

About the Authors



Black Elk (Hehaka Sapa) (1863-1950) and John G. Neihardt (1881-1973)

Black Elk (Hehaka Sapa) was born in December 1863 and died in August 1950. A member of the Oglala Lakota, he was the second cousin of Crazy Horse and was a witness of the Battle of the Little Big Horn and a wounded victim at the Wounded Knee Massacre in 1890. He also was a member of Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show when it travelled to England in 1887. Like Sitting Bull on another occasion, Black Elk found the participation to be a bad experience, given the liberties that Cody took with the truth. Black Elk was both a holy man and a Catholic convert. In addition, he was a heyoka (jester or contrarian) who forced people to confront issues in different ways than were dictated by social convention. When Black Elk put on furs during a heat wave and shed clothing during a cold spell, he was satirizing the limits placed on life by the elements.

John G. Neihardt (January 8, 1881, to November 24, 1973) was an American poet (*The Song of Hugh Glass* and *A Cycle of the West*, among others) who also published prose studies of Plains history (*When the Tree Flowered*, *The Splendid Wayfaring*, and *Indian Tales and Others*). His work focused on the Plains experience, including the displacement of Native Americans by European migrants. Born in Illinois, Neihardt moved to Bancroft, Nebraska in 1901, living on the edge of the Omaha Reservation. He graduated at the age of sixteen from Nebraska Normal College (now Wayne State College) and turned to running a newspaper called *The Bancroft Blade* for several years. He was Nebraska Poet Laureate from 1921 until his death, though he lived in Missouri from 1920 until 1969. *Black Elk Speaks*, which appeared in 1932, is generally regarded as one of the most influential books written in the Midwest.

www.arizona-dream.com

www.neihardt.com

Note: Information was attained from one of the South Dakota Book Bag Study Guides (a project supported with funding from the South Dakota Humanities Council).

<http://library.sd.gov/PROG/sdbookbag/index.aspx>