



# Reader's Guide — *The Revenge of Dead Horse Canyon : Novavose*

## Book 3 — Thematic Exploration

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### ❖ 1. Trauma, Acceptance, Adaptation

- Sara survives the poison but at a steep price. Her general health is deeply compromised plus she is now a paraplegic confined to a wheelchair.
- Charlie and Whitewolf's detoxification protocols provide some relief, but she still cannot walk or move her legs.
- Patrice tells her acceptance is often the gateway to resolve.

#### Discussion Prompts:

- Was it any surprise she felt betrayed when she "came back" only to discover the extent of her disabilities?
- Why did her attitude improve so dramatically after Charlie and Whitewolf's help?
- How important is a person's mental and emotional health to recovery or adaptation?
- Was Patrice correct?
- Sara had sufficient financial resources to adapt. What would a person do who didn't have that advantage?

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### ❖ 2. Generosity, Gratitude, Appreciation

- Star finds joy in giving because it "brought a feeling you couldn't get any other way."
- Conversely, Ingrid Thorson is obsessed with status and Angela Bentley is entrenched in a wealthy lifestyle.
- Not all people of limited means are generous and not all wealthy individuals are greedy.
- Spirituality, *i.e.* belief in more than meets the eye, provides a different perspective.

#### Discussion Prompts:

- Which group is generally happier? Those satisfied with what they have or those always seeking more?
- How does gratitude and appreciation contribute to a person's contentment?
- Does sacrifice, such as that demonstrated by Charlie's fast, contribute?
- Is spirituality learned? Has it been purposely suppressed?
- What abilities might we all have that require nurturing and practice to develop?

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## 🕯 3. Tradition, Ancestry, Ceremony

- Ancient healing methods, food traditions, and naming conventions that honor historical figures, are all inherent to Cheyenne culture.
- Respect for elders and the Earth Mother are integrated with daily life as well as reverence toward *Maheo* and all living things.
- "We are all related" combined with philosophical lessons from wildlife as *maiyan* whisper inspiration in moments of need promote an introspective and humble worldview.
- Symbolism is heavily practiced in Indigenous cultures while Westerners perceive beads, feathers, and other items related only to ornamentation.

### Discussion Prompts:

- How did these cultural norms help preserve their rich culture in spite of efforts to anglicize them?
- What cultural damage resulted from outlawing certain ceremonies?
- Was that the only reason some practices vital to their identity and well-being were lost?
- What level of "situational awareness" do indigenous people maintain compared to the average American?

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## ॥ 4. Imprisonment, Liberation, Freedom

- Jason kidnaps Sara, making her a prisoner.
- Charlie and spiritual forces facilitate not only her escape but heal her disability as well.
- Ice stated, "*Maheo* allowed the blindness to continue" after Sara escaped.

### Discussion Prompts:

- What was the purpose of Jason's blindness other than allowing her to escape?
- Why was a sweat required to reverse it and allow him to see?
- After all was said and done, did Sara actually liberate him?

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## ☐ 5. Determination, Patience, Resolve

- Sara remained steadfast in fulfilling Bryan's request in spite of daunting opposition that threatened her life more than once.
- White Wolf continually admonishes Charlie to be patient.
- When a Cheyenne pledges a ceremony he has one year to complete it. If he does not, it is looked upon as a serious violation.

### Discussion Prompts:

- What drove Sara's passion? Without that would she have persisted?
- Was Charlie really impatient? Or was he reacting to a subconscious sense of urgency?
- What other factors converged to accomplish what occurred following the *Massaum and Dance of Peace and Welcome*?
- Which indicators pointed toward a specific day?

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## ★ 6. Manifest Destiny, Assimilation, Cultural Annihilation

- Early settlers in North and South America as well as framers of the U.S. Constitution considered indigenous people savages who were slightly less than human.
- Religious institutions such as the Roman Catholic Church supported that view.
- *Manifest Destiny* justified western expansion and annihilation of native populations.
- The Civil War freed black slaves, which combined with a flood of European immigrants during the 19th and early 20th Centuries, brought a strong emphasis on assimilation.
- Those with empathy toward Native Americans were overruled by military and government officials.
- The U.S. Constitution was based on the Iroquois Confederacy Agreement between tribes. ([Blog](#))
- Native American tribes warred against one another--but so did European and Asian countries.
- The Black Hills originally belonged to the Cheyenne where the Sacred Mountain, *Novavose*, is located. It was given back to them by the U.S. Government, then retaken when gold was discovered. (Ever wonder where the term "Indian giver" came from?)

### Discussion Prompts:

- Did you ever think of those who came to America from Europe as early as the 13th Century as invaders?
- Why was assimilating European immigrants and former slaves different than doing so with Native Americans?
- Were indigenous cultures more spiritual in their worldview than western civilizations?
- How was Mount Rushmore the ultimate insult to Native Americans?

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## Suggested Reading List

- Blaisdell, Bob (Editor); *Great Speeches by Native Americans* ([My Review](#))
- Sandweiss, Martha A.; *The Girl in the Middle: A Recovered History of the American West* ([My Review](#))
- FourEagles, Russell; *The Making of a Healer: Teachings of My Oneida Grandmother* ([My review](#))
- Kimmerer, Robin Wall; *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* ([My review](#))
- Saunt, Claudio; *Unworthy Republic: The Dispossession of Native Americans and the Road to Indian Territory*

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## Trivia & Insights

- **Giving**

The psychology of giving explores why people give to others and the emotional and psychological benefits they experience in the process. Research shows that giving activates areas of the brain associated with pleasure, satisfaction, and reward, creating a "helper's high." People often give because it boosts their sense of self-worth, fosters social connections, and promotes feelings of empathy and compassion. Giving can also be driven by a desire to create positive change, strengthen relationships, or meet societal expectations. Ultimately, the act of giving not only helps others but also provides a sense of fulfillment and well-being for the giver.

- **Occupational Therapists**

As a Physical Therapist (PT) Sara was aware of what Occupational therapists (OTs) do to help people with disabilities or injuries regain or improve their ability to perform daily tasks. While PTs help their patients recover or compensate for physical injuries, OTs help individuals deal with their limitations by developing, recovering, or maintaining the skills needed for everyday activities, such as dressing, cooking, and work-related tasks.

OTs assess a person's physical, mental, and emotional abilities and create personalized treatment plans to improve independence. They may recommend adaptive equipment, teach new strategies, and work on building motor skills, sensory processing, and cognitive functions to help clients achieve their goals and enhance their quality of life.

- **Abductor - Abductee Relationships**

The relationship that can develop between a kidnapper and their victim, often referred to as Stockholm Syndrome, is a complex psychological phenomenon. It occurs when a victim forms an emotional bond with their captor, sometimes even defending or identifying with them. This bond often develops in situations of extreme stress, isolation, or dependence, where the victim may perceive acts of kindness, or lack of violence, as signs of care. Over time, the victim might feel gratitude or sympathy for the captor, and the captor may even begin to see the victim as a tool to maintain control or gain validation.

In the case of Patty Hearst, her kidnapping by the Symbionese Liberation Army (SLA) in 1974 is a prime example of this. After months of captivity, Hearst began to show signs of Stockholm Syndrome, participating in criminal activities with her captors, including bank robberies. Her transformation from a wealthy socialite to a member of the SLA raised questions about psychological manipulation and trauma. Over time, victims of such situations can become psychologically entwined with their captors, sometimes making it difficult for outsiders to understand their behavior, as it becomes tied to survival instincts, fear, and a distorted sense of connection.

In the case of Sara and Jason, there are shades of this, except she had a stronger influence on him than vice versa. Her courage and helpless state brought out his male protective instincts, something he had never experienced before, generating the Stockholm Syndrome in reverse.

- **Ceremonies**

Ceremonies play a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing the identity, values, and social cohesion of a culture. Psychologically, they provide structure and meaning to significant life events, such as births, marriages, rites of passage, and deaths, helping individuals navigate transitions and challenges. Ceremonies offer a sense of belonging and continuity, linking individuals to their community, heritage, and the larger world.

They also help individuals process emotions and make sense of life's milestones by creating a shared experience that fosters solidarity. The collective nature of ceremonies strengthens social bonds, reinforcing shared beliefs, rituals, and traditions that promote cultural continuity.

Psychologically, ceremonies can offer comfort, reduce anxiety, and provide a sense of control in times of uncertainty. They also allow people to express their values, beliefs, and identities in a meaningful way, often creating lasting memories and emotional connections with both the event and the culture itself. Ultimately, ceremonies serve as a powerful tool for social, emotional, and psychological well-being within a culture.