

Native American Literature  
Discussion Questions

***Moccasin Thunder: American Indian Stories for Today***  
**Edited by Lori Marie Carlson**

Created by Dorothea M. Susag for OPI library project

1. “How to Get to the Planet Venus” by Joy Harjo  
At this contemporary boarding school, what does the narrator grow to understand about the “shining luminescent bridge past all human failures”? How do the dreams of the two girls help them survive?
2. “Because My Father Always Said He Was the Only Indian Who Saw Jimi Hendrix Play ‘The Star-Spangled Banner’ at Woodstock” by Sherman Alexie  
Describe Victor’s father and his impact on his son and wife? How do dreams help Victor survive?
3. “A Real-Live Blond Cherokee and His Equally Annoyed Soul Mate” by Cynthia Leitich Smith  
Why does the narrator become angry when Nika asks for an interview and the college guys want to buy a costume? What causes the narrator to change at the end?
4. “The Last Snow of the Virgin Mary” by Richard Van Camp  
Kevin Garner is a dope dealer and a tutor who wants to enter a teacher education program. What keeps him from achieving that dream?
5. “Crow” by Linda Hogan  
How does Grandmother use traditional story to help her interpret and understand events and people in her world today?
6. “Ice” by Joseph Bruchac  
Who is a “real Indian” and how does that contrast with the Indians tourists want to see?
7. “Wild Geese” by Louise Erdrich  
What does Nector Kashpaw suddenly realize about Marie Lazarre, and why does that change the way he feels about her?
8. “The Magic Pony” by Greg Sarris  
What does the pony symbolize to Ruby? Why might it be an appropriate thread or image for all the characters in the story?

9. "Summer Wind" by Lee Francis and "Drum Kiss" by Susan Power  
The last two stories in this collection feature preteens who live with their grandmothers. What are the lessons the children learn from their grandmothers that will last a lifetime?
  
10. In the Introduction, Lori Marie Carlson writes that "these stories are made of deep contemplations about a past that is still alive in those of us who are descended from ancient peoples." She goes on to say that this world "presents us with endless dilemmas," some of which are "from the larger society: drugs, alcohol, racism, the confusion of being of mixed race(xv)." What are the most effective tools for survival that these stories reveal?