



ONE BOOK
ONE MINNESOTA



DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION

Murder on the Red River Discussion Guide

1. Small towns and rural locales often make atmospheric settings for mysteries. What is it about the Red River Valley as the characters experience it that makes it a fitting place to set a murder mystery? How is the Red River Valley itself a character in the narrative?
2. Cash remembers her aunties practicing Spanish so they could pretend to be Mexican migrant workers and get into the bars that did not allow Indians. What does this story reflect about the perception of race and ethnicity in the United States?
3. Often the amateur detective in mysteries is the one or two steps ahead of the police. How does *Murder on the Red River* navigate this dynamic in a way that feels believable?
4. In what ways does Rendon's writing remind the reader – sometimes jarringly – that Cash is very young? How does she read differently than the other young people present in the book – the other girls in town (who Cash remembers being a few years behind her at school) and the Day-Dodge children?
5. The opening pages of the book drop the reader deep into Cash's perspective and her character in a way that is immersive and sets the pace for the rest of the novel. What writerly skills is Marcie Rendon using to accomplish this?
6. *Murder on the Red River* draws some of its tension from the jurisdictional puzzle at the center of a crime that takes place at the intersection of tribal, federal, and county law – often a sort of Bermuda Triangle where cases disappear. What unique challenges does this pose for both Cash and Wheaton? What commentary does the book make in its subtext about the way this system works or doesn't?
7. There has been a lot of talk in the last few years about the ways in which mysteries and procedural stories in both television and book form center law enforcement. How does *Murder on the Red River* upend the usual narrative, while still giving the reader someone to root for in the character of Wheaton?
8. Cash was removed from her mother's care as a young child and placed into a white foster home. How do the reverberations of this trauma affect the way Cash moves through the world? How do the Day-Dodge children serve as a mirror for Cash?