

Code Talker: A Novel about the Navajo Marines of World War Two

by Joseph Bruchac

Due Date: August 14th, 2020

(Due Date for Students Enrolled On/After August 1st: Due August 28th, 2020)

ANSWERS MUST BE TYPED! HAND-WRITTEN RESPONSES WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED!

Chapter 1

1. “I was only six years old and I was worried” (5). “My heart sank. I really was going to be sent away” (6). Analyze these two passages, and then write about how you would have felt to be sent away from home at such an early age.
2. Why, if the main character is so loved, do his parents decide to send him away to boarding school? What part did his uncle play in the main character’s departure from his home?
3. Summarize the Long Walk. Why do you think the Long Walk is important to the novel?

Chapter 2-4

4. “There is no word for goodbye in Navajo.” (p. 12) What does this tell you about the Navajo culture?
5. Chapter Four begins with this quote, “Tradition is the enemy of progress.” (p. 23) What does this mean to you? Do you think this quote is true or false? Explain your thoughts.
6. What happened to “Ned” when he spoke the polite Navajo greeting, the way his parents had always taught him? How does his education differ from yours? How is it the same?
7. “John Roanhorse was taken into the cold stone basement and chained in a dark corner.” (p. 25) “I think part of his spirit was left down in that cold, dark place.” (p. 25) Analyze these two passages. What is meant by part of his spirit was left?
8. “...our teachers—who watched us the way coyotes watch a prairie dog hole...” (pp. 25-26) What does he mean? What impression do you have of his teachers?

Chapter 5-6

9. Why were sports important to some of the children? How does this compare with your experience?
10. “Someday, I said to myself, I will become a teacher, one who does not just teach, but also shows respect to all his Indian students and expects the best of everyone.” (p. 29) Why is showing respect an important part of teaching?
11. In what ways does Ned feel connected to the Japanese?
12. “Soon after that, we students at Navajo High School had our own food drive for the poor, hungry Japanese.” (p. 31) Why did the students hold a food drive for the Japanese? What does this tell you about their character? What made this act so significant?

Chapter 7-8

13. “You can tell a lot about a man by the way he speaks and the way he carries himself.” (p. 43) What does this mean?
14. How did being a Navajo prepare Ned and other recruits for the military? Cite textual evidence.
15. “[The recruit] believed that any Navajo joining up would have a better chance of getting through boot camp than your average Bilagáana.” (48) Use textual evidence that supports this passage.

Chapter 9-13

16. On page 52, the author foreshadows events to come by telling stories of non-Native Americans trying to use their language, but unsuccessfully doing so. Why, in your opinion, does the author do this? Predict what may happen based on this foreshadowing.
17. “We were not just fighting for the United States. We were going into battle for our Navajo people, our families, and our sacred land.” (p. 69) Reread page 10, and cite textual evidence that leads the reader to realize that Ned has not forgotten what his uncle told him.
18. Many people thought that Phillip Johnson developed the code. Why was this not true? Why do you think people thought that Phillip Johnson developed the code instead of the Navajos?

Chapter 14-16

- 19. “When we saw them, we realized that our enemies were just human beings.” (p. 97) How does this passage support one of the themes of this novel?**
- 20. Reread page 101. Compare the native people on these islands to the Native Americans. Why did Ned speak to them more than the white Marines?**
- 21. On page 103, Ned has an encounter with Gene-Gene. Ned states, “It was one of the best conversations I ever had.” (p. 103) Why? What is unique about this conversation?**

Chapter 17-18

- 22. Describe Ned’s observation of the first Japanese soldier he sees. What is the comparison he makes? How do you think this affects Ned?**
- 23. Reread pages 129 and 130. Why did the radio operators and code talkers have to keep moving?**
- 24. Reread page 132. Smitty had a duty that was necessary. What was this particular duty?**

Chapter 19-20

- 25. Reread pages 136 and 137. What did the generals write about the Navajo code talkers? How did this make Ned feel? How did their comments differ from what he’d been told in the boarding schools? Why are these attitudes so different?**
- 26. Ned is reflecting on his relationship with Georgia Boy and Smitty. He relates, “But I no longer thought of them as Bilagáana strangers.” (p. 139) Why did he feel this way?**
- 27. How are respect and appreciation formed and shown after people get to know one another? Write about a time you thought differently about a person once you got to know him/her.**

Chapter 21-22

- 28. Reread pages 168 and 169. Compare and contrast Japanese vs. European rules of war and the treatment of prisoners.**

Chapter 23-26

- 29. Reread page 177. What happened to the food relief cans Ned's high school sent the Japanese? How do you suppose this made Ned feel?**
- 30. Reread the last two paragraphs on page 186. Write examples of the sensory language the author uses to convey the memories of the odor the war. How does the use of sensory language lend to the tone?**

Chapter 27-28

- 31. "It was like the old days, long before any white man's war." (p. 204) What does Ned mean by this? Why does Ned have this perspective?**
- 32. Reread pages 205 and 206. What effects does the bomb have in Nagasaki and Hiroshima?**
- 33. Compare what Emperor Hirohito says to what the Supreme Military Council says. Who had power? Was this power used for the good of the Japanese people?**

Chapter 29

- 34. How did the New Zealanders and Australians treat the American Indians? Why?**
- 35. Reread pages 208 – 210. Compare how Ned was treated in San Francisco to how he was treated in Arizona. What does Ned realize after someone called him a stupid Navajo?**
- 36. Depending on relationships; and appreciating people for who they are, not the color of their skin are some themes of this novel. In your opinion, would Ned be a successful survivor of the war without those relationships?**
- 37. Pick out at least 3 similes and 3 metaphors from this novel. Explain how these impact the imagery or the mood of the story.**
- 38. Why do you think that throughout the novel the author directly addresses his grandchildren?**
- 39. Explain the importance/value of this novel. Why should non-fiction accounts continue to be told?**
- 40. If you had the opportunity to meet Mr. Bruchac what 3 questions would you ask him and why?**