

Native American Literature
Discussion Questions

***Indian Summers* by Eric Gansworth**

Created by Dorothea M. Susag for OPI library project

1. “Eric Gansworth is Onondaga and was raised on the Tuscorara Reservation. How does this place, its history and culture, shape the stories in *Indian Summers*?”
2. What is the story of the Dike and its importance to those who play or work around it? What places in Montana might be similar to the Dike and reservoir in *Indian Summers*?
3. What memories of “The Real Bug” help Floyd work through his grief?
4. What is the attraction of the plastic Indians for Floyd and his cousins in Chapter Seven, “The Ballad of Plastic Fred”? What does Floyd learn about death?
5. Reviewer Maurice Kenny has commented on the “hilariously comical” aspects of this novel. Which are the most memorable episodes that want retelling or rereading?
6. What are the assumptions non-Indians make about Indians and the reservation in these stories? For example: Floyd overhears a cop talking to the black girl about the man who had sexually assaulted her. “He was probably an Indian, this close to the reservation. They do things like that. And some of them look as white as . . . well, as white as me.” How do the assumptions and the resultant behaviors affect the Indians?
7. What are the compromises that Floyd makes throughout these stories? Are they reasonable? Are they necessary for survival?
8. In “Independence Day,” how does the story of The Crow operate as a metaphor for Indians?
9. Why does Floyd drown the ghost machine and burn the stories of memories he’s been writing?
10. In the end, Hank says to Floyd, Innis, and Jan, “I was wondering when you folks were coming home.” What is the significance of this statement for Hank? How does it help answer the question of why Indians, particularly those in *Indian Summers*, continue to live on the reservation?
11. The last lines of each chapter in *Indian Summers* are profound, inviting the reader into further reflection on the chapter’s theme and story. Which are the most striking and why?