

“The Cattle Thief” Questions

1. Considering the initial descriptions of Eagle Chief as a "terror to all the settlers" and a "monstrous, fearless Indian" who "thieved and raided, and scouted, who rode like a hurricane," why are the details of his eventual appearance so ironic?
2. What is the significance of Eagle Chief's physical appearance to the theme of the poem?
3. The settlers were "bent on bullets and bloodshed, bent on bringing down their game." Which poetic devices are being used here? What does this line indicate about how the settlers view Eagle Chief?
4. Both Eagle Chief and his daughter speak to the English settlers "in the language of the Cree." How does this add to your understanding of the poem's theme?
5. Explain the meaning of the lines: "How have you paid us for our game? How paid us for our land? / By a book, to save our souls from the sins you brought in your other hand." Clarify the allusion and comment on why Eagle Chief's daughter believes that the settlers, not her father, are the real thieves.
6. What does this poem reveal about colonialism, settlement, and attempts to erase Indigenous culture? What perspective is presented on Indigenous-settler history?