see firsthand how the salmon that once escaped the upper millpond can no longer return to their spawning ground. Frantically, Jesse starts trying to catch the fish with his bare hands, heaving them up and into the upper millpond. As the chapter ends, Jesse is screaming and crying over the misfortune of the salmon.

Important Quotations:

"You get the feeling people want you to be what they're not, or what they should have been." (134)

"White noodles of raw wood came from the saw's teeth with each stroke, like strips of time. To crosscut an old-growth fir is to pull out these white strips of wood that start as young as me and go back through Duncan and Link and old Gus Schwarz, who claimed this land, and all the way back to Lewis and Clark and Robert Gray. And the Indians before that." (136)

"But these salmon, after surviving the ocean and all the perils of passage, were home now. And the door was locked." (140)

Discussion Questions:

1. How are the millpond and the salmon a parallel to Calamus and the people who reside there? How do Wade and Jesse fit into this metaphor for life in Calamus?
2. What is the "Link factor"? In other words, what is Wade referring to when he talks about the blue fire in Duncan's eyes? In Link's?
3. Why is Jesse determined to save the fish? What comparisons can be made between the salmon, the Native Americans, and the inclusion of modern society in the west?

Themes/Analysis:

The story that Wade tells at the beginning of the chapter about the upper millpond sets the scene for the end of the chapter when Jesse is frantically trying to save the fish and return them to their home. Over breakfast, Wade describes a blue fire that he seldom sees in Duncan's eyes, a fire reminiscent of the Link factor. Wade's reflection on his father can be seen as a reflection of the town of Calamus and the people who live there. In a way, Wade feels that by going to college and working in Portland, his father has abandoned the passion and pride of the small logging town of Calamus, something Link has never strayed from.

While chopping wood for Link, Wade makes a beautiful comparison between the strips of wood and the history of the West. He comments on the history of the land from his family to Lewis and Clark, paying homage to the Native Americans who first called the land home. Robin Cody calls into question the Americans' treatment of the Native Americans, as Jesse remains thankful for the root beer and Oreos he would have to go without if it weren't for the brutal intrusion the Native Americans faced.

In the end, as Jesse struggles to save the salmon, his emotions toward the fish draw a comparison to the ways Native Americans were treated by the American settlers. Through this narrative, Robin Cody bridges the gap between man and nature, as Jesse finds himself caught somewhere in between.

Chapter Fifteen

Summary:

The chapter opens with Wade and Link discussing the landlocked salmon in Tom Creek. Wade says that the fish go against nature; Link agrees that the survival of the timid is just plain "bass-ackwards."

After getting his license reinstated, Jesse buys a '57 Ford Fairlane with money his mom gave him. Now that they have a car with a backseat, and considering Wade and Lorna aren't getting along, Jesse talks Wade into a double date. Jesse asks out Judith Horton, a bookworm type whose father is a mill-foreman-turned-real-estate agent. Wade decides to ask Rhonda Rheinbeck out, and the double date is set for Saturday night at the Broadway movie theatre in Calamus. Rhonda is surprised that Wade Curren would ask her out, and after the movie she brings up his relationship with Lorna. Wade feels like the date might have been a mistake and after driving Jesse and Judith up and down Main Street a few times, they drop Rhonda off and Wade goes home.

Jesse stays out with Judith, and the pair goes out of town to park. When Judith still hasn't returned home by dawn, her father meets Jesse and Judith back at Jesse's car with a shotgun. Judith's father, a real blowhard, proceeds to shoot out Jesse's rear left tire to show Jesse he means business. Judith's father later becomes a real hero at the barbershop for this act.

Important Quotations:

"The part that got me, when I had time to think it over, was that these fish went against everything you learn. Darwin's theory and all that." (143)

"I guess my idea of Jesse was that he had Calamus by the tail, and he could swing it about any way he wanted. Now I got to thinking maybe not, or just the opposite. The way things were set up... I don't know. What had always dogged me was the Link factor, that I could never be good enough. Jesse was opening this new window where it looked like you could be too good." (151)

Discussion Questions:

1. What is the significance of Wade and Link's discussion about the landlocked salmon at Tom Creek? How is this a parallel to life in Calamus?
2. When Jesse gets two tickets in the first week of owning his new car, what is the author saying about small town law enforcement and the community's feelings towards Native Americans?
3. How is the theme of predictability continued in Chapter Fifteen? What does this theme continue to say about life in Calamus?
4. How is Wade's idea of Jesse changing, and how is it changing his idea of himself?

Themes/Analysis:

The opening dialogue between Wade and Link addresses the story's continual theme of reversal, and raises questions about the nature of life in a small town. When Jesse buys a new car and receives two tickets in the first week, the ideology of small town law enforcement and politics is brought to the forefront. Robin Cody uses this scene to address the feelings many people had about Native Americans at this time. These feelings toward Native Americans are further addressed when Judith Horton's father shoots out Jesse's tire after he catches him with his daughter.

The theme of predictability is further developed when Wade asks out Rhonda Rheinbeck. Their interaction during the date allows Wade to see just how predictable life can be in Calamus. The events in this chapter leave Wade questioning many of the ideals he has come to believe in while growing up. In addition to this, his idealization of Jesse is being called into question, as Jesse continues to make questionable decisions. Wade is left wondering how he and Jesse fit into life in Calamus.

Chapter Sixteen

Summary:

The rainy season has arrived in Calamus, and the football team is practicing in the mud and muck. Jesse has decided to skip practice, yet again, and for that Coach Garth suspends him for one game. Wade encounters Lorna in the hallway after practice, and the two hash it out over Wade's date with Rhonda Rheinbeck. After some clawing and scratching and tears of anger, Wade and Lorna head toward home. Wade recalls his childhood growing up with Lorna, and the biology collection that she has in Wade's family's woodshed. Wade knows that this can't be it between him and Lorna as they have too much history together.

Wade then leads Lorna down to the millpond where he and Jesse saw the salmon trying to return home to spawn. Here, Lorna expresses her fear of Calamus and her life in the trailer park. As they sit in the rain and watch the salmon spawn, Wade and Lorna share a physical moment that brings them closer than ever before.

Important Quotations:

"Football—maybe Calamus itself—was a big party in Jesse's honor. All he had to do was show up, blow out the candles, and open his presents... That's the way Jesse's world worked. The problem was, I began thinking my own world could work that way too, if I could just figure it out." (154)

"Lorna wasn't one to be afraid of things... She was the strongest person I knew, except for Link... Maybe everybody carries a kind of terror deep in the stomach, like I do, a dark twisted knot that comes from... from what?" (160)

"I was pretty sure we had ratcheted up a notch or two in what love is. We were part of the sky, part of the soft warm rain falling down, and part of the salmon dance in Tom Creek." (163)

Discussion Questions:

1. What comparisons can be made between the osprey at the beginning of Chapter Sixteen and the Native Americans at Celilo Falls? What might the bald eagle represent?
2. Wade describes football—and maybe Calamus itself—as a big party for Jesse. How does this change the way Wade sees Jesse? How does it change the way Wade sees himself?
3. Why is Lorna scared of Calamus, of football uniforms and caulked boots, of mill saws at night, of Jesse's car, and the way Wade is acting? Why is Calamus a mean place to Lorna?
4. How are the spawning salmon a parallel to life in Calamus? How do Wade and Lorna see the salmon, and Calamus, as contributing to the circle of life?

Themes/Analysis:

Wade's description of the osprey and the bald eagle at the beginning of Chapter Sixteen can be seen as a comparison between the Native Americans at Celilo Falls and the white settlers. The Native Americans at Celilo Falls were fishermen, much like the osprey, surviving on the fish the river provided them. The intrusion of the bald eagle draws comparisons to the white settlers building the dam and taking away the Native Americans' ability to fish the Celilo Falls as they had been doing for centuries before.

Wade is caught in a struggle between the life he knows and the life Jesse brings to Calamus. Jesse's influence is changing the way Wade sees life in Calamus and, in turn, changing the way Wade perceives Jesse, and himself. Jesse's carefree and careless attitude has Wade questioning his life.

Wade's relationship with Lorna reaches a new level; he can't imagine his life in Calamus without her. After they hash out their differences, they share a loving moment watching the salmon contribute to the circle of life at Tom Creek. The theme of man versus nature is bridged in the chapter, as Robin Cody uses metaphors in nature to express the feelings of his characters. Lorna is fearful of getting stuck in the small town and is clinging to Wade as her only way out. The salmon remain a constant theme as they leave Calamus for bigger, better waters, yet return home to create new life,¹⁹

Chapter Seventeen

Summary:

Wade recounts his bout with poison oak after he and Lorna's "salmon-watching." He explains how, "Nature is great, all right." (165) On top of the poison oak, Wade has come down with a cold that will cause him to miss the next football game.

Jesse shows up at Wade's bedside at midnight with pocketfuls of medicine that he stole from the local store. Wade is appreciative of the gesture, but he soon finds out that Jesse has once again gotten into more than he bargained for. Officer Miles shows up at the Curren house and Jesse is arrested and taken to jail. Upon hearing the news of Jesse's arrest, Link storms down to the barbershop to confront Officer Miles and his self-righteous, self-appointed men of justice. Link gets the shop owner, Mr. Gott, to drop the charges as long as Jesse agrees to pay for the stolen property and broken window and not skip any more football practices. Not to let Jesse off the hook too easy, Link lets them keep him in jail until Monday.

Wade comes home to find Lorna discussing colleges with his mother, and they discuss the idea of going back east for college. At dinner later that night, Wade plays the "Trying-To-Say" game with his parents. Through this game Wade realizes that his parents are trying to say that he should be more responsible when it comes to his friendship with Jesse.

Important Quotations:

"Nature is great, all right. We'd been part of the fir trees, part of the salmon and the rain... and part of the poison oak along the bank at Tom Creek." (165)

"When Jesse glanced towards me, I was shaking my head no. I was just amazed how stupid he could be, but I guess he took it as a refusal to cover for him. Maybe he figured I couldn't pull it off, even if I wanted to. He was probably right." (167)

"Jesse got jailed. Which was absurd, everybody knew it. But that didn't quell the excitement... This business about Jesse burglarizing the drugstore got blown way out of proportion." (168)

"I guess Link's main harangue was that Calamus was no longer run by loggers but by this group that reminded him of a Kiwanis meeting, or a sewing circle. He's right about that." (168)

"When I read it, nontraditional sounded like you were a Zulu or raised by wolves or something. But there was no doubt in Lorna's mind that Calamus qualified her." (171)

Discussion Questions:

1. How does Jesse's arrest affect the reader's understanding of his character? How does it change Wade's perception of Jesse?
2. How does the scene at the barbershop, where Link gets Jesse off the hook, develop the reader's understanding of small town law enforcement? What do you think Robin Cody is saying about the people of Calamus?
3. Why does Lorna consider Calamus as a qualification for a "non-traditional" student? What about Calamus is non-traditional?
4. What is significant about Duncan and Wade's mother having gone to school "Back East"? What is Robin Cody saying about the dichotomy between East and West?
5. What is the purpose of the "Trying-To-Say" game? What are Wade's parents trying to say to him? Do you have any similar "games" with your family?

Themes/Analysis:

Once again, we see a connection to nature in the opening description of Chapter Seventeen. Wade expresses his love of nature, even when it entails something unfortunate like poison oak. In a sense, Wade is saying that his experience with Lorna in the previous chapter was well worth a bout with poison oak.

Jesse's willingness to steal for Wade raises multiple questions about Jesse's character. For one, he can be seen as a great friend, willing to do whatever it takes to help his friend out. At the same time, it calls into question Jesse's sense of reality. He never thinks about the consequences, he just does whatever he wants. Jesse shows his careless attitude again when he comments on the good fortune that he and Wade missed the muddy football game. Typically this would not be seen as positive turn of events; however, in Jesse's carefree mind it is.

In the scene where Link gets the charges against Jesse dropped, Cody once again raises questions about the politics of small-town law enforcement. In addition, Cody is commenting on the ways in which the town's people view Jesse and Native Americans in general.

As Lorna and Wade's mother are looking at colleges, Lorna comments on the fact that being from Calamus qualifies her as a "non-traditional" student. In this sense, Lorna is commenting on life in Calamus as being out of the ordinary, a place that is different from most other places. This addresses Lorna's fears of Calamus and her desire to escape. The discussion of "Back East" creates a dichotomy between East and West, building up Lorna's desire to escape from Calamus for a brighter future "Back East." The debate between East and West also comments on the people who choose to settle in Calamus and live "Out West."

The final scene in Chapter Seventeen addresses Wade's parents' concern over his friendship with Jesse. The "Trying-To-Say" game creates a way for Robin Cody to comment on the impact Jesse might be having on Wade's life without coming right out and saying it. The game lets the readers draw their own conclusions about the influence Jesse has on Wade's character. It also requires Wade to question his relationship with Jesse and how his concept of Calamus and the world outside is changing.

Chapter Eighteen

Summary:

Wade describes the life cycle of salmon in the opening anecdote. The fish must survive as eggs, make it to the ocean, and then return in four years to spawn. Their only advantage is their coloring; salmon are dark on top to blend in with the riverbed and light underneath, to blend in with the water, making it difficult for predators to see them from either above or below.

Jesse has lost interest in both school and football. He spends his government check carelessly, and he reveals to Wade his plan to blow up the millpond spillway; he is going to do it for the fish and for the river. Someone in the town shoots up a bunch of mailboxes and everyone, including Wade, suspects Jesse. Jesse brings Lorna and Wade to the millpond and blows it up in front of them. Jesse thinks he is saving something, but in reality he is killing the salmon that have taken to spawning farther downstream.

Important Quotations:

"Any wild animal will blend in with the surroundings. But it depends on your angle, with salmon." (175)

"What I mean about the safety net rip was I could feel the town turning, like a slow ratchet, against Jesse." (177)

Discussion Questions:

1. How is Jesse like the salmon trying to return to the river to spawn?
2. Why are the townspeople turning against Jesse?
3. How is Jesse blowing up the millpond spillway symbolic?
4. Explain what Jesse means by "the spot." Why does he think the millpond is his spot?

Themes/Analysis:

Jesse's role as the outsider in Calamus continues to develop; the townspeople are becoming more hostile toward him as he becomes more brazen in his actions and his attitude. The people were more comfortable with Jesse when he was scoring points for the football team. They are not comfortable with a mouthy Native American kid with easy money.

As Jesse becomes more of an outsider, he rejects Calamus and civilization in general. He becomes angry, blowing up the millpond spillway to demonstrate his rebellion against civilization and his defense of nature. The dam is a symbol for civilization. The once wild salmon and river have been tamed.

Just as Jesse refuses to be "tamed," he attempts to set the river and the salmon free from the slavery of the dam and into the wild. In his attempt Jesse unknowingly destroys the salmon that have adapted to the dam.

Chapter Nineteen

Summary:

In the opening sequence, Wade describes a pretty white stone that you just can't grasp. When you reach down into the water to grab it, your hand creates ripples and you can no longer see the stone at the bottom.

Jesse has been sent to MacLaren, a juvenile correctional facility. The millpond is repaired almost as quickly as the town adjusts to Jesse's absence. Wade decides that Jesse doesn't have a place, not just in society, but a place to be himself. Wade and Lorna visit Jesse at MacLaren, where they tell him about their plans to build a raft and float to the ocean. Jesse believes their story and it cheers him up.

Wade receives a scholarship to Princeton University, on the East Coast. Lorna mentions going with Wade to Princeton. Wade and Lorna go to visit Duncan at his office and Wade feels out of place and has to escape. Wade is getting restless and starts to understand Lorna's need to escape Calamus.

Important Quotations:

"It wasn't something you could believe in. What you think of as Indians didn't exist anymore. He was just Jesse, not an Indian. But then he was, too." (188)

"Her world had come flying apart. One more year in Calamus was a life sentence. She had nothing left to live for." (192)

"I couldn't shake the idea of the millpond and those landlocked salmon we used to see there. If people were salmon, they'd be like those stunted lost relatives of Old Man Chinook." (192)

Discussion Questions:

1. How is Jesse both an Indian and not an Indian? Where can you find evidence in the novel?
2. How does Wade react to Duncan's office environment? In what ways is his response similar to Jesse's reaction to Calamus? In what ways is it different?
3. Why is life in Calamus a death sentence for Lorna?
4. Lorna and Jesse can both be considered outsiders in Calamus. How do they handle being an outsider?
5. How is Wade's perception of Calamus changing?

Themes/Analysis:

Wade has become increasingly suspicious of his acceptance as an insider in both society and Calamus. He resents Duncan for parading him around the office and begins to doubt and question his assigned role as "model teen."

Wade begins to see what civilization has done to people. He sees the people in Calamus and at his father's office as landlocked salmon. The civilized people are just "shadows" of the old world people, like Old Man Chinook.

Wade begins to see his father as someone who has been tamed and Jesse continues to represent someone who cannot be tamed.

The white stone is a symbol for all the different things that Wade, Lorna, and Jesse desire and are afraid of losing. Wade fears he may lose sight of what he wants before he can realize it. The ripples in the water represent the blurred vision and the confusion that Wade is experiencing.

Chapter Twenty

Summary:

The chapter begins with a description of "Out West," and Wade concludes that this is Jesse's way of thinking. Heading "Out West" isn't just about location, but a state of mind.

Jesse is released from MacLaren, but things are different between Jesse and Wade. Jesse turns eighteen and gets his trust fund check from the government for the loss of the tribe's fishing rights. Wade, Jesse, and Lorna take a trip to the Warm Springs Reservation to visit Reno, Jesse's mother. Jesse introduces Lorna and Wade as "his people."

Wade tells a story about his dad, Duncan, losing his temper with another driver. Wade describes the fury he saw in his father's eyes, a fury he doesn't see anymore.

The people on the reservation are still waiting for their checks, but have been promised jobs at a new lodge that is being built. Lorna and Wade meet Lawrence White Fish. Lawrence used to be the best fisherman around, but he doesn't talk anymore. Jesse stages a fishing experience; everyone participates and pretends to fish by swooping the chickens, and eventually a dog, into the net. Jesse gets Lawrence to smile and laugh. Jesse dubs the dog the Last Fish and returns it to the "water." This makes Lawrence cry.

Important Quotations:

"It's like my dad is dormant or something. Or he already happened, and he's through. There was something in there that isn't anymore." (202)

"Different worlds were what we had. Jesse, with all his money, wasn't in either of them. He was as exotic to these Indians as he was to Calamus." (207)

Discussion Questions:

1. Describe what Wade means by "Out West."
2. Why is Jesse an outsider even among his mother and other Native Americans?
3. What is significant about Wade's story of Duncan?
4. What is Jesse's "gift"?

Themes/Analysis:

Lawrence White Fish represents the old world and Lorna and Wade the new world. Jesse is the mediator between the two worlds. Lorna and Wade see that Jesse's "spot" is with people. He has a power over people because he refuses to assimilate or "tame" himself.

Wade is afraid to end up like his father, but at the same time he is afraid for Jesse. Duncan has been tamed, while Jesse remains wild, but both are victims of their environment. Duncan has been subdued by his environment and is revered in the community, while Jesse is made more rebellious because he has no place in either society.

Wade and Lorna start to realize that civilization and the dam has had the same effect on the Native Americans as it did on the salmon. They have become stunted in their being; Reno lost her gift and Lawrence lost his voice.

Chapter Twenty-One

Summary:

The chapter opens with an anecdote about June hogs—huge Chinook salmon. When the Grand Coulee Dam was created, their cycle was blocked and they weren't seen anymore. Jesse and Lawrence tell Wade and Lorna their story about a June hog: a boy named Billy caught a June hog in his net, but was pulled into the river. Luckily the boy was saved by a fishing net. When Billy is brought to shore he tells everyone the June hogs sang to him.

Reno decides to have a celebration. She describes the First Fish ceremony that ended when the dam was created. The First Fish was a chieftain of people who lived in a great house; everyone had to treat him right. The First Fish was cut into many pieces, enough for everyone. When all the fish was eaten, the members of the tribe returned his bones to the river, telling others it was okay to fish.

Jesse explains to Lorna and Wade that Reno sent him to Calamus because she loved him; she wasn't able to be hard on him like the other children. Lorna, Wade, and Jesse leave the reservation.

Important Quotations:

"It was a dizzying thought, that somebody could fit the world so well and still have no place. No where. Nothing to do there. It would matter to me, but it didn't matter to Jesse. He could go fishing in a dry ravine and make the old man talk." (214–5)

"To Jesse they are just stories. Jesse hears the stories like jokes." (217)

Discussion Questions:

1. In the First Fish ceremony returning the bones to the place they came from is extremely important. What does it mean for a group of people when they can no longer return to where they came from?
2. What does Jesse mean when he says Reno sent him to Calamus because she loved him?
3. How did Native Americans become less civilized as the world around them became tamer?
4. Who are the June hogs in this novel?

Themes/Analysis:

Native Americans believe in things that Lorna can't understand. When Jesse tries to explain that the chieftain was disguised as a fish, he says they "had" to believe. Jesse and the Native Americans need stories because that is all they have left of their traditions and culture.

Reno saw that Jesse would remain an outsider on the reservation, so she sent him away in hopes that he would assimilate into white culture. But Jesse is a spectacle, exotic wherever he goes. He doesn't belong with the Native Americans or the Calamus townspeople.

Wade and Lorna are outsiders at the reservation and are able to sympathize with Jesse. This is especially significant for Wade because he has always felt accepted in Calamus, while Lorna was a different kind of outsider in Calamus.

Chapter Twenty-Two

Summary:

Wade feels that going to Princeton is like moving backwards and taking the easy way out. Wade decides to go out to sea with Jesse and Lorna and wait on college.

Jesse takes Wade and Lorna to Celilo Falls for a picnic on an island in a special spot that was sacred to his tribe. They climb to the top of the bluff and see several drawings on the rocks. Jesse explains that there used to be "Screamers" that warned the people about the rapids. Immediately after Jesse tells this story, the wind howls and the three of them turn to see a picture of a woman screaming on the rock. Jesse screams in response. The three friends frantically flee the island.

Important Quotations:

"But I couldn't shake this other idea that Back East was the safest of options. Survival of the timid." (221)

"You could wade through time and catch something of the world of Lawrence White Fish and Reno Howl. There was a sense of fullness about it. The whole world—and the rest of Time—was laid out before us." (223)

"The trouble with Jesse was just the opposite. Jesse was a believer! Stories were his real world. I'd seen it before. Jesse wasn't like he let on. It was just easier to make a joke of things that were too big or too sad." (224)

Discussion Questions:

1. What do stories mean to Wade, Jesse, and Lorna? Why do they need stories?
2. Why does Jesse get so scared when the wind howls?
3. Is Wade's rejection of going "Back East" more considerable than Lorna's or Jesse's rejection since Wade has been accepted by society?

Themes/Analysis:

Wade has rejected the prescribed life ahead of him and refuses to go "Back East." This is different than Jesse or Lorna's rejection of society because Wade is departing from the role of an insider.

Jesse is a believer in stories from nature because that's all he has. Being tame or civilized is impossible for Jesse; therefore he must reject that life. At the same time he is haunted by the ghosts, or screamers, from the old world. This is a world he cannot belong to.

Chapter Twenty-Three

Summary:

The chapter begins with an anecdotal story about Wade finding an egg, letting it hatch, and raising a duckling. The duck takes to a dog immediately and follows the dog around, so much that the duck thought it was a dog and couldn't be trained otherwise. The duck disappeared after a few days.

Wade decides to have a big dinner with his whole family, including Link, Jesse, and Lorna, to announce his change of plans. Jesse doesn't show up. Duncan gives a toast to his future and Wade shares his new plan to float the river with Lorna and Jesse and then go to Princeton a year later. His change of plans is not popular with anyone at the table. Duncan suggests that Wade help Jesse get into college if he really wants to help him. Wade goes to the coach and asks him to write a letter of recommendation for Jesse, but the coach refuses and Wade calls him a coward.

Important Quotations:

"The sad part, though, was there was no way to teach the chick duckness." (231)

"But it was subtle, not what you'd call vicious. It wasn't so much what people said but the way they didn't say it." (233)

Discussion Questions:

1. How is Jesse like the duckling?
2. Explain how Wade calling his coach a coward is a pivotal moment in the novel.
3. Why do you think Jesse doesn't show up for the big dinner?
4. Is the raft trip as important to Wade as it is to Lorna or Jesse?

Themes/Analysis:

Wade makes his final descent into the role of an outsider when he decides to float the river and challenge his coach in defense of Jesse. Rather than being born into being an outsider, Wade willingly assumes this role. Jesse has made the tension between the civilized world and the natural world clear to Wade.

By missing the important dinner Jesse opts out of being saved and assimilated to the civilized or natural world. Wade tries to make a spot for Jesse, but Jesse does not accept it.

Even Lorna, someone who has been made into an outsider, struggles to reject the civilized, and tame world when she sides with Wade's mother instead of Wade. She is still struggling to head "Out West." For Lorna, heading "Back East" seems like enough of a departure from Calamus, even if it is moving backwards.

Chapter Twenty-Four

Summary:

Jesse decides to enter the Calamus "Natives" competition. Wade tries to discourage Jesse from participating, but to no avail. Jesse almost wins the log rolling part of the competition, and regains the town's favor. Wade asks Link if he is Jesse's father and Link says only Reno knows the answer to that. When it comes time to climb the tree, Jesse doesn't stop or slow down when he reaches the top, causing his safety strap to slip over the top of the tree; Jesse falls to his death. All of the townspeople witness his death, including Link and Wade.

Important Quotations:

"This was something more than a ball game. Jesse was taking on loggers at their own game and showing them up."
(247)

"He turned to face us, his body extended as if floating through a graceful slow-motion dive for a theater audience."
(253)

Discussion Questions:

1. Why is it ironic for Jesse to join the "Natives" competition?
2. Why do the townspeople accept Jesse after he loses the log rolling competition?
3. Jesse expresses his final rebellion against civilization when he commits suicide. Does he succumb to civilization or is his revolt a triumph?
4. Was there a "spot" for Jesse? Did he have a choice?

Themes/Analysis:

Wade continues to try to rescue Jesse. He asks Jesse to reconsider entering in the contest, doubting whether Jesse recognizes the full weight of his decisions, even as he fell to his death. Wade attempts to "tame" Jesse at least enough to survive in civilization, but ultimately he fails.

Jesse commits his final act of defiance by committing suicide at the Timber Jamboree; he rejects society and civilization and embraces his role as the outsider. He is unwilling to compromise and live in either world. In Jesse's mind there was no other option, but to Wade he did have a "spot." He just didn't know it.

Jesse's suicide changes Wade. While Jesse might be unaware of the consequences of his actions, Wade sees the suicide as the destructive side of civilization.

Chapter Twenty-Five

Summary:

Wade and Lorna have to take a trip to the Warm Springs Reservation to tell Reno that Jesse is dead. Lorna and Wade try to cope with Jesse's death. The lake is the only place they are able to find solace.

One night Wade is practicing pitching in the window of his house and sees Jesse in himself. Wade and Lorna begin their river adventure toward Astoria without any real plans. Wade drops the necklace Jesse gave to him into the river. Wade explains "vuja de" to Lorna: that feeling of being an explorer and that what you're seeing no one else has ever seen before.

Important Quotations:

"His was a stupid, unnecessary death. I couldn't get over the idea that I was responsible—we all were—for a world too organized to hold him. Yet there was nobody, really, to blame... It was Calamus. But there was something inside of him, too, that would never have fit, would never have been civilized or comfortable." (257)

"Vuja de is that feeling you're the first one out here. Nobody in the world has ever been here before." (262)

Discussion Questions:

1. Wade describes white, not as the absence of color or nothing, but everything. How are the characters like the color white? Who goes from nothing to everything?
2. Wade drops Jesse's necklace into the water on the river trip. How is this ritual like the First Fish ceremony?
3. Does going "Back East" mean you can't experience "vuja de?"
4. How can Jesse have a "dim-brilliance"?
5. What part of Jesse is Wade able to see in himself?
6. Does the river journey become more important to Lorna and Wade after Jesse's death? Why?

Themes/Analysis:

At the end of the novel, Wade and Lorna are able to reconcile the dichotomy between civilization and nature. They are able to survive in a world that didn't make a "spot" for Jesse. With Jesse's help Lorna and Wade hope to find their "spot" on the river. Wade and Lorna have eliminated the possibility of Calamus being their "spot."

By going out into the wild, Lorna and Wade are able to experience "vuja de." Wade seems to think that choosing to be an outsider is better than blindly being accepted as an insider. He wants to be a part of Jesse and Lorna's world, as they are outsiders. By experimenting with life as an outsider, Wade is able to find his "spot."