



**Inclement Weather
Resources
ELA
Grade 7**

**The Department of Curriculum
&
Instruction**

Literacy Support Parent Guide

Between The Lines and Rez Dog Rules

by Cynthia Leitich Smith (2021)



In this section of the Literacy Support Guide, we're reading anchor text, "Between the Lines" by Cynthia Leitich Smith and "Rez Dog Rules" by Rebecca Roanhorse. In "Between the Lines," Native American teenagers Mel and Ray deal with awkwardness and misunderstandings at a community event. Smith encourages readers to discuss the themes of America, Community, and Identity as they relate to the text. We are trying to answer these big questions: "How has America changed over time?", "How are communities formed?", "What is the importance of community?", and "What makes you who you are?"

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Ways to Support your Child

1. Ask your child what literary texts: "Between the Lines" and the paired text, "Rez Dog Rules" are about?
2. **Parent Answer Keys**-Review written responses together

Related Media

Watch the following clips with your child at home.

1. ['Cynthia Leitich Smith: Why powwow is central to the "Ancestor Approved" anthology | Colorin Colorado'](#)
2. ['Fancy Shawl - 2018 Gathering of Nations Pow Wow | PowWows.com'](#)
3. ['Nizhoni Elizabeth Smocks on what it means to be Afro-Indigenous | Rocky Mountain PBS'](#)

ANCHOR TEXT



Name: _____

Class: _____

Between the Lines

By Cynthia Leitich Smith

2021

Cynthia Leitich Smith is an award-winning author of books for young readers that center on the lives of present-day Native American people. She is also a citizen of the Muscogee Nation, the fourth largest Native American tribe. In "Between the Lines," teenagers Mel and Ray deal with awkwardness and misunderstandings at a community event.

As you read, take notes on how the narrator describes Mel's and Ray's thoughts and feelings.

- [1] Electric colors and pulsating song beckoned from inside the high school.

Near the busy entrance, Mel leaned against a pillar, clutching a worn paperback novel. Wind felt chilly. Her stomach, hollow. She glanced toward the video shoot on the lawn, where her mom was still — *still* — talking about her time in the coast guard.¹

That boy on the other side of the doors, the one seated against the wall on the concrete walk... was he using his phone to take a picture of her? Why? She wasn't dressed in regalia² or doing anything interesting. "Hey, you! Stop that!"



"Chickahominy Pow Wow" by Tony Alter is licensed under CC0.

The boy, Ray, froze at the warning in her voice. In the parking lot, he'd noticed her arriving with her mom, who was being interviewed along with his grampa Halfmoon for a documentary³ on Native⁴ veterans.

- [5] Earlier that afternoon, Ray had been wandering around the powwow,⁵ sketching and using his hand-me-down cell phone to take reference photos for future sketches. He'd come outside to get some fresh air. The way Mel had gripped her book had caught his eye.

"Don't you have somewhere to be?" she asked him.

-
1. a branch of the US armed forces responsible for protecting life and property at sea
 2. the distinguishing decorations or symbols of any organization, position, or office
 3. a film that explores real facts and events and often includes real footage of the events as they happened
 4. a term often used to refer describe indigenous peoples from the United States, including Native Americans, Native Hawaiians, and Alaska Natives
 5. Native American gatherings that include singing, dancing, and celebrating rich cultural histories

He opened his mouth and closed it again. He felt embarrassed, unsure what to say.

Right then, a couple of Elder ladies, approaching the entrance, stopped in their tracks.

"You all right?" asked the Elder in long beaded earrings and a long denim coat.

[10] "Yeah." Mel pointed in the general direction of the shoot. "My mom's over there."

"Hmm." The other Elder was sporting a Detroit Pistons jacket and a fuzzy blue scarf. "Looks like they'll be busy for a while." She gestured to invite Mel inside. "You'd best come along. The weather's all over the place this week. We had sleet — "

"More like rain," her companion replied.

"No, it was sleet, and a twister, too."

"It was *not* a twister, Priscilla!"

[15] "Was so! I told you — I heard about it on the radio."

Mel liked them right off, and she was tired of waiting outside.

With a friendly grin, Priscilla added, "This sourpuss is my sister, Laurel. We drove in earlier this week to visit our niece. She's a student in the architecture school at the college."

Nodding, Mel texted her mom that she was heading back to the powwow. Mel was about to introduce herself when Laurel asked, "Where're your people from?"

Meanwhile, Ray had tucked his phone into his clear backpack and gathered up his colored pencils and sketchbook. The girl was already gone.

[20] What a mess that had been! Maybe he should've asked her permission before taking the photo. He definitely should've. He'd even thought about it, but Ray had a shy streak.

Even if he'd been back home at Chicago's annual powwow or splitting deep-dish pizza with his baseball buddies, Ray wasn't a big talker. But he was always doing something, and today he was mostly focused on drawing. His art teacher had told him that hands and feet were among the hardest subjects to draw. "If you can master hands, you'll be able to do anything."

Ray took off jogging across the school lawn. The documentary maker, Marita, had mentioned the importance of natural light and sound quality. That was why she'd set up the shoot outside, but Ray hadn't expected it to take so long. He should've known that Grampa, who was the social one in the family, would get caught up in all the excitement and make a bunch of new friends. In any case, Grampa wasn't being filmed at that very moment, so Ray said, "Okay if I go inside to check out the vendor booths?"

"You go and find that Carly," Grampa Halfmoon said. "Offer to help out at their booth."

Marita paused what she was doing, waved hello at Ray, and raised her camera again. She hailed from the Tigua

people of Ysleta del Sur Pueblo, near El Paso.⁶

- [25] While working on the film, she was traveling from coast to coast with family, including her cousin-in-law Carly, who sold books and maps at powwows and other Native events.

That morning at the hotel, over bacon and waffles, Grampa Halfmoon and Carly — who was Muscogee Creek and Cherokee — had really hit it off. Carly had shown a real interest when Ray opened his sketchbook and flipped through a few drawings he'd created on the train ride into Ann Arbor.⁷ Ray had appreciated the attention. His buddies back home were a lot of fun, but they mostly talked about sports, not art.

In the vendor⁸ area, Ray spotted a T-shirt that said *Ancestor Approved*. He studied beadwork and bought a beaded key chain to give his grandfather. Finally, Carly waved Ray over and made space on the display table. "Good to see you again, kiddo. Want to draw right here?"

"Sure thing, wado!"⁹ Settling in, Ray reached for a big coffee-table book on beadwork. He turned to a glossy, close-up color photo of an artist's hands at work. Ray began sketching.

In the concession stands area, Mel had slipped her paperback novel into her puffy purple coat pocket. She was maybe halfway through the story. She'd spent babysitting money on it. Mel felt obligated to push on through, but it was tough going.

- [30] The Elder ladies were telling her all about their soon-to-be-architect niece's plans to study abroad¹⁰ in Shanghai,¹¹ about their visit to a fancy local delicatessen¹² in Ann Arbor, about the station wagon they'd named "Maud," about their car troubles, and about how Sheldon Sundown, the "dashing emcee," had rescued them with jumper cables last night in the hotel parking lot.

Mel listened and listened and listened and listened, and finally, she happened to mention that the documentary being filmed outside was about Native military vets.

"You don't say!" Priscilla exclaimed. "Isn't that interesting, Laurel?"

"She served in the navy," Laurel said, handing Mel an orange pop.

"I served in the navy," Priscilla echoed. "Do I ever have stories to tell!"

- [35] Sipping her icy drink, Mel could only imagine. A few minutes later, the sisters excused themselves to go talk to Marita the filmmaker and... Mel felt better.

6. city in West Texas near the border with New Mexico

7. a city in southeast Michigan where the University of Michigan is located

8. **Vendor (noun)** a person or group that sell things

9. "Thank you" in the Cherokee language

10. pursue an educational opportunity in another country

11. the largest city in China; a major port and global financial hub

12. **Delicatessen (noun)** a shop that sells cheese, cooked meats, and other foods ready to eat; often shortened to "deli"

A hearty dose of caring Elders had done her good.

Mel wandered into the gym, figuring that by now her mom *had* to be done with the filming and probably got caught up chatting. With Laurel and Priscilla in the mix, she might be outside socializing until dinner. Mel grinned at the thought. Her first real smile of the day.

Scanning the bleachers, Mel made her way to a spot in the top corner to sit. She'd tied the padded coat around her waist and had to twist a bit to fish the novel out of the pocket.

Mel opened the paperback, closed it again. She tapped the novel against her knee. It was a fantasy¹³ story, and Mel loved fantasy. It had the word "Indian" in the title, and she'd wanted to read a story with a Native character. But it was chock-full of old-timey Hollywood Indian speak. Mel regretted the five bucks she'd spent on it at her local used bookstore.

- [40] About halfway down the bleachers, a girl about her age with cropped dark hair was using a real camera (not a phone app) to photograph an adorable, chubby baby wearing a beaded headband.

What with the music of the drum and a gym full of people, Mel couldn't hear their laughter — the baby's or the girl's — but she could feel it.

She considered making her way over to them and introducing herself, but what would she say? Mel had felt lost — more anxious than usual — since her best friend Emma had moved to Lansing over winter break. Mel's counselor had encouraged her to come to the powwow today instead of staying home with her auntie and little cousins. "Maybe you'll make a new friend." But it was always hard for Mel, talking to new people. She got nervous, froze up. What if she made a fool of herself?

The photographer girl looked so happy, confident.

Mel opened her book once more and tried again.

- [45] For the first time, Ray's sketch of beading hands, the sketch that poured from his colored pencils, resembled actual human hands. Sort of. Close enough. What a day!

It had helped to begin by breaking the palms and finger joints into basic shapes and paying more attention to the spaces between the fingers. He'd made real progress, and along the way, he'd also helped sell four copies of the pricey coffee-table book on beading.

Passersby were drawn in, curious to watch his artistic process.

"Kiddo, you've got a real future in bookselling," Carly said with a chuckle.

Ray ducked his head, embarrassed, and excused himself to get some fry bread.¹⁴

13. imaginative fiction that contains strange characters, places, or events

14. a flat dough bread fried in oil that was a survival food created by the Navajo nation when they were

[50] “Hang on.” Carly handed over some cash and waved him on. “Get me a Navajo taco¹⁵ and a drink, too.” As Ray went searching for lunch, Carly considered the available options.

Where to show off Ray’s terrific new sketch? Table space was at a premium.

Being a Black Indian¹⁶ cowboy and a two-spirit¹⁷ activist, Carly proudly stocked nonfiction and poetry on both subjects, along with Native-created novels and a handful of picture books. Carly liked poetry the best, the way the words could light up a heartbeat, a misread signal, a careful stitch, or a sudden shift from strangers to friends.

After reconfiguring¹⁸ the book arrangement twice, Carly finally decided to display Ray’s artwork in front alongside the bookmarks and business cards. They propped it up at an angle.

In the concessions area, Ray had more than one option for the World’s Best Fry Bread, but he chose the stand where a boy who was about his age was chopping lettuce. Those would be interesting hands to draw. But then Ray remembered the girl with the book who’d hollered at him outside. Should he risk distracting the boy with the knife in his hand or interrupting while the stand was so busy: Probably not. *Okay*, Ray thought, *back to the camera app*. Only this time he’d be stealthier.

[55] Joey, a Turtle Mountain Band Ojibwe, set the kitchen knife down. “Hey, there. Uh, what’s so exciting about lettuce?”

Ray had been caught in the act again. He shrugged. “I... I wasn’t taking a picture of the lettuce. I was taking a picture of your hands chopping it.” He held out his phone to show Joey all his photos of hands. “I use the pics as models to draw different positions.”

“Huh. Good for you, man,” Joey said, reaching for a ripe tomato.

Ray glanced down at his phone screen. It might be interesting to do a collage with all the photos of the hands in addition to drawing them. “You really sell the world’s best fry bread?”

Joey tossed up the tomato, caught it one-handed. “We’ve all got our talents.”

[60] Appreciating the pose, Ray grinned and took a picture.

Carly took off a straw cowboy hat. “I’ve got just the book for you.”

Mel brightened at the cover of *Skeleton Man*. She liked spooky stories.

displaced from their ancestral lands in the mid 1800s

15. fry bread topped with seasoned meat, beans, and other fixings

16. Native American people who also have significant African American heritage

17. referring to a person who identifies as having both a masculine and a feminine spirit

18. **Reconfigure (verb)** to change the shape or formation of; remodel

"There's a sequel,¹⁹ too," Carly added, reaching. "I've got it right here."

Mel set her orange pop on the display table so she could flip through *Skeleton Man*, not realizing her drink was resting unevenly on Carly's business cards. Then she set her purse on the foldout table next to it and peeked inside her wallet.

[65] "I'll take the first one." Mel frowned. "Don't have enough money for both."

"You don't say." Carly arched a brow. "What's that sticking out of your pocket?"

Mel pulled out the book she'd given up on. "I couldn't get into it."

"Uh-huh." Carly glanced at the cover, read the description on the back, and nodded thoughtfully. "I understand. How's about I trade you this for *The Return of Skeleton Man*?"

What a deal! In the exchange, Mel bumped into her purse, which bumped into her cup, which was already a tiny bit tilted, and *ka-splash!* The orange pop went *everywhere*. Inside Mel's purse, onto her puffy coat, onto her new books, and all over Ray's drawing.

[70] Ray was walking up when he saw the accident. He hurried over, handing the food and drinks to Carly, who quickly turned to set it all on a cardboard box on the floor. Then Ray lifted Mel's purse out of the way.

"Give that back!" she exclaimed, yanking her purse back. A second later, Mel recognized him. "It's you, from outside. Why are you following me?"

"I am *not* following you!" Ray exclaimed. His voice bottomed out. "My sketch... "

"What?" She glanced down. "Oh." She realized that had been his drawing. Biting her lip, she appreciated the time it must've taken. The skill it must've taken. Orange soda pop was already staining the paper. The bookmarks and business cards were ruined, too.

"I'll run and get napkins," Ray said as fizzy liquid dripped off the table to the floor.

[75] "Take it easy, kids," Carly began, clearing a stack of books out of the way. "It's a shame, but these things hap—" Ray had already disappeared in the crowd.

Mel began to back away, hugging her new books. "Sorry, sorry," she said to Carly. "I'm so sorry. I, um, my mom just texted me. I've got to go."

Before long, Ray returned with a whole roll of paper towels — donated by Joey — to sop up the spill. By then, Mel was gone. Ray thought about trying to find her, to tell her that there were no hard feelings. But, he figured, if she'd wanted to be friends, she wouldn't have rushed off like that. Besides, his fry bread was calling to him.

19. **Sequel** (*noun*) a book or movie that is complete on its own, but also continues a story begun in an earlier work

That evening, settling in on the Amtrak Wolverine²⁰ train, Grampa Halfmoon was admiring his new beaded key chain and telling Ray all about the film shoot. “Grand Traverse Band,” they said. “This lady, Priscilla was her name — she was there with her sister, Laurel. Real friendly, both of them. I sure do like folks who like to talk.”

“Me too,” Ray said, distracted. Right then a familiar-looking girl carrying a new, slightly orange paperback novel was walking toward them with a grown-up woman.

[80] Grampa smiled at the woman. “Good to see you again! This is my grandson, Ray.”

“You too! This is my daughter, Melanie.”

As the two kids traded awkward hellos, their respective grownups picked up their conversation from earlier that day, discussing the Cubs baseball team. Which was all well and good, except that other passengers, standing behind mother and daughter, needed to get seated.

“Ray, how ‘bout you sit over there with Melanie while we visit,” Grampa suggested.

Lacking any excuse not to, Ray grabbed his clear backpack and relocated across the aisle.

[85] For nearly an hour, he and Mel sat side by side on the train in absolute silence. She began reading *Skeleton Man*. He opened his sketch pad and — studying a photo on his phone — began drawing Joey’s hand, modeling the tomato from the World’s Best Fry Bread stand.

Mel liked her new book *much* better than the one she’d traded away, but she couldn’t help sneaking the occasional peek at what Ray was doing. He caught her looking and offered a wan²¹ smile. Was he still mad at her? she wondered. He didn’t seem mad.

“I’m sorry I spilled pop all over your drawing this afternoon,” she said in a quiet rush. “I didn’t do it on purpose. I didn’t even notice the picture until...” That hadn’t sounded right. “I’m not saying it wasn’t a good picture,” she went on. “It was really pretty.” Was he one of those boys who hated anything to do with himself being called “pretty”? She hoped not.

Mel pursed her lips. She still wasn’t happy about him randomly taking pictures of her, but she didn’t want him to think that she’d ruined his work on purpose either.

Ray took a breath. She was talking to him. Least he could do was reciprocate.²² “It’s okay, Melanie.” He said her name slowly, like he was trying out the word. “Really, my ferret has eaten some of my best artwork. He’s spilled watery paint on it, shredded it, stolen it.”

[90] Was that insulting, comparing her to his pet? Ray didn’t mean it that way. “Not that you’re like a ferret. You’re

20. a high-speed passenger train that operates between Ann Arbor, MI and Chicago, IL; the Wolverine is the mascot of the University of Michigan

21. **Wan** (*adjective*) faint; weak

22. **Reciprocate** (*verb*) to give or feel something to the same degree

definitely a person.”

At Mel’s quizzical,²³ vaguely amused expression, he reached for his phone and tapped his camera app a couple of times to show her a photo of Bandit.

Mel grinned at the image. “He’s cute. Lots of personality?”

“So much personality,” Ray agreed. “My grampa calls him ‘ornery.’”

Ray tapped his screen a couple more times to get back to the grid of photos. He tapped the image of Mel’s hands, holding the paperback novel she’d traded away at Carly’s booth. He’d done his best to zoom in, but the photo wasn’t as good as those he’d taken from a closer distance.

[95] “Sorry, I should’ve asked first.” There, he’d said it. Ray had been tempted to explain away the mistake by saying he didn’t want to interrupt her reading like he hadn’t wanted to interrupt Joey chopping lettuce at the fry bread stand. But truth was, it was never easy for Ray to talk to new people. So he handed her the phone instead.

Mel scrolled and studied his images. A lot of pics of Grampa Halfmoon and Bandit, a handful of Wrigley Field and sparkling lake views. So many hands — young and old, shaded in a range of beiges and browns. She glanced at his open notebook again.

Returning the phone, she said, “You’re an artist.”

The whole train seemed to shimmer. The stars shone brighter out the window.

Ray knew Grampa and his art teacher believed in him, but nobody had ever said, “You’re an artist.” Just like that. Let alone someone his own age. Maybe Mel wasn’t easy to get to know, but she sure did have a kind heart. “I’m trying to learn how to draw people,” he said. “Hands — they’re hard. So are feet. I haven’t even tried feet yet.”

[100] Then they were chatting away. Mel said she was Muscogee Creek and Odawa, that her friends called her “Mel,” and that she lived with her mom and a tabby cat named Dragon in Kalamazoo. Ray said he was Cherokee and Seminole, that his friends called him Ray, and that he lived with Bandit and Grampa Halfmoon in the Albany Park neighborhood of Chicago.

“Maybe you and your mom could meet up with me and Grampa for a Cubs game,” Ray suggested, ducking his head a little. “Would you like that, Mel?”

He wanted to see her again? “Yeah,” Mel said. “I mean, I’d have to check with my mom, but I think she’d really go for it.”

Earlier that day, Mel had been in a bad mood. She hadn’t liked that one book. She’d hardly paid attention to the Fancy Shawl²⁴ dancers, and they were her favorite. Sure, she’d had some nice moments, hanging out with her

23. **Quizzical** (*adjective*) questioning or puzzled

24. a women’s dance originating from the Northern Tribes along the US-Canadian border that involves jumping

mom, talking to Priscilla, Laurel, and Carly.

But mostly, even though she'd been surrounded by so many people, Mel had felt alone and tight in her skin. She and Ray had gotten off to a rough start. Make that "starts" — plural. Who would've guessed that she'd end up with a new friend?

[105] "Can you draw my hands reading this book instead?" Mel opened *Skeleton Man*. "I'm sitting right here beside you. You won't even have to take a picture."

"Glad to," Ray replied, breaking out his colored pencils.

Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. What is the theme of the story?
 - A. Powwows are an important way for communities to share traditions in the past.
 - B. Although Elders mean well, sometimes they make situations worse by interfering.
 - C. Friendship can be found in unexpected places if people are willing to take a chance.
 - D. The best way to overcome shyness is by doing solo activities like drawing and reading.

2. What do paragraphs 42-43 suggest about Mel?
 - A. Mel is frustrated that her counselor made her go to the powwow.
 - B. Mel is jealous of the happy kids around her and would rather be at home.
 - C. Mel wants to have friends, but her shyness makes it hard to talk to people.
 - D. Although she does not want to make new friends, Mel enjoys watching people.

3. Which detail supports the idea that Carly cares about helping people learn about many aspects of Native American culture?
 - A. "You go and find that Carly," Grampa Halfmoon said. "Offer to help out at their booth." (Paragraph 23)
 - B. "Carly had shown a real interest when Ray opened his sketchbook and flipped through a few drawings he'd created on the train ride into Ann Arbor." (Paragraph 26)
 - C. "Being a Black Indian cowboy and a two-spirit activist, Carly proudly stocked nonfiction and poetry on both subjects, along with Native-created novels and a handful of picture books." (Paragraph 52)
 - D. "Ray was walking up when he saw the accident. He hurried over, handing the food and drinks to Carly, who quickly turned to set it all on a cardboard box on the floor." (Paragraph 70)

4. How does Grampa Halfmoon's outgoing personality most impact the development of the plot?
 - A. Because he knows Ray is too shy to do it on his own, Grampa Halfmoon apologizes to Mel on his behalf.
 - B. Grampa Halfmoon invites Mel and her mother to a Cubs game in Chicago because he knows that Ray is too shy to ask.
 - C. Ray is frustrated that his talkative Grampa Halfmoon keeps trying to make him talk to Mel, and that causes him to avoid her even more.
 - D. Grampa Halfmoon asks Ray to switch seats with Mel's mom so they can chat, leaving Ray and Mel to sit together and eventually talk.

5. What does the word "ornery" mean as it is used in paragraph 93?
 - A. speedy and always on the run
 - B. lazy and prefers to lay around
 - C. funny and enjoys playing jokes
 - D. stubborn and difficult to control

6. How does the author use figurative language in paragraph 98 to convey Ray's feelings?
- A. The author uses alliteration to demonstrate that Ray is bored with the long train ride.
 - B. The author uses metaphor to show that Ray enjoys watching the bright stars on a clear night.
 - C. The author uses imagery about shiny, shimmery things to show Ray's happiness at being called an artist.
 - D. The author uses personification to give the train human-like qualities to illustrate Ray's growing friendship.

7. How does the conversation between Mel and Ray on the train contribute to the story's theme?

Discussion Questions

Directions: *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. Throughout the story, various characters are either asked about or mention where they are from. Why do you think this is an important question in the context of Native American literature and culture? Is it important in your culture or family to always acknowledge where you are from? Why or why not?
2. In the story, it takes Ray and Mel a while to become friends, even though they obviously have a lot in common. Have you ever become friends with someone who you didn't like or were afraid to talk to at first? What kept you from being able to connect with that person initially, and how did you eventually overcome it to become friends?
3. Elders play an important role in the story and Native American culture in general. Do you have important elders in your life? Who are they, and what sorts of wisdom and value do they add to your life? Tell us about your favorite elder. What sort of elder do you hope to be one day?
4. Mel mentions not liking the original paperback book that she was reading very much because it was "chock-full of old-timey Hollywood Indian speak" (Paragraph 39). What do you think she means by this? When Carly allows her to trade in her old book for the two *Skeleton Man* books, why is Mel especially excited to read them? Do you think it matters whether an author is a member of the same culture about which they are writing? Why, or why not?

PAIRED TEXT



Name: _____

Class: _____

Rez Dog Rules

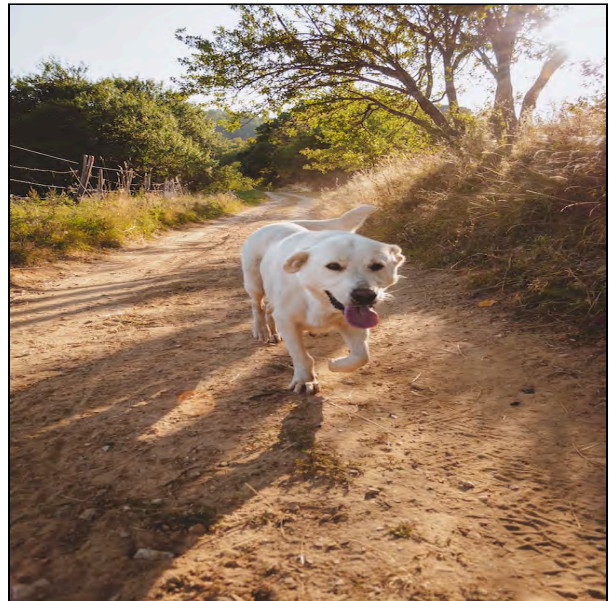
By Rebecca Roanhorse
2021

Rebecca Roanhorse is a New York Times bestselling author who writes fiction for both young readers and adults. A reservation, sometimes called a "rez," is land that was set aside by the U.S. government to be occupied and governed by recognized Indigenous American tribes. In this story, an independent dog living on a reservation discovers something new about himself.

As you read, take notes on how Ozzie sees himself.

[1] While there were many things that Ozzie appreciated being a Rez dog, there were exactly three were the absolute best:

1. No masters. It was a provable fact that Rez dogs, by definition, had no masters. In fact, one of the defining qualities of the *Canis Liberatus Reservatus* (as he and his kin were known in Latin) was a lack of human-imposed rules. Ozzie was his own dog, and the only laws he followed were those of nature, who told him when to eat, when to sleep, and when to lift his leg on a convenient tree. Ozzie was as free as any living creature could be. Sure, it was lonely sometimes, especially on rainy nights when all the humans and their pets were warm and cozy inside and Ozzie was stuck outside, making do with whatever shelter he could find. And he sometimes wondered what his life would be like if he lived in one of those houses with four walls and a roof and warm cuddles from a human child. But overall, he was content, because he knew nothing was as warm and comforting as freedom. He was a canine¹ majestic and untamed, and he preferred it that way.



"Untitled" by Alexandra Mirgheş is licensed under CC0.

2. No leashes. It would logically² follow that a dog who would abide no master would also not tolerate³ a leash. Ozzie was proud to say that he had never succumbed⁴ to the tyranny of wearing a leash, a harness, a gentle lead, or any other human-created restricting⁵ device. He firmly believed in unencumbered⁶ movement. Ozzie

1. of or related to dogs
2. **Logically** (*adverb*) reasonably; in a way that would be expected
3. **Tolerate** (*verb*) to put up with; to allow
4. to give in; to yield
5. **Restrict** (*verb*) to contain or confine

went where he wanted, when he wanted. Mostly on four feet, but it was not unheard of for him to catch a ride in the bed of an old pickup truck when he had to get across town in a hurry. He imagined himself roaming the mesas like his ancestor, the wolf, and he felt proud of his heritage.⁷

3. Mrs. Cruz's back porch on Sunday afternoons. While it was true that Ozzie would never wear a leash and had no human he called master, he was very fond of Mrs. Cruz. She was by nature a kind and generous woman and the best human Ozzie knew. She had raised three children and many more grandchildren in the little adobe house on the southern edge of the Pueblo of Ohkay Owingeh⁸ in New Mexico, the place Ozzie called home. Mrs. Cruz's house had passed down through her family for generations. It was filled with a lot of pride and laughter. It was also occasionally filled with fried chicken. And Mrs. Cruz, never one to waste, would often give any leftover fried chicken she had to Ozzie, along with any other scraps of tamales, refritos, pastelitos, and calabacitas,⁹ if he showed up on Sundays just after the children and grandchildren had been stuffed full of Sunday lunch and piled into their cars and trucks to head back to their own homes. He and Mrs. Cruz would sit together on the back porch watching the setting sun as she picked the bones out of the chicken and fed him the meat by hand. It was, in a word, heaven.

[5] So it was quite worrisome to Ozzie when, from his perch on the back patio just outside the kitchen screen door, he overheard Mrs. Cruz talking to her eldest grandson, Marino, about having to give up the house. They were sitting at the kitchen table enjoying a late cup of coffee and eating the last of the prune pastelitos. "Maybe it's time I pass it to your father," Mrs. Cruz said, sadness tingeing¹⁰ her voice.

"No, Grandma," Marino said, distressed. "This is your home. Dad would say so, too. It wouldn't be the same if you weren't here.

"But this house needs so much work," Mrs. Cruz said with a heavy sigh. "The roof leaks, the foundation needs fixing, and I need to have someone take a look at the well. I think it's going to run dry soon."

"I can help fix things around the house," Marino said. He took a sip of his piñon¹¹-flavored coffee. He was a nice grandson and Mrs. Cruz's favorite. He was short and wide, only a few inches taller than his grandmother, with a thick thatch of black hair and mischievous brown eyes. Ozzie knew he was always quick to offer someone a ride to town in his old truck or to haul wood for the Elders, and he had never heard an unkind word spoken about the young man.

"Oh, Marino," Mrs. Cruz said, "I wish you could. But what I need is a bit of money." When she spoke, Ozzie could hear tears in her voice. "I don't even think I can afford my electric bill this month."

6. free to move around without limits

7. parts of one's identity that come from one's family, community, or ethnic background

8. Pueblo Ohkay Owingeh is a small town in New Mexico that was known by its colonial Spanish name of San Juan until 2005, when its pre-colonial name was restored; it is largely populated by Indigenous Americans from a tribe of the same name.

9. Tamales, refritos, pastelitos, and calabacitas are traditional Mexican dishes that are also part of traditional Southwestern American and Indigenous American cuisines.

10. to leave a light trace on; to slightly affect

11. edible seeds of the pine family; pine nut

[10] "I can make some money," Marino volunteered eagerly. "I make T-shirts. I can sell them and raise enough money so you can keep your house."

Marino had a silk-screening¹² T-shirt business, where he made a variety of clever T-shirts that celebrated Native identity and culture. Ozzie couldn't actually read what they said, but he did remember that at the last summer street fair, he had sat quietly under Marino's vendor¹³ table watching people come up, peruse the T-shirts, laugh, smile, and finally hand over the twenty or thirty bucks to own one for themselves. Marino came home that night with his pockets full of money and bought his grandmother a new stewpot. Mrs. Cruz was so happy she made green chile stew and even sneaked Ozzie a bowl. Ozzie had wolfed it down (pardon the expression) and then sat in the dusty backyard out under the stars, content. Selling T-shirts sounded like a fine idea to help Mrs. Cruz. Ozzie barked a supportive woof! from his side of the screen porch.

Marino smiled at Ozzie through the wire door, but Mrs. Cruz was shaking her head. "But where would you sell on such short notice? I need the funds for the electricity bill by next Friday." Next Friday was less than two weeks away. Marino would have to find a place to sell quickly if he was going to help.

"My friend Eli told me about a powwow¹⁴ that's happening this weekend in Ann Arbor, Michigan. She already has a vendor license and a booth. I can set up with her."

"But it's all the way in Michigan," Mrs. Cruz complained, sounding concerned. "Do you really think your old truck will make it from New Mexico?"

[15] "Ah, don't worry about me," Marino said. "Me and that old truck have been everywhere. Maine to San Diego. I'm sure we'll make it to Ann Arbor."

"I don't know." Mrs. Marino wrung her wrinkled hands. "I don't think you should drive alone."

Ozzie had no idea where Ann Arbor, Michigan, was, but he knew he wanted to help. He pawed gently at the screen door, letting out a very restrained¹⁵ whine. Mrs. Cruz looked up from the table. "Why are you crying, Ozzie? You're usually such a good boy."

Ozzie was indeed a good boy. But today he was a good boy with an ulterior motive.¹⁶ He whined again, and this time he added the *pièce de résistance*:¹⁷ puppy-dog eyes.

Mrs. Cruz's whole body softened. Her shoulders dropped, her hands settled around the coffee mug she was holding, and a smile spread across her wrinkled face. "Hey, why don't you take Ozzie?" she suggested.

[20] Marino looked back over his shoulder. Ozzie gave him the full puppy-dog-eyes effect, and he added a little

-
12. ink is pressed through the open spaces in a stencil to create the desired design on a piece of fabric
 13. **Vendor** (*noun*) a person or organization that sells goods or services
 14. Powwows are social gatherings held by Indigenous American communities that often include dancing, music, and craft markets.
 15. **Restrain** (*verb*) to hold back or control
 16. a hidden meaning or intention behind saying or doing something
 17. the most noteworthy or important part of something

excited jump to show just how much he wanted to go. Marino looked thoughtful. "Huh," he said. "I hadn't thought about it, but maybe."

"You told me that he was so well-behaved at the summer street fair," his grandmother reminded him.

"He was," Marino admitted. He leaned close to the screen door. "What do you say, Ozzie? Want to go to Michigan?"

"Bowwow!" said Ozzie, which sounded a lot like "powwow," and the Cruzes exchanged a look of surprise.

"Did he just...?" Marino asked, awed.

[25] His grandmother grinned and gave Ozzie a thumbs-up. "I think so."

"It will take three days to get there, so we'll leave on Wednesday. Can you be back and ready to go on Wednesday, bright and early?" Marino asked Ozzie. Ozzie usually slept in the doghouse out behind the old gas station, because there were more people coming and going from there and the chances of getting fed were quite high. Of course, Cheetos and beef jerky couldn't match Mrs. Cruz's cooking, but he made do. But he had no qualms¹⁸ about giving up his coveted¹⁹ gas station spot for a few days on the road trip.

Ozzie gave another bark.

"Well, okay then," Marino said. "Let's go to a powwow!"

The drive to the Ann Arbor powwow was long, but Marino kept it fun by playing all his favorite music on the truck's old radio, which he had hooked up to his phone. There was one particular song that Ozzie really liked, and each time it came on, he made sure to sing along, his voice matching the high notes in a series of *aroooooos* and *wroooooows*.

[30] Marino laughed. "This is the Northern Cree Singers," he told Ozzie. "They sing a style called Northern Drum.²⁰ They're my favorite, too."

Ozzie *arooo'd* again.

They stopped for dinner, and Marino fed Ozzie three delicious ninety-nine-cent fast-food burgers. "Don't get used to it, Ozzie," he playfully warned his canine companion as Ozzie munched a double meat with cheese, no

18. feeling of guilt or doubt

19. desired strongly and by many others

20. a musical style in which a drum group sings in the style of the Northern Plains tribes; this style usually includes high-pitched singing and a fast beat

onions. "This is a special occasion. And besides, our travel money is running low."

"Woof," said Ozzie, appreciative of the burger but worried about what Marino had said about money. If Marino didn't sell his T-shirts at the powwow, would they even have enough money to get back to Mrs. Cruz's?

The pair pulled into Ann Arbor early Saturday morning. Marino checked his GPS for the location of Skyline High School and pointed his old truck in the right direction. Ozzie stuck his head out the window, snapping at the cold wind and smelling a hint of rain in the air. They pulled into the parking lot, and Ozzie could see that it was already busy with vendors bringing in their wares and dancers in bright, colorful regalia.²¹ He barked happily. He knew they were there to try to earn money, but the powwow looked like so much fun!

[35] Marino parked the truck, a look of consternation²² on his face. "Eli said she'd meet me in the parking lot, but I don't see her anywhere. I'm going to have to go in and find her," he told Ozzie. "Do you want to come?"

What a ridiculous question. Of course Ozzie wanted to come. Before Marino could ask again, Ozzie wiggled out of the open window and leaped to the ground. Marino climbed out of the driver's seat, stretched and yawned, and then headed for the gym, Ozzie on his heels and ready for adventure.

Ozzie could see the problem immediately. Eli and Marino's booth was in the very last row in the very farthest corner, about as far away from the main dance floor and the food and drink concessions as possible. The only good thing was that the booth was close to the area designated²³ for health services, and Ozzie had spotted a very friendly-looking girl setting up a table to sell raffle tickets. He would definitely say hello to her later, as she looked good for a pat on the head and perhaps a treat. But right now he was focused on Marino and Eli and their terrible T-shirt-selling spot.

"What are we going to do?" Eli moaned. "No one's going to see us way back here."

"Don't be negative, Eli," Marino said, setting a box of T-shirts on the table. "We'll just have to think of something." He scratched his chin. "Maybe we can make a sign with a big red arrow that points people back to our booth."

[40] Eli perked up. "That's not a bad idea."

Marino opened the box and started laying out the T-shirts on the table for display. He even hung some on the wall behind them so people could see them from farther away. "And maybe you can walk around and pass out flyers telling people about our booth."

-
21. fine dress that often includes the specific decorations of an organization, group, or specific position of honor
 22. surprise and concern that often leads to greater confusion
 23. to mark for a specific purpose

"Now that's a great idea," Eli said. "There's only one problem. We don't have any flyers."

Marino braced his hands on his hips. "Hmm. Good point. Well, we'll think of something. My grandmother needs this money, so I'm not giving up before we even get started."

Speaking of getting started, Ozzie could hear the noise picking up near the front of the gym. The deep bass of the drums, the higher, brighter sounds of the accompanying singers, the jingle of bells, and the rhythmic thump of dozens of dancing feet.

[45] "Woof?" he said to Marino.

"What's that? Oh yeah, you can go see what's going on. We're going to finish setting up."

"And pray someone notices us," added Eli, looking morose.²⁴

Ozzie pressed his wet nose against Eli's hand to tell her everything would be okay, and she patted Ozzie's head in appreciation before he headed out to explore.

The powwow was a riot of color and noise and happy people. He saw people representing so many different Native nations of all ages and skin tones and traditions. It was very exciting, almost too exciting for a Rez dog who spent most of his time in the wide-open country. But he was getting used to the crowds. If only Marino and Eli had a way to get all these people to notice their booth way back in the corner.

[50] Ozzie had an idea. Maybe Marino and Eli didn't have flyers, but they did have a four-legged friend who could be a walking billboard.

Ozzie ran back to the T-shirt booth, where Marino and Eli sat, faces glum. The T-shirts were still piled in neat stacks on the table, looking like no one had come to buy them yet. "Still no customers," Marino said, "but I'm sure someone will come soon."

A lot of someones would come if Ozzie had anything to say about it! He perused the T-shirts, looking for just the right one, finally settling on a black shirt with white lettering that said *Ancestor Approved*. He casually pulled it down from the table while the two friends weren't looking. Using his front paws and teeth, he wiggled his head into the T-shirt. His body followed. His front legs came out of the arm holes. Voilà! Ozzie was wearing a T-shirt. Now he had work to do.

He started at the admission gate. There were people still milling about, waiting for friends and holding blankets they would lay down later to save their seats. He wound his way through the crowd, making sure they could all see his T-shirt. Finally a young girl wearing bright purple leggings and an oversize pink hoodie noticed him. "Hey,

24. gloomy or sullen

check out that dog in the cool shirt!" she said to the two friends who were standing next to her. "I wonder where he got that?"

Ozzie paused long enough for the girl's friends to admire his shirt before he woofed a *follow me*.

[55] "I think he wants us to follow him," the girl's friend in the black baseball cap said.

"I think you're right," said the pink hoodie girl. "You all want to go see where this dog got his shirt?"

"Sure!" said the boy in the cap.

"Why not?" said the other friend, a girl wearing red sneakers.

And Ozzie had his first potential customers!

[60] Next, he trotted through the gym over to where the dancers who had just finished dancing were lounging on the bleachers, the girl in the pink hoodie and her friends trailing him. He walked back and forth in front of a jingle dress dancer, who was laughing and leaning in very close to a boy in beautiful green-and-white fancy dance²⁵ regalia. They didn't notice him. He would have to think of something else to get their attention. Just then a drum started up, playing a northern-style powwow song. Ozzie recognized the style from the songs Marino had played on the drive to Ann Arbor. It made him want to dance, and he did a little high-stepping to the beat of the drum.

"Whoa, is that dog dancing?" he heard a voice ask. It was the fancy dancer.

"How cute!" said the jingle dress girl. "Hey, that's a pretty great shirt, dancing dog. Where did you get that?"

"Woof!" said Ozzie, and the two dancers exchanged a look.

"Might as well," said the boy, and they both stood up to follow Ozzie.

[65] More customers! Ozzie pranced toward the concessions, the girl in the pink hoodie, the boy with the black cap, their friend in the red sneakers, the jingle dress dancer, and the fancy dancer all following.

The concessions area smelled wonderful. Ozzie's mouth watered as he smelled fry bread and corn soup and Navajo tacos and hot dogs with lots of ketchup and mustard. But he was on a mission and refused to be distracted. He spotted a long line of people and strolled past slowly enough for everyone to get a chance to read his shirt. Sure enough, people started talking about the funny dog with the cool T-shirt, and when a few people moved out of the line to ask where he had gotten such a great shirt, he knew they would follow him. And follow him they did. So that when he came back to Marino and Eli's booth moments later, he was leading a parade.

25. Fancy Dance is an elaborate dance usually performed by a single dancer wearing highly decorative and detailed costumes, to the beat of a single drum; it was created in approximately 1928 as a way to preserve and celebrate Indigenous American culture that had previously been banned by the U.S. government.

Eli noticed him first. She looked up from a comic book she was reading, her eyes going wide.

"Uh, Marino...?"

Marino lifted his chin and his jaw dropped. He stood up. "What in the world, Ozzie? Where did you find all these people? Wait... are you wearing a shirt?"

- [70] Ozzie woofed happily and high-stepped up to the table where the T-shirts were displayed. Soon the crowd was so big and so busy that he had to squeeze under the table to get some relief. He could hear Marino and Eli explaining their shirts and unpacking the sizes people requested, and most importantly, he heard people say, "I'll take one!" and once he heard a woman say, "I'll take four!" And Ozzie figured he'd helped out pretty good.

The powwow went on for another day, and Ozzie made sure to make his rounds and tell people about Marino's booth again, this time with a T-shirt that said Rez Dawg, which he was pretty sure Marino had made with Ozzie in mind.

This time, by the end of the day, Marino and Eli were sold out.

"We couldn't have done it without you, Ozzie!" Eli exclaimed, giving Ozzie a hug around the neck.

"You're the greatest!" Marino said. "Give me a high five!" Ozzie knew this trick and lifted a paw to slap against Marino's open palm.

- [75] "Goodbye, Ozzie," Eli said. "You were the hit of the powwow. You and Marino have to come back next year!"

"Definitely," Marino assured her, and Ozzie barked his agreement. Marino bent down to rub Ozzie's ears. "Okay, Ozzie, time to pack up and get back to Ohkay Owingeh and Grandma's house."

And so they did.

The drive took three days, and once again Ozzie feasted on cheap cheeseburgers and sang along to Marino's music. (Northern Drum was his new favorite.)

They pulled into Mrs. Cruz's driveway late Wednesday evening as the sun was setting across the distant mountains. Ozzie hopped out first. The air smelled like fried chicken and fresh bread, and as much as Ozzie had enjoyed his trip, he was happy to be home.

- [80] Home! Ozzie had always thought himself a free-range dog with no particular home. But seeing Mrs. Cruz's eyes light up as she hugged Marino and watching as tears ran freely down her cheeks as her grandson handed her an envelope full of enough money to fix the house and get the well checked and pay her light bill, Ozzie had to reconsider.

Perhaps he was free, and perhaps he would never wear a leash or call anyone master, but Ozzie decided right there and then that he had been wrong. There weren't just three things that were the absolute best about

being a Rez dog there were four:

1. No masters.
2. No leashes.
3. Mrs. Cruz's back porch on Sundays, and the occasional Wednesday.

[85] And... 4. coming home.

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Text-Dependent Questions

Directions: For the following questions, choose the best answer or respond in complete sentences.

1. What is a central theme of "Rez Dog Rules"?
 - A. Sometimes people must make difficult sacrifices as they grow older.
 - B. Although they feel free, all pets are actually controlled by their owners.
 - C. Sometimes a sense of belonging is just as important as personal freedom.
 - D. Although their humans may love them, pets cannot be tamed by their owners.

2. How does the description of Mrs. Cruz's house in paragraphs 4-7 contribute to the story's plot?
 - A. It illustrates that most of the homes on the reservation are falling apart.
 - B. It establishes that the house is too old to be repaired and should be sold.
 - C. It demonstrates that Mrs. Cruz's family has not taken very good care of her.
 - D. It shows that the house is special to Mrs. Cruz's entire family and it must be saved.

3. What does the following sentence from paragraph 8 suggest about Marino?
Ozzie knew he was always quick to offer someone a ride to town in his old truck or to haul wood for the Elders, and he had never heard an unkind word spoken about the young man.
 - A. He enjoys driving around town and avoiding hard work.
 - B. He is always looking for jobs to complete so that he can earn money.
 - C. He is helpful and well-liked by the people of the Pueblo of Ohkay Owingeh.
 - D. He does not enjoy living in the Pueblo of Ohkay Owingeh and is looking for a way to leave.

4. What is the best meaning of the word "peruse" as used in paragraph 11?
 - A. examine
 - B. forget
 - C. gather
 - D. modify

5. What role do paragraphs 52-65 mostly play in the story?
 - A. They show that Ozzie likes attention and will do anything to get it.
 - B. They show that the people at the powwow like Ozzie but not the t-shirts.
 - C. They show that Ozzie is smart and determined to help Marino and Mrs. Cruz.
 - D. They show that the people at the powwow think it is upsetting for Ozzie to wear a t-shirt.

6. Which of the following details best supports the idea that Mrs. Cruz's house is more important to Ozzie than he first realized?
- A. "While it was true that Ozzie would never wear a leash and had no human he called master, he was very fond of Mrs. Cruz." (Paragraph 4)
 - B. "He and Mrs. Cruz would sit together on the back porch watching the setting sun as she picked the bones out of the chicken and fed him the meat by hand." (Paragraph 4)
 - C. "Marino bent down to rub Ozzie's ears. 'Okay, Ozzie, time to pack up and get back to Ohkay Owingeh and Grandma's house.'" (Paragraph 76)
 - D. "The air smelled like fried chicken and fresh bread, and as much as Ozzie had enjoyed his trip, he was happy to be home." (Paragraph 79)

7. How does the way Ozzie sees himself change over the course of the story?

Discussion Questions

Directions: *Brainstorm your answers to the following questions in the space provided. Be prepared to share your original ideas in a class discussion.*

1. Which do you think is more important: freedom or a sense of belonging? Is it possible to have both? Why, or why not?
2. Where do you think Ozzie got his name? Do you think he chose his own name, or that a human gave it to him? What does this suggest about his level of independence? Explain your answers using details from the text.
3. Why did the author choose to share Ozzie's thoughts with the reader? How does this choice impact your feelings about Ozzie as a character?
4. Why do you think that stories involving animals as main characters are so popular? What are some of your other favorite animal main characters in literature, film, or popular culture? What do you like about them?

ANSWER KEYS



Answer key > Between the Lines

by Cynthia Leitich Smith ● 2021

1. What is the theme of the story?

7.RL.KID.2 ^

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary.

- A. Powwows are an important way for communities to share traditions in the past.
- B. Although Elders mean well, sometimes they make situations worse by interfering.
- C. **Friendship can be found in unexpected places if people are willing to take a chance.**
- D. The best way to overcome shyness is by doing solo activities like drawing and reading.

2. What do paragraphs 42-43 suggest about Mel?

7.RL.KID.3 ^

Analyze how specific elements of a story or drama interact with and affect each other.

- A. Mel is frustrated that her counselor made her go to the powwow.
- B. Mel is jealous of the happy kids around her and would rather be at home.
- C. **Mel wants to have friends, but her shyness makes it hard to talk to people.**
- D. Although she does not want to make new friends, Mel enjoys watching people.

3. Which detail supports the idea that Carly cares about helping people learn about many aspects of Native American culture?

7.RL.KID.1 ^

Analyze what a text says explicitly and draw logical inferences; cite several pieces of textual evidence to support conclusions.

- A. "You go and find that Carly," Grampa Halfmoon said. "Offer to help out at their booth." (Paragraph 23)
- B. "Carly had shown a real interest when Ray opened his sketchbook and flipped through a few drawings he'd created on the train ride into Ann Arbor." (Paragraph 26)
- C. **"Being a Black Indian cowboy and a two-spirit activist, Carly proudly stocked nonfiction and poetry on both subjects, along with Native-created novels and a handful of picture books." (Paragraph 52)**
- D. "Ray was walking up when he saw the accident. He hurried over, handing the and drinks to Carly, who quickly turned to set it all on a cardboard box on the floor."

(Paragraph 70)

4. How does Grampa Halfmoon's outgoing personality most impact the development of the plot? **7.RL.KID.3** ^

Analyze how specific elements of a story or drama interact with and affect each other.

- A. Because he knows Ray is too shy to do it on his own, Grampa Halfmoon apologizes to Mel on his behalf.
- B. Grampa Halfmoon invites Mel and her mother to a Cubs game in Chicago because he knows that Ray is too shy to ask.
- C. Ray is frustrated that his talkative Grampa Halfmoon keeps trying to make him talk to Mel, and that causes him to avoid her even more.
- D. Grampa Halfmoon asks Ray to switch seats with Mel's mom so they can chat, leaving Ray and Mel to sit together and eventually talk.**

5. What does the word "ornery" mean as it is used in paragraph 93? **7.RL.CS.4** ^

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including allusions to other texts and repetition of words and phrases.

- A. speedy and always on the run
- B. lazy and prefers to lay around
- C. funny and enjoys playing jokes
- D. stubborn and difficult to control**

6. How does the author use figurative language in paragraph 98 to convey Ray's feelings? **7.RL.CS.5** ^

Analyze the form or structure of a story, poem, or drama, considering how text form or structure contributes to its theme and meaning.

- A. The author uses alliteration to demonstrate that Ray is bored with the long train ride.
- B. The author uses metaphor to show that Ray enjoys watching the bright stars on a clear night.
- C. The author uses imagery about shiny, shimmery things to show Ray's happiness at being called an artist.**
- D. The author uses personification to give the train human-like qualities to illustrate Ray's growing friendship.

7. How does the conversation between Mel and Ray on the train contribute to the story's theme? **7.RL.KID.3** ^

Analyze how specific elements of a story or drama interact with and affect each other.

Student answers will vary. Students should discuss the fact that even though they both feel uncertain, Mel and Ray both take a chance and talk with each other on the train, which eventually leads to a new friendship. True to the shyness they have

shown throughout the story, Ray and Mel "sat side by side on the train in absolute silence" (Paragraph 85) for the first hour of the train ride. Encouraged by Ray's shy smile (Paragraph 86), Mel finally takes the chance and apologizes for spilling soda on his drawing and tells him that it was "really pretty" (Paragraph 87). Ray is nervous but thinks that the "least he could do was reciprocate" (Paragraph 89), so he tries to make Mel feel better by telling her that his ferret has destroyed plenty of his artwork. Just as Mel had worried internally about calling his painting "pretty," Ray worries about comparing Mel to his pet (Paragraph 90). Their shared awkwardness breaks the ice, and soon "they were chatting away" and telling each other about their lives and where they were from (Paragraph 100). Mel is pleased when Ray suggests that they meet up for a Cubs game (Paragraph 101) and begins to reflect on her day. Although she had "felt alone and tight in her skin" and she and Ray "had gotten off to a rough start" (Paragraph 104), the day had ended in an unexpectedly positive way. When Ray and Mel finally get past their insecurities and open up to each other, they find that they are two shy kids with much in common and a probable good friendship ahead of them.

Answer key > Rez Dog Rules

by Rebecca Roanhorse ● 2021

1. What is a central theme of "Rez Dog Rules"? 7.RL.KID.2 ^

Determine a theme or central idea of a text and analyze its development over the course of the text; provide an objective summary.

- A. Sometimes people must make difficult sacrifices as they grow older.
 - B. Although they feel free, all pets are actually controlled by their owners.
 - C. Sometimes a sense of belonging is just as important as personal freedom.**
 - D. Although their humans may love them, pets cannot be tamed by their owners.
2. How does the description of Mrs. Cruz's house in paragraphs 4-7 contribute to the story's plot? 7.RL.KID.3 ^

Analyze how specific elements of a story or drama interact with and affect each other.

- A. It illustrates that most of the homes on the reservation are falling apart.
 - B. It establishes that the house is too old to be repaired and should be sold.
 - C. It demonstrates that Mrs. Cruz's family has not taken very good care of her.
 - D. It shows that the house is special to Mrs. Cruz's entire family and it must be saved.**
3. What does the following sentence from paragraph 8 suggest about Marino? 7.RL.KID.3 ^
Ozzie knew he was always quick to offer someone a ride to town in his old truck or to haul wood for the Elders, and he had never heard an unkind word spoken about the young man.

Analyze how specific elements of a story or drama interact with and affect each other.

- A. He enjoys driving around town and avoiding hard work.
 - B. He is always looking for jobs to complete so that he can earn money.
 - C. He is helpful and well-liked by the people of the Pueblo of Ohkay Owingeh.**
 - D. He does not enjoy living in the Pueblo of Ohkay Owingeh and is looking for a way to leave.
4. What is the best meaning of the word "peruse" as used in paragraph 11? 7.RL.CS.4

Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including allusions to other texts and repetition of words and phrases.

- A. examine
- B. forget
- C. gather
- D. modify

5. What role do paragraphs 52-65 mostly play in the story?

7.RL.CS.5 ^

Analyze the form or structure of a story, poem, or drama, considering how text form or structure contributes to its theme and meaning.

- A. They show that Ozzie likes attention and will do anything to get it.
- B. They show that the people at the powwow like Ozzie but not the t-shirts.
- C. **They show that Ozzie is smart and determined to help Marino and Mrs. Cruz.**
- D. They show that the people at the powwow think it is upsetting for Ozzie to wear a t-shirt.

6. Which of the following details best supports the idea that Mrs. Cruz's house is more important to Ozzie than he first realized?

7.RL.KID.1 ^

Analyze what a text says explicitly and draw logical inferences; cite several pieces of textual evidence to support conclusions.

- A. "While it was true that Ozzie would never wear a leash and had no human he called master, he was very fond of Mrs. Cruz." (Paragraph 4)
- B. "He and Mrs. Cruz would sit together on the back porch watching the setting sun as she picked the bones out of the chicken and fed him the meat by hand." (Paragraph 4)
- C. "Marino bent down to rub Ozzie's ears. 'Okay, Ozzie, time to pack up and get back to Ohkay Owingeh and Grandma's house.'" (Paragraph 76)
- D. **"The air smelled like fried chicken and fresh bread, and as much as Ozzie had enjoyed his trip, he was happy to be home." (Paragraph 79)**

7. How does the way Ozzie sees himself change over the course of the story?

7.RL.KID.3 ^

Analyze how specific elements of a story or drama interact with and affect each other.

Student responses will vary. Students should explain that Ozzie sees himself as a completely independent and free dog at the beginning of the story, but by the end of the story he realizes that he has a home with Mrs. Cruz and that is also important to him. The story begins with Ozzie describing the three things he loves about being a "Rez dog," largely focusing on his own freedom: "It was a provable fact that Rez dogs, by definition, had no masters" and there "was a lack of human-imposed rules" (Paragraph 2), and that Ozzie "had never succumbed to the tyranny of wearing a leash" (Paragraph 3). Ozzie views himself as an independent dog proud of his freedom and heritage, imagining himself "roaming the mesas like his ancestor, the wolf" (Paragraph 3). Even with his focus on his freedom, Ozzie acknowledges that he is "very fond of Mrs. Cruz," who is "by nature a kind and generous woman and the best

human Ozzie knew" (Paragraph 4). Ozzie wants to help Mrs. Cruz with her financial problems, and he knows that he is smart enough to do it: "Ozzie had an idea. Maybe Marino and Eli didn't have flyers, but they did have a four-legged friend who could be a walking billboard (Paragraph 50). Ozzie uses his personality and intelligence to lure customers to Marino's t-shirt booth, and the sale is a success: "Ozzie figured he'd helped out pretty good" (Paragraph 70). After Marino and Ozzie return from the powwow, Ozzie has a sudden realization: "he was happy to be home" (Paragraph 79). Although "Ozzie had always thought of himself as a free-range dog with no particular home" (Paragraph 80), he now sees himself as a dog who loves four things about being a Rez dog – including "coming home" (Paragraph 85). Ozzie realizes that he's a smart dog who can still have his freedom and independence, but also enjoy the love and security of a home.