

Discussion Questions

1. What is “culture”?
2. How might a tribal definition of “culture” differ from definitions of “American culture”? Why?
3. The trickster is a common figure in many cultures. What are some examples from American culture? From other cultures?
4. The troll also has relatives in other cultures. What are some of those, and how do they compare to and contrast with the troll in this book?
5. What are some of the specific historical events alluded to in this text? How widely known are they?
6. What are “oral traditions”? How are they demonstrated in this text?
7. Are you significantly influenced by oral traditions? Should you be?
8. What are the dominant vehicles for storytelling in the contemporary world? How does contemporary storytelling compare to storytelling of other times?
9. Is “history” storytelling? Should it be? Why or why not?
10. Why do most South Dakotans know so little about American Indian histories and cultures?
11. Is the past “past”? Should it be?
12. How might the history of this region be made into more of a usable memory?
13. Which of the issues raised in this text are still issues today? Why?
14. What are some differences between American Indian and non-Indian philosophies of the earth? How are they dramatized in this text?
15. How do you define “humor”? How is it defined and how does it function in this text?
16. In her “Author’s Note,” the author observes, “Today there is an awareness that we live in a multicultural nation.” Do you think that awareness of which she speaks is common among South Dakotans? Why or why not?

17. Do you know of other “bridge” books? If so, how do they compare and contrast with this one?
18. South Dakota is predominantly bi-cultural, American Indian and Euro-American. What are some other cross-cultural dynamics in our state?
19. How is the recent influx of immigrants from other countries affecting South Dakota society and culture?
20. Would you recommend this text to other readers? Why or why not?

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>