



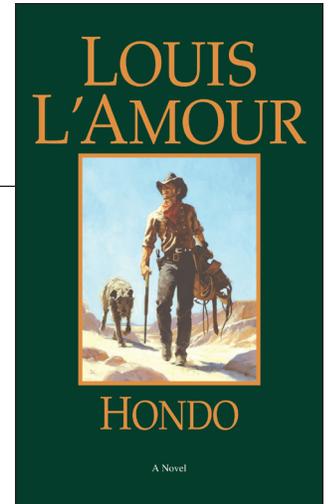
Hondo

by Louis L'Amour

Bantam | MM | 978-0-553-28090-6 | 224 pp. | \$5.99/\$6.99 Can.

Also available as an unabridged audio CD, unabridged audiobook download and an e-Book.

Reading Level: 7.2



“I think of myself in the oral tradition—as a troubadour, a village tale-teller, the man in the shadows of the campfire.

That’s the way I’d like to be remembered—as a storyteller. A good storyteller.” —Louis L'Amour

about this author

It is doubtful that any author could be as at home in the world re-created in his novels as Louis Dearborn L'Amour. Not only could he physically fill the boots of the rugged characters he wrote about, but he literally “walked the land my characters walk.” His personal experiences as well as his lifelong devotion to historical research combined to give him the unique knowledge and understanding of people, events, and the challenge of the American frontier that became the hallmarks of his popularity.

Of French-Irish descent, L'Amour could trace his own family in North America back to the early 1600s and follow their steady progression westward, “always on the frontier.” As a boy growing up in Jamestown, North Dakota, he absorbed all he could about his family’s frontier heritage, including the story of his great-grandfather, who was scalped by Sioux warriors.

Spurred by an eager curiosity and desire to broaden his horizons, L'Amour left home at the age of fifteen and enjoyed a wide variety of jobs, including seaman, lumberjack, elephant handler, skinner of dead cattle, and miner, and was an officer in the transportation corps during World War II. During his “yondering” days he also circled the world on a freighter, sailed a dhow on the Red Sea, was shipwrecked in the West Indies and stranded in the Mojave Desert. He won fifty-one of fifty-nine fights as a professional boxer and worked as a journalist and lecturer. He was a voracious reader and collector of rare books. His personal library contained seventeen thousand volumes.

L'Amour “wanted to write almost from the time I could talk.” After developing a widespread following for his many frontier and adventure stories written for fiction magazines, L'Amour published his first full-length novel, *Hondo*, in the United States in 1953. Every one of his more than 120 books is in print; there are more than 270 million copies of his books in print worldwide, making him one of the best-selling authors in modern literary history. His books have been translated into twenty languages, and more than forty-five of his novels and stories have been made into feature films and television movies.

His hardcover best sellers include *The Lonesome Gods*, *The Walking Drum* (his twelfth-century historical novel), *Jubal Sackett*, *Last of the Breed*, and *The Haunted Mesa*. His memoir, *Education of a Wandering Man*, was a leading best seller in 1989. Audio dramatizations and adaptations of many L'Amour stories are available on cassette tapes from Bantam Audio Publishing.

The recipient of many great honors and awards, in 1983 L'Amour became the first novelist ever to be awarded the Congressional Gold Medal by the United States Congress in honor of his life's work. In 1984 he was also awarded the Medal of Freedom by President Reagan.

Louis L'Amour died on June 10, 1988. His wife, Kathy, and their two children, Beau and Angelique, carry the L'Amour publishing tradition forward.

For more biographical information about Louis L'Amour: www.louislamour.com.

teaching ideas

themes

- (1) Love for, and stewardship of, the land
- (2) Chivalry, honor, loyalty

Louis L'Amour's many novels very often develop a theme of love for, and stewardship of, the land. Since the West, harsh in climate and topography as it may be, has proven to be very fragile under the pressures of overgrazing, overcultivation of arid land, and other environmental hazards, this theme is especially relevant today. L'Amour often championed the conservation of natural resources through responsible land management, as he does in *Hondo* and other novels. He often compares the rancher with foresight and vision with the rancher who tries to make a quick profit from the land. Water conservation, proper planting, and proper grazing techniques make the difference. L'Amour's books are filled with beautiful descriptions of the West—evidence of his own love for Western lands.

The Western hero is often a parallel to the knight in shining armor, and *Hondo* is no different in his code of chivalry. *Hondo* will risk his own life to protect the weak and innocent, whether in the case of Angie and Johnny left on the ranch or Peter Summervel about to be cheated by two cardsharps. *Hondo* is honor bound to do the right thing in all situations, and his conscience is undeniable. His loyalty to those he is tied to knows no bounds. This honor code is applied to all men, including Phalinger and Lowe, who die for violating it, and the various military and Apache commanders and chiefs who earn the respect of others by following it.

historical background

In the first half of the nineteenth century the various tribes of the Apache nation and the early citizens/settlers of the United States territory of Arizona enjoyed an uneasy coexistence based on a common enemy, the Mexican government. When gold was discovered in California in 1848, however, the flood of people to the West was on, and an irreversible process began. Indigenous peoples were forced off their land by whatever means necessary (murder, trickery, or treaty)—for mineral rights, for ranching and farming access, or any other form of profit the land had to offer. For twenty-three years the American Southwest suffered through a cycle of peace and war in which clashes between white men and native peoples resulted in violence, violence resulted in government intervention through military campaigns, military campaigns resulted in treaties, treaties resulted in broken promises, and broken promises resulted in renewed violence.

During this time, the various bands and tribes of the Apache nation, including the major groups of the Chiricahua, the Mescalero, the Mimbres (L'Amour refers to them as Mimbrenos), Tonto, White Mountain, San Carlos, (tribal classifications often originating from the Spanish colonists or the name of the reservation to which they were eventually restricted), and others gave rise to a series of effective guerrilla war generals who would eventually be acknowledged for their military genius and leadership skills. The most well-known of these were Mangas Coloradas, Cochise, Victorio, and Geronimo. These names were most often designations given to them by European colonists who found their actual Apache names unfamiliar if not unpronounceable; Mangas Coloradas, for example was a nickname given in Spanish for the warrior's red sleeves.

Warfare between the various Apache tribes of the southwestern United States and the U.S. government probably began in earnest following the Civil War, when U.S. troops returned to Arizona to a series of camps or forts meant to be points of origin for military operations to control the various nations as well as provide sanctuary to settlers when needed. The U.S. Army counts as many as fifty, but the more well-known include Apache, Bowie, McDowell, and Verde (U.S. Army). Camp Huachuca, the military camp depicted in *Hondo*, was established in 1877 in the Huachuca Mountains, to "offer protection to settlers and travel routes in southeastern Arizona while

simultaneously blocking the traditional Apache escape routes through the San Pedro and Santa Cruz valleys into sanctuary in Mexico" (U.S. Army). In 1882, the installation's name was elevated to Fort Huachuca, and in 1886 General Nelson A. Miles made it the headquarters for his campaign to capture or kill Geronimo.

The Apache uprisings were doomed to eventual failure, if nothing else simply due to the imposing numbers of white immigrants to the West. Mangas Coloradas was killed in 1863, and his nephew, Cochise, died on the Chiricahua Reservation in 1874. In 1874, four thousand Apaches were forced onto the San Carlos reservation, an inhospitable piece of the territory, where their mistreatment caused many to revolt and leave the reservation, some even rejoining a war effort against the white man, Geronimo among them. In 1880, Victorio was killed with a band of two hundred men, women, and children by Mexican forces in Chihuahua, Mexico.

Geronimo, although never actually captured, surrendered and fled the reservation twice before surrendering a final time in 1884. He was promised that after a short stay in Florida he would be allowed to return to Arizona. This promise was never kept, and Geronimo died in Oklahoma in 1909.

Timeline of the Apache Wars

- 1846—Mexican-American War begins
- 1847—United States defeats Mexican Army at Mexico City
- 1848—Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo ends the Mexican-American War, adding what would become the states of Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, and Utah
- 1850—United States takes control of lands that would become Arizona and New Mexico
- 1853—Gadsden Purchase finalizes Mexican-American border location by adding parts of present-day Arizona and New Mexico to American holdings
- 1861—Cochise arrested and falsely charged with cattle rustling and kidnapping
- 1862—Battle of Apache Pass
- 1863—Mangas Coloradas captured and killed trying to escape (allegedly) from Fort McLane, New Mexico
- 1871—General George Crook assumes command of military forces in Arizona
- 1871—Camp Grant Massacre: 108 peaceful Arivapai Apache slaughtered
- 1871—Cochise surrenders
- 1872—Cochise escapes
- 1872—Chiricahua Reservation established
- 1872—Cochise surrenders
- 1874—Cochise dies on Chiricahua Reservation
- 1874—4,000 Apache forced onto San Carlos Reservation
- 1886—Geronimo's final surrender and incarceration in a Florida prison
- Late 1800s/Early 1900s—Geronimo relocated to reservation near Fort Sill, Oklahoma
- 1909—Geronimo's death near Fort Sill, Oklahoma

historical accuracy of Hondo Lane's character

The character of Hondo Lane may be fictitious, but it is not unlikely that men very much like L'Amour's protagonist existed in this time and place. The most famous of the Arizona military commanders and the figure always on the periphery of *Hondo*, for whom the protagonist is "riding dispatch," was General George Crook, who assumed command of the American military in the territory of Arizona in 1871. General Crook recognized the value of men hardened by the West and wise in the culture of its peoples, and his campaign against the Apache may have succeeded in part because of his use of Apache scouts and scouts of mixed Apache blood, as many as one hundred at a time. Crook respected the Apache and was respected by them as well for his honesty and fairness. He led by example, not unlike an Apache war chief, and believed that defeated Native American peoples should be treated with dignity. Unlike many Westerners and government officials, his goal was not to rid the West of its native peoples but, rather, to create a lasting peace so that people of all nations could coexist.

Crook was known to take matters into his own hands when treaty promises were not kept. He attempted to help the newly confined Apache tribes set up irrigation systems and tribal police forces rather than wait out the slow-moving machinery of federal bureaucracy or trust in the integrity of government agencies. He attempted but failed in getting schools started on the newly

formed reservation and was opposed to sending Native American youth to boarding schools in the East.

The general was relentless and unswerving when military action was necessary, however, and he explained to all Native American nations from Canada to Mexico that once trouble started, he would not stop to consider who started the problem but would counter with all possible force and continue no matter how long it took. On the other hand, and much to the dissatisfaction of President Grant and many Westerners who coveted Apache lands, his first choice was always to negotiate the peace rather than initiate war. He also recognized that there were good and bad men among both the Apache and the white people.

Hondo Lane is very much the product of that time and place. His physical, spiritual, and psychological character is a distillation of its essence. He understands the two cultures, respects what is good, and recognizes what is bad in both. He is fair but will act with unswerving determination and violence when necessary. He is above all honorable and true to a code of ethics that crosses both cultures.

Louis L'Amour's use of names and places

Many of the names Louis L'Amour uses in *Hondo* are either historically accurate, mildly altered versions of an actual figure, or, possibly, meant to resemble the names of actual historical figures. Civil War references are accurate, including various battles and battlefields such as Bull Run and Shiloh, as are various figures such as Lieutenant General Nathan Bedford Forrest, the famed Tennessee cavalry tactician whose guerrilla war strategies enabled Confederate cavalymen to defeat much larger groups of Northern cavalry. L'Amour's descriptions of General George Crook and his military campaigns in Arizona are also accurate. L'Amour's Mangus Colorado is obviously an Anglicized version of Mangas Coloradas, while the Apache chief Vittoro who adopts Johnny Lowe as an honorary Apache is nearly identical in name to the real war chief Victorio.

Lieutenant Creyton Davis and his scout Pete Britton seem to have been inspired by the historical figure Lieutenant Britton Davis. Fort Huachuca is still an important military base today. Although the valley and canyon names are fictitious, the basic setting of Southeast Arizona is appropriate, and L'Amour's descriptions of the beauty of the desert and mountains of Southeast Arizona are lovingly accurate.

discussion and writing

plot summary and discussion questions by chapter

Foreword

As the author begins, he characterizes his protagonists for the reader by using opposites or complements:

- A man whose loneliness is cloaked in independence, whose harshness and violence are offset by kindness and justice
- A woman who has a home, no matter how meager or lonely, for whom the amenities of civilization are not available but for whom the beauty of the West is always at hand, who fears that life could end for her and her son at any moment but who has a strong will to endure
- The Apache, Cheyenne, and Nez Perce who kill their enemies without hesitation but respect and admire their courage and strength
- A boy who has no father to show him the way and therefore represents the uncertain future of the West

1. The author says he need not "go to Thermopylae or the Plains of Marathon for heroism." (vi) What happened in those places? What is he saying about the American frontier?
2. Who were Demosthenes and Cicero? How does he compare Chief Joseph to those figures from history?

Chapter 1

The author describes his protagonist, Hondo Lane, to the reader physically but, more important, psychologically. Hondo is a big, rough, and imposing figure. He is schooled in survival by life in a harsh land. His understanding of his physical environment is deep, as is his knowledge of how to

survive. He knows by instinct and by the slight dust cloud in the air that other people are in the area, and his life may very well be at risk. Mescalero and Mimbrenos Apaches are on the warpath. He takes great precautions to remain unseen as he crosses the river. He is attacked by two Apaches, one of whom kills Hondo's horse. He kills the two of them but is now left horseless and many miles from his destination. He picks up his saddle, and he and his mongrel dog, Sam, quickly strike out, attempting to leave as little of a trail as possible. They pass other Apaches unseen.

To his surprise, Hondo comes upon a ranch inhabited by a woman, Angie Lowe, and her six-year-old son, Johnny. Although Angie says her husband is just up in the timber, working their cattle, Hondo can tell by the state of disrepair that a man has not been working this ranch in many months.

Angie is slightly confused by Hondo's abrupt and direct ways. He seems uncivilized. He does not feed his dog, nor does he allow anyone else to feed it or pet it, preferring that Sam remain independent of human care. In spite of her wariness, Angie finds that she is drawn to Hondo.

1. What psychological traits does Hondo Lane possess?
2. What contradictions exist between Angie Lowe's claims and the evidence about the ranch that Hondo sees?
3. How is Hondo's treatment of Sam unorthodox?

Chapter 2

The Lowes have some horses, including some mustangs (wild horses), one of which Hondo arranges to hire from Angie. He likes horses with spirit, claiming they will be the most reliable "when the going's tough." (14) Hondo performs a number of chores, each one providing evidence that no man has been on the premises in a long time. Angie explains that she and her husband grew up on this ranch and that he was an orphan taken in by her father. Johnny gets snapped at when he tries to pet Sam.

Hondo tames, rather than breaks, the wild horse he likes most, and Angie admires his skill. Again, Angie finds that Hondo has an emotional impact on her. Hondo confronts her on the truth about her husband. Angie refuses to believe that they are unsafe there even though Hondo explains that the Apache war chief Vittorio is off the reservation and people have been killed. She trusts in the relationship her father set up with the Apache. Hondo claims he has trained Sam to smell Indians and reveals that he is part Indian himself.

1. What is Hondo's philosophy about horses?
2. What is Angie's history there on the ranch?

Chapter 3

Hondo does more chores and Angie insists that he sleep inside in the comfort of the cabin. After he falls asleep, Angie sees his first and last name on a brass plate on his saddle, HONDO LANE. Knowing that the "gunman" Hondo Lane shot three men dead last year, she draws her gun on him and pulls the trigger by mistake, only to find that she has fired on an empty chamber. Hondo then coaches her to keep a cartridge in all six chambers in the future so that she can shoot someone when she needs to. He goes back to sleep.

Angie thinks about what kind of man Hondo is and remembers hearing that General Crook has hired him to ride dispatch. She knows that Crook values and recruits just this kind of man.

The next day Hondo shows them how to find food in the desert as he learned from the Apache. He tells Angie about his Mescalero wife of five years, who died. Hondo says that Angie reminds him of her, although it is hard for Angie to get past anything beyond physical resemblance, which is not what Hondo means.

Before he leaves, and without warning or ceremony, Hondo kisses Angie on the lips. She is surprised but thinks to herself that it feels natural. Hondo rides away.

1. What is ironic about Angie's near murder of Hondo?
2. What more does she learn about him?
3. Why does Hondo think he kissed Angie?

Chapter 4

L'Amour opens this chapter with a philosophical observation about death, a foreshadowing of what will soon happen to Company C under the command of Lieutenant Creyton Davis. Davis has experience in both the Civil War and the Indian Wars of the West. Cotton Lyndon, a white-haired scout, returns to the company to report that Apaches are in the area. Pete Britton, another scout, reports in to tell them about the massacre of a ranch family, the McLaughlins.

The next day Company C arrives at the McLaughlin ranch to survey the scene for clues of the Apache numbers and to identify and bury the dead. The massacre was a raiding party under the indirect supervision of the war chief Vittorio, and the lieutenant knows that riding in pursuit of him would be riding into an ambush. Davis makes plans to pull Vittorio into an ambush of his own. After riding partway back to Fort Huachuca, Company C sets a trap for Vittorio's band. Seventeen or more Apaches are killed, but scout Pete Britton rides in to tell them that despite the success of their trap, they are about to be surrounded by hundreds of Apache tribes coming from other directions, including Mescaleros and Mimbrenos. They dig in for the last battle of their lives.

1. Are the fights between the cavalry and the Apaches just about numbers and ferocity? What else comes into play?
2. Are all Apaches from the same tribe and/or band? What are some of the various groups within the larger category of Apache?

Chapter 5

Hondo comes upon the site of Company C's last stand and reconstructs what took place based on the physical evidence. Some bodies have been mutilated but not those of soldiers who were thought to have fought bravely. Lieutenant Davis appears to have been among the last to die, and Pete Britton appears to have outlasted his companions by an hour. Out of respect, the Apaches have left his weapons at his side.

A storm comes up, and Hondo's new horse saves him from a flash flood hurtling down an arroyo. Hondo keeps thinking about Angie and about Johnny's lack of a father figure. He finds an old dugout cabin and spends the night. As Fort Huachuca comes into view, Hondo finds that he is still thinking of Angie and Johnny and the ranch.

1. What conclusions does Hondo come to about what took place during Company C's last battle?
2. What characteristics does Hondo value in his new horse, the lineback?
3. To what do Hondo's thoughts keep returning?

Chapter 6

Angie and Johnny experience the same rainstorm Hondo does. Angie keeps thinking about Hondo and instinctively knows that as hard as he seems on the outside, he is tough only as a result of his environment—not cruel. She cares about him and wonders if he is surviving.

Angie remembers something her father told her about the land: "We do not own the land, Angie. We hold it in trust for tomorrow." (63) Angie values the land and understands the concept of stewardship of the environment (a common theme in L'Amour's work). She thinks about the fact that her husband has abandoned her and forsaken their marital vows. She does not love him or feel a commitment to him.

Chief Vittorio and members of his band visit the ranch. Vittorio is striking in appearance and betrays no emotion. He has come apparently to see Angie and Johnny dead. Angie does not back down from him, and when Silva, a cruel member of Vittorio's group, assaults Angie with a knife, Johnny fires a pistol at him, creasing his scalp and knocking him unconscious. Vittorio is moved by the little boy's bravery and makes him a blood brother: "I name him Small Warrior, of the Moon Dog Lodge of the Chiricahua Apache." (67) As the mother of a Chiricahua warrior, Angie may live on the ranch in absolute safety, although Silva, upon gaining consciousness, makes it obvious that he will look for ways to circumvent Vittorio's decree.

1. What philosophy about the land does the author illustrate through Angie's memory of her father?
2. Does Angie still consider herself married?
3. What values do the Apache hold that are evidenced by Johnny's interaction with Silva and Vittorio?

Chapter 7

When Hondo arrives back at the fort, he is first greeted by two men, Dick and Buffalo Baker, who are Western roughnecks like himself. They have been entertaining themselves by betting on whether or not Hondo will make it back alive. In the U.S. Cavalry headquarters, an irritating man with the look of a saloon gambler and swindler is demanding to see Major Sherry, the ranking officer of the fort. He is regarded as a nuisance by the sergeant outside the major's office but eventually gets an audience with Major Sherry to complain that he has cattle in the north that the army should be protecting. The man turns out to be Ed Lowe, Angie's absent husband. He says nothing to the officer about a wife and child on a ranch in Apache country, and in fact, no one in town knows that he has a wife and child, because he has abandoned them and is keeping them a secret.

When Hondo shows up with news of Company C's devastation, he is just in time to see Lowe dismissed from the major's office. When Ed Lowe threatens to take his anger out on Sam, Hondo's dog, Hondo backs him down, but Lowe seems to be a man who harbors grudges and exacts revenge in cowardly ways.

Later, Hondo and Buffalo Baker discuss the demise of Pete Britton, a mutual friend. The chapter ends with Hondo thinking about Angie and the idea that a "man needed somebody to think about." (75)

1. How does L'Amour characterize Ed Lowe? What kind of man is Lowe?
2. Why do you think Ed Lowe backed down in the face of a calm warning from Hondo after his attempt to harm Sam?
3. Does the author want the reader to think Lowe will forgive Hondo and forget the incident?

Chapter 8

After a nap, Hondo walks through the night to the sutler's store, which contains a makeshift bar. The piano player is a cowboy, a fact which the author points out as evidence that in the "melting pot of the West there was no estimating the hidden talents of a drifting man." (76) People who know Hondo or know his reputation treat him with respect, including the bartender, who gives him an unsolicited free drink from a special bottle. When Hondo sees a teenage boy, Pete Summervel, drinking and playing poker with a known card cheat, he invites him away from the poker game to talk. Ed Lowe is one of the cardplayers, and he starts a fistfight with Hondo, then draws his gun, seeing he can't win. Hondo kicks the gun away, pummels Lowe, and throws him out in the street. Lowe swears revenge, even murder. He is advised by those in the know to let the matter drop.

Afterward, Hondo learns that the man whom he has crossed twice is Ed Lowe, Angie's estranged husband. He questions what kind of man would be complaining to the army about his cattle without a word spoken about the safety of his wife and child.

Company F rides out at daylight along with a large company of scouts composed of men of many nationalities, including Apache, Yaqui, Opata, Mexicans, and Americans. The whole group is actually under orders to do nothing more than bury Company C and return, forsaking any fighting unless first attacked.

Settlers arrive at the safety of the camp at regular intervals, but Angie and Johnny are never among them. Hondo wants to go and rescue them, but General Crook has sent Major Sherry strict orders that no one is to enter that country. After a discussion of where and why Hondo wants to enter Vittorio's country, Major Sherry gives Hondo covert permission to go and attempt to bring back information about Vittorio.

1. What is Hondo's first response to disagreements with other men? Violence? Or something else?
2. Why did Hondo hit Ed Lowe first? Was this serious or humorous? How can you tell?
3. What evidence does the author give that suggests that Hondo looks out for the best interests of friends and people he thinks are being taken advantage of?
4. What point does the author seem to be making about the cavalry's use of scouts?
5. Discuss the feelings Hondo experiences about saving Angie and Johnny.

Chapter 9

Vittorio takes an active interest in Johnny's upbringing. He may appear at any moment to check on him or to give him some kind of lesson in riding or hunting or manhood. Vittorio gives Johnny a beaded headband that signifies he is a member of the Moon Dog Lodge. Vittorio insists that

Johnny needs a father, that Johnny's real father must be dead and that Angie must replace him with another man. Vittorio means an Apache, but Angie resists the idea.

Angie meditates on what it means to be married. She does not seem to think that her current situation constitutes a marriage. She remembers more of her father's wisdom: "To each of us is given a life. To live with honor and to pass on having left our mark." (86) Honor is obviously important to Angie. She also thinks about her role as a woman, which includes protecting her home even if it means facing down a dangerous Apache chief. Angie has high standards for being a mother and taking care of her son. She also realizes that Johnny does need a man to teach him things Angie cannot. She cannot help but think of Hondo Lane.

Silva rides by the cabin and stops to make threatening remarks in Apache. Angie does not know what he is saying, but he holds up a red-haired scalp and looks back and forth from Angie to Johnny in a menacing way.

1. What goals does Vittorio have for Johnny?
2. How does Angie enter into his plan?
3. Will Vittorio respect Angie's wishes? Why or why not?
4. What prevents Silva from exacting revenge on the six-year-old boy?

Chapter 10

As Hondo is preparing to leave, Ed Lowe sees the brand of his horse on the wild pony Hondo hired from Angie. He complains to Sergeant Young that the horse is stolen. Hondo says it is indeed Ed's horse, but he's taking it back to where he got it. The sergeant refuses to apprehend or impede Hondo in any way despite Lowe's whining.

Later, Sergeant Young reports to Sergeant Major O'Bierne that he believes Ed Lowe and the card cheat Phalinger are going to follow Hondo Lane out of town with criminal intentions. O'Bierne assures Young that either the Apaches or Hondo Lane will kill them if they do.

As Hondo heads back to the ranch, he thinks about the Apache culture. He knows that Apaches are cruel to their enemies but will not harm children. He knows that the Apaches survived on this cruel landscape for centuries with no more weapons than bows and arrows and no more transportation than their own feet. He is very careful to conceal his progress, but Hondo does not know about Lowe and Phalinger following him. He does, however, suspect that someone is behind him, because of the dust in the air. He continues to watch Sam for signs of danger.

Meanwhile, Lowe and Phalinger have the advantage of knowing where Hondo is headed. Even so, Phalinger instinctively knows this is a fatal mistake but he cannot convince Lowe to let wisdom and survival overrule his need for revenge. Lowe entices Phalinger with the cash Hondo must be carrying, but eventually Phalinger says he will continue only one more day.

Lowe thinks about how much he hated life on the remote and secluded ranch. He thinks he will hire men to work his cattle and property after the Apaches have been subdued by the army. He remembers Angie's disapproval of his vices. They find Hondo's camp and plan to kill him at first light.

1. What does the author make clear about Apache culture and about their history in the Southwest?
2. What enables Lowe to manipulate Phalinger?
3. What prediction would you make about the likelihood of a successful assassination on the part of the two outlaws?

Chapter 11

As Angie goes about the work of the ranch, she continues to believe that Hondo Lane will return. She can also tell by the evidence of Apache warriors riding past the ranch with scalps and army uniform jackets that the war has been going badly for the cavalry. Vittorio brings all the eligible men from the Moon Dog Lodge of the Mescalero to the ranch for the "squaw-seeking ceremony." (97) He instructs Angie to pick one as they demonstrate for her their skills at horsemanship and Vittorio tells her a little of the wealth and character of each man. The author describes the potential grooms as "magnificent physical specimens . . . dressed in their fanciest regalia." (98)

When Angie refuses with the explanation that her religion will not permit her to marry another man while her own husband is quite possibly alive, Vittorio says that he will give her until the season of the planting rain, but if no husband has shown by then, she will have to take an Apache husband.

Angie starts planning to escape as soon as the rains that will hide their tracks come. She begins putting two horses out to graze in various places away from the corral so that Apache warriors watching the ranch do not assume they have fled when two horses are missing from the corral. Her father left a handmade map that will prove a valuable tool when they leave. Silva makes another demeaning visit, suggesting she may be his squaw one day. When Angie insults him, another warrior, Emiliano, backs him down for the time being. Angie expresses her gratitude after Emiliano prevents Silva from harming her.

1. At this point in the story, who appears to be winning the so-called Apache Wars?
2. What is the difference between Emiliano and Silva?
3. If Angie stays until the rains come, what will Vittorio force her to do? Why?

Chapter 12

As they wait for daylight to ambush Hondo, Phalinger again concludes that their plot is a mistake. He thinks about Ed Lowe's lack of character and how Ed's patterns in life will always repeat themselves. Greed, hatred, revenge, envy, would be Ed's motivation in everything he did.

Meanwhile Hondo is lying in his camp and thinking of Angie.

Three miles away, three Mescalero Apaches are discovering the white men's tracks and making their own plans for the morning.

Even before the sun is up, Hondo is awake, and Sam signals him that there are Apache warriors somewhere nearby. He does not know about the two white men, but he is already out of sight when they arrive. Lowe and Phalinger plan to ride to the edge of the small canyon with some distance separating them so that Hondo must choose one target. When they show themselves, however, he is not to be seen. Instead, the trailing Apaches ambush the two of them as they come out in the open, and before either of the two realizes it, they have been shot. Hondo, in turn, fires on the warriors, killing two.

Miraculously, Ed Lowe has been saved from death by the metal frame of a picture (tintype) of his son, Johnny, which deflected the bullet. He is injured but not fatally so. Lowe realizes that Hondo, the man he came to kill, is nevertheless giving him aid. He also realizes that Hondo's horse is the only transportation out of danger, so he attempts to shoot his rescuer. A quick warning from Sam, and Hondo whirls around to fire upon his would-be assassin. He has now killed the husband and father of the woman and child he has come to save.

1. What important realizations about life does Phalinger make that are too late to act on?
2. Discuss some of the ironies in this chapter, wherein many are killed but not according to plan.
3. What significance may the death of Ed Lowe have for Hondo Lane?

Chapter 13

As Hondo travels closer to the ranch, he is intercepted by Apaches, including Silva. Although he seems to be successfully escaping one group, another soon cuts him off. His horse falls, and he is captured without even being able to draw his gun. Hondo warns Sam to hide in the brush, and the Apaches discover that Hondo speaks their language. Familiar with their ways, Hondo foresees Silva's intention to torture him and attempts to provoke Silva into giving him a quick death. The other warriors are entertained by Hondo's insults, but Silva is only more motivated to keep him alive in order to kill him slowly and painfully.

Hondo realizes that there is little chance of escape, and he resolves to die with honor. He will show no fear and express no pain. He rides into the Apache camp knowing there may be some who recognize him from his time among the Apache, but he looks straight ahead and acknowledges no one.

1. How did it happen that Hondo was captured without a fight?
2. Given his helplessness, why does Hondo insist on insulting Silva as much as possible?
3. As he enters the camp, what has Hondo resolved to do?

Chapter 14

Vittorio is a good judge of character, and he commends Hondo for his bravery in insulting Silva under such dire circumstances. Hondo says he recognizes Vittorio from the treaty council at Fort

Meade. Vittorio is contemptuous of the treaty, which the white men must have broken. Vittorio wants to know exactly where the cavalry is and is curious about why Hondo is out here all alone. The author describes Hondo's philosophical meditation as he nears death. He thinks about the beauty of the desert and mountains, "the creak of saddle leather in the sun." (122) He regrets that he never had a son to pass his experiences on to. He realizes that his death won't mean much; only a few people would mourn his passing for a short time. He regrets not having a family. An adopted family would be just as good, and he thinks of Johnny and Angie.

As he contemplates death, Hondo does not blame the Apache people. He thinks of how the indigenous peoples of America greeted the European explorers with nothing but friendship and were rewarded with centuries of treachery. He thinks of how everyone, Native Americans included, knew that all attempts to fight the white man's advance were futile. It was only a matter of time. Even as he awaits torture, Hondo admires the Apache for fighting back against unbeatable odds.

His last thoughts before torture turn to Angie and Johnny. Silva begins the torture by filling Hondo's palms with glowing coals, but at that same moment a near miracle occurs. One of the warriors examining the contents of Hondo's saddlebags finds the tintype of Johnny, Vittorio's adopted son and blood brother. Upon seeing the picture, Vittorio assumes that Hondo is Angie's husband who has finally come home, and the torture is halted.

Silva is furious, and he calls upon Vittorio to give him "the blood right" to fight Hondo to the death. (124) Even with burned palms, Hondo defeats Silva, yet gives him the option of living or dying as he holds him motionless with a knife blade against his throat. Vittorio respects this, and when Silva chooses to submit and live, Vittorio chooses to let Hondo live as well. Silva's demeanor by no means belies gratitude for his life, and in his heart he plans to kill Hondo when the opportunity presents itself.

1. How does the author use Hondo's near death meditation to write about life?
2. Why doesn't Hondo hold the Apache responsible for his impending death?
3. What can the reader interpret about Louis L'Amour's stance on the fate of the Native American nations?
4. How are Vittorio and Silva different in character?
5. What did Hondo hope to gain from letting Silva live?

Chapter 15

By the time Vittorio and his cavalcade deliver Hondo to Angie, he is unconscious and must be revived with a bucket of water. When Vittorio asks if Hondo is Angie's man, she replies, "Yes. This is my husband," although she has no idea how this has come to pass. (129) Vittorio expresses satisfaction with the fact that Hondo has lived among the Apache and can pass their ways on to Small Warrior, Johnny. Angie surveys Hondo's wounds from combat, capture, and torture and knows he will require some doctoring.

When Sam approaches the cabin, Silva relishes skewering the poor dog on his war lance. Upon hearing of Sam's passing, Hondo talks about how old the dog was and how he almost ate him one winter when he was starving and how he was "an ugly cuss, that Sam," only convincing the reader of his love for the dog whom he never fed but trusted his life to. (131)

As the rain falls on the cabin roof that night, Angie realizes that "the man is back," just as Johnny has been asking for, and that Hondo is not just any man. (132)

1. How does this scene again illustrate the differences between Vittorio and Silva?
2. How does Hondo feel about the death of Sam? How does the reader know he feels that way?
3. How do Johnny and Angie feel now?
4. What problem might the reader foresee for the new family?

Chapter 16

Hondo shows Angie the tintype of Johnny and explains that he got it from Ed when he died, but before he can find the words to tell her that he killed Ed, Johnny enters and the conversation is sidlined for the time being.

Hondo takes Vittorio's mandate that Johnny receive Apache male training to heart, and starts him on a training program of sorts that includes tossing him into deep water without warning to teach

him to swim, learning to fish and hunt effectively, learning to read tracks, learning to find water and food in the desert. For the moment, life seems idyllic.

1. What differences in philosophy about raising a boy between Hondo and Angie are illustrated in this chapter?
2. Does Angie trust Hondo's judgment? Why or why not?
3. How does Johnny react to this new training regimen?

Chapter 17

The author opens this chapter by describing the irony of the situation: Hondo Lane, the killer from the Brazos, and a boy of six, riding Old Gray. (141) Hondo is a patient and gentle teacher, and even if the lessons may be harsh, they are never cruel. Hondo passes on more information about the wildlife and geography of the Arizona desert, as well as philosophy about how to approach life.

The pair survives an encounter with four Apaches from the mountains familiar with the reputation of Vittorio but unaware of his relationship with the six-year-old boy. Three of the four are only curious, but the fourth is openly hostile, and when a fight seems unavoidable, Hondo kills him quickly and mercilessly. The other three seem more interested in Hondo's method than in the tragedy of the man's death.

When Vittorio's party appears by surprise and hears what happened, the old chief instructs Johnny to take his coup stick and strike the dead warrior, thus counting coup. Johnny does this a little reluctantly, but Vittorio and the others are satisfied and leave. As they head home, Johnny cries, Hondo holds him and says finally, "It was a hard thing. . . . You did well, Johnny." (150)

1. What are some of the lessons about life on the desert that Hondo teaches Johnny?
2. Why are these four Apache warriors not as friendly as the Mescalero?
3. What is the organizational structure of the Apache nation?
4. What was the difference between Johnny's lesson early in the day and his final lesson late in the day?
5. Explore the contrast between Hondo's reaction to the hostile warrior and his reaction to Johnny's crying. Does it make sense to the reader?

Chapter 18

Hondo is relieved to see that Johnny bounces back from the killing and coup-counting in a short time.

Hondo broods over the fact that he is now living with the wife and son of a man whom he killed, and they do not know it. Again, he attempts to tell Angie, but Angie, sensing that this is something too important to rush, advises him to wait for the best time and not rush it.

Hondo describes life in an Apache village. No one steals, no one lets another go hungry, and everyone looks out for those who cannot take care of themselves.

Despite his roughness, Hondo reveals the many simple things he notices about Angie, and she thanks him for noticing.

Vittorio appears out of nowhere again. He tells them that the U.S. Cavalry will be upon them soon. He asks that Hondo not go with the soldiers, and Hondo agrees. Then he asks that Hondo and Angie lie to the soldiers about which direction the Apache warriors are headed in, and Hondo disagrees. Vittorio pronounces Hondo a good man, and later Hondo tells Angie that he thinks this was a test of his honesty.

Angie tells Hondo that she loves him but feels it is unseemly, given the short time that has passed since her husband's death. Hondo replies that hearts do not follow calendars. The stars and the sky and the sounds of the night are so beautiful that the two cannot resist sleeping outside that night.

1. What has Hondo still failed to tell Angie and Johnny, which will always be hanging over them?
2. What values do Apaches have, according to Hondo? Does he think these values are consistent with Angie's?
3. How does Vittorio test Hondo's honesty?
4. What assumptions might a reader make about the author's relationship with nature based on this chapter's ending?

Chapter 19

Squadron D of the Sixth U.S. Cavalry files by the ranch, and Hondo is reunited with his old friend Buffalo Baker, whom Angie invites in for dinner along with Lieutenant McKay and a few others. In a light moment, Buffalo is embarrassed when he cannot immediately remember his seldom-used last name. Lieutenant Baker is incredulous that the ranchers are on friendly terms with Vittorio and refuses to believe that Vittorio could be a man of honor or anything more than a murdering savage. McKay has been mistaking Vittorio's military tactics for cowardice, but when Hondo asks a few pointed questions about what a supreme military tactician such as Napoleon would have done in similar circumstances, McKay arrives at the realization that Vittorio may very well be a genius, and the U.S. Cavalry needs to operate with extreme caution or dire consequences may follow.

As the chapter ends, McKay asks for Hondo's advice regarding Vittorio. The advice is that when Vittorio engages the soldiers in battle, it will be because he believes it is a situation in which he can win, so when the moment comes, don't assume anything.

1. Why is it hard for Lieutenant McKay to accept that Vittorio may be a brilliant military leader and a man of honor?
2. How can the reader explain why Buffalo Baker couldn't remember his own last name at first?
3. What advice does McKay solicit from Hondo about fighting Vittorio?

Chapter 20

Lennie Sproul is a scoundrel who is not above trying to blackmail someone. He knows that Hondo killed Ed Lowe, and he sees that Hondo has assumed Lowe's place as head of his household. Sproul's point of view is that Hondo has done this for material gain, and now Sproul tries to blackmail Hondo out of his Winchester rifle. Sproul proposes he'll keep quiet, not realizing he has just taken his life in his hands. As he is getting the life beaten out of him by Hondo, Hondo realizes that Angie has heard their whole conversation. Their eyes meet for a long time, then Angie turns and walks away.

McKay expects Hondo to ride scout for them, but as Hondo promised Vittorio, he will not. The cavalry column rides away, and Hondo, Angie, and Johnny are left behind. Hondo attempts to open the conversation about the death of Ed Lowe, but Angie stops him. She wants time to think.

Thinking about the fate of his friends who are about to engage the Apache, Hondo ponders the army's need for "[m]ore officers like General Crook who understood the Indian." (167)

As the chapter ends, Hondo is about to saddle his horse. He appears to be leaving.

1. What mistake did Lennie Sproul make that could have been extremely hazardous to his health?
2. What was Angie's reaction upon learning that Hondo killed her husband? Would she discuss it?
3. What assumption might Hondo be making about his own future?

Chapter 21

Johnny sees Hondo saddling his horse and is devastated that he is leaving. Hondo attempts to give him a few last words of woodsman lore, and the author tells us that Hondo's "throat felt tight and choked up." (169) Angie faces Hondo, who tells her he had "no choice." Angie expresses a stream of feelings about her ex-husband, the strongest of which was hatred. Her appraisal of him seems to suggest that he was everything Hondo is not. She says that the fact that Hondo killed Ed Lowe does not change her love for Hondo.

Hondo presents some worst-case scenarios involving Johnny, but Angie doesn't accept any of them. Having Hondo for a father is the best thing that could possibly happen to Johnny.

Hondo decides to stay with them. For the time being they will go to live on his ranch in California, but when the Apache Wars are over, they will return.

The Sixth Cavalry suddenly returns. As Hondo predicted, Vittorio attacked when he had the army at a disadvantage. However, Vittorio was killed, so the Apaches retreated even though they had the cavalry surrounded. Hondo explains that they will rejoin the attack as soon as they have a new war chief, which will doubtlessly be Silva.

Buffalo remarks that he is proud of their West Point lieutenant: "All his bullet holes is in the front part of him." (173) Regardless of their courage, the cavalrymen are outnumbered, have suffered

casualties, and must retreat to the post as soon as possible. Hondo tells Angie that one of Silva's first attacks will be their ranch.

1. Which of the three people might the reader guess is hurting the most at the beginning of the chapter: Hondo, Johnny, or Angie? What clues are there?
2. What are some of the consequences of Vittorio's death?
3. Why is Buffalo Baker proud of Lieutenant McKay?

Chapter 22

Hondo predicts that Silva will catch up with the column and attack within four hours. He also predicts that Silva will be ruthless and dangerous but impatient and less cunning than Vittorio. The commanding officer, Lieutenant McKay, is delirious from his wounds. With the Apaches' first attack on the retreating column, the soldiers circled the wagons, creating a makeshift fort, and fired from inside. The Apache warriors attack and then stop, disappearing for no apparent reason, followed by waves of attacks from the tall grass, but are thwarted when Hondo initiates the stratagem of suddenly driving the wagons on, leaving the dismounted Apaches on foot and behind.

Each time the warriors attack, the soldiers employ a new tactic, each time catching the Apaches by surprise. Retreating cavalymen suddenly stop, dismount, and fire from kneeling positions at the charging warriors, exploiting their reckless pursuit.

Silva employs a trick of his own, sending a group ahead to cut off the retreat with a charge of horsemen from the front. For the last time, the wagons are circled and the fighting continues, sometimes hand to hand. In the end, Hondo and Silva are face-to-face. They fight with blows from fists, feet, and lances, but ultimately Hondo does to Silva what Silva did to Sam.

With the death of Silva, the fighting is over. Hondo knows that the column will reach the fort before another chief can be decided upon.

As the column advances toward the fort, Hondo turns the reins over to Johnny despite Angie's protests that he's never driven the team, and somewhere among the wagons a mandolin and a bass voice combine in a rendition of "Sweet Betsy from Pike." As the novel ends, Hondo's thoughts are of a ranch and a field of newly mown hay, of a house with smoke rising from the chimney and a woman inside, holding a sleeping child.

1. How does the Sixth Cavalry avoid annihilation?
2. What is perhaps Silva's fatal weakness?
3. Compare and contrast the opening and closing of the novel. What radical change has taken place in the protagonist?

→ suggested activities

reader response activities

what is reader response theory?

The point of reader response theory for the classroom is basically to teach students to read for themselves and to think at high cognitive levels about their reading. It is well-known that when students personally interact with books, they are much more likely to develop skills of literary interpretation, as well as develop a love of literature.

activities

Literature circles were made famous by Harvey Daniels in his books *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-centered Classroom* (Stenhouse, 1994) and *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in Book Clubs and Reading Groups* (Stenhouse, 2002). In the literature circles technique, students are actually preparing for what will simply be called a book club when they are adults—that is, sharing their personal ideas about a book that all members of the group have read. In Daniels's original design, each member of a group of about six students has a different role each day, and the group members rotate through the roles. Some of the more common roles are: (1) discussion leader (who prepares discussion questions for the day's reading assignment), (2) connections maker (who points out connections that could be made between the book and modern life), (3) literary luminary (who picks out some especially powerful quotations to read out loud), (4) illustrator (who creates an artistic rendering of some portion of the day's reading), (5)

vocabulary enricher (who looks up the meanings of unfamiliar words), and (6) investigator (who researches some factual portion of the reading). Each day the students hold a literature circle meeting and fulfill their roles.

Silent discussion is a means for engaging every student and allowing for interaction to take place in greater volume than is possible with traditional class discussion. After students have completed a meaningful reading assignment, place provocative quotations (along with the page number) from the book on poster paper (sheets about two feet by five feet or whatever will fit on the surfaces) around the room. Ask students to write a response to each quotation right on the poster paper. You might have them move in groups; for example, six members of one group all read and write responses to quotation A at the same time (hence the need for the large poster paper). After a set number of minutes, announce that it is time to rotate to the next quotation and respond again.

When everyone has rotated through all the quotations, ask them to again go through the rotations, but this time they must respond to what someone else has written. They may need some preparation for what is a constructive response.

When they have completed the second round of rotations, each group is responsible for presenting the poster they began with. They read the quotation, explain what it means in the context of the page on which it appeared, and pick a first response and its second response to share with the class. They then explain why they chose this set to share.

Letter writing can take a number of forms. Students choose a character and assume that character's identity as they write a letter to another character in the book. Angie might write a letter to Hondo, for example, after he has left, explaining her life and how Johnny needs a real father. Vittorio might write a letter to the president of the United States, outlining the plight of the Apache and explaining why they fight. The possibilities are bound only by the students' imaginations.

Newspaper publication encourages students to work in groups and create a few pages from a local newspaper (fictitious or not) reporting on the events of the time. Some articles can be serious: "Vittorio Takes Warpath," for example, and some can be humorous, "Woman Wears Pants in Patagonia." A little Internet and library research will help students to get background information. Writing skills are enhanced and students gain a better understanding of the setting.

Television news program is another technique for getting students thinking about the novel and its significance. Students work in groups to present a prepared news program with anchormen and -women, reporters in the field, and local inhabitants who are interviewed. An anchor might report on Vittorio's movements, for example, while a reporter in the field might interview Silva about what his plans are. Like the newspaper project, this can produce both humorous and serious pieces.

→ internet resources

1. Apache Warriors:
<http://www.geocities.com/~zybt/warriors.htm>
2. Apache Wars:
<http://www.onwar.com/aced/nation/all/apache/findex.htm>
http://thenaturalamerican.com/apache_war.htm
<http://www.geocities.com/~zybt/awars.htm>
3. Chiricahua Apaches:
http://www.desertusa.com/magfeb98/feb_pap/du_apache.html
4. Cochise Stronghold:
<http://www.cochisestronghold.com/>
5. Fort Huachuca:
<http://huachuca-www.army.mil/HISTORY/huachuca.htm>
6. General George Crook:
<http://www.desertusa.com/mag99/may/papr/crook.html>
7. Geronimo:
<http://www.desertusa.com/ind1/geronimo.html>
<http://www.indians.org/welker/geronimo.htm>
<http://www.geocities.com/Yosemite/Rapids/9755/geronimo.html>

8. Louis L'Amour:
<http://www.louislamour.com>
9. San Carlos Apache Tribe:
<http://www.geocities.com/~zybt/apache.htm>
10. White Mountain Apache Tribe:
<http://www.wmat.nsn.us/>

• additional resources

- Alesire, Peter. *Reaping the Whirlwind: The Apache Wars*. Facts on File, 1998.
- Alesire, Peter. *Warrior Woman: The Story of Lozen, Apache Warrior and Shaman*. St. Martin's Press, 2001.
- Bourke, John G. *On the Border with Crook*. University of Nebraska Press, 1971.
- Debo, Angie. *Geronimo: The Man, His Time, His Place*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1989.
- Geronimo. *Geronimo: His Own Story*. Plume, 1996.
- Hawkins, Reese. *Remembering Louis L'Amour*. McCleery and Sons, 2001.
- L'Amour, Angelique. *A Trail of Memories: The Quotations of Louis L'Amour*. Bantam, 1988.
- Michno, Gregory. *Encyclopedia of Indian Wars: Western Battles and Skirmishes 1850–1890*. Mountain Press, 2003.
- Roberts, David. *Once They Moved Like the Wind: Cochise, Geronimo, and the Apache Wars*. Touchstone Books, 1994.
- Sheridan, Thomas. *Arizona: A History*. University of Arizona Press, 1995.
- Sweeney, Edwin. *Cochise: Chiricahua Apache Chief* (The Civilization of the American Indian, Vol. 204). University of Oklahoma Press, 1995.
- Sweeney, Edwin. *Making Peace with Cochise: The 1872 Journal of Captain Joseph Alton Sladen*. University of Oklahoma Press, 1997.
- Sweeney, Edwin, and Angie Debo. *Great Apache Chiefs: Cochise and Geronimo*. Fine Communications, 1997.
- Trimble, Marshall. *Roadside History of Arizona*. Mountain Press, 1986.
- U.S. Army Intelligence Center and Fort Huachuca Directorate of Information Management. *Fort Huachuca*. 15 March 2004.
<http://huachuca-www.army.mil/HISTORY/huachuca.htm>. 20 March 2004.

• about this guide's writer

JAMES BLASINGAME, JR., is an assistant professor of English at Arizona State University (ASU), in Tempe, Arizona. Dr. Blasingame works in the teacher preparation program at ASU, where he teaches methods classes and supervises student teachers. He is the coauthor of *Teaching Writing in the Middle and Secondary Schools* (Pearson Prentice Hall) and the author of *They Rhymed with Their Boots: A Teacher's Guide to Cowboy Poetry* (The Writing Conference, Inc.). He is coeditor of *The ALAN Review* and creates the Books for Adolescents section of the *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy*. Dr. Blasingame was a high school English teacher for eighteen years before joining higher education. He frequents the historic Apache Trail near his home in Arizona.