

READING GROUP GUIDE

1. Discuss Captain Jefferson Kyle Kidd's work as a newspaper reader. What does he bring to his audience, and what does he gain from his work besides financial compensation?
2. Why does Kidd accept the difficult job of returning Johanna home? What drives him to complete the job despite the danger and obstacles?
3. Why do you think Johanna wants to stay with her Kiowa family? What do you think she remembers of her life before she was taken?
4. What connects Kidd to Johanna? Why does she seem to trust him so easily?
5. What does Kidd worry may become of Johanna once she's returned to her family? What does he know of the fate of other "returned captives"?
6. Doris Dillion says that Johanna is "carried away on the flood of the world...not real and not not-real." She describes her as having "been through two creations" and "forever falling." Do you agree with her assessment? Does Johanna remain this way through the course of the novel?
7. Discuss the various tensions in the novel: Indians and whites, soldiers and civilizations, America's recent past and its unsure future. In what ways do these tensions underlie the story of Kidd and Johanna?
8. Imagine the perspective of Johanna's Kiowa family. Why do you think they would've taken her in and raise her? Why would they give her up? How do you think they felt when they let her go?
9. Discuss the troubling moment when Johanna wanted to scalp her fallen enemy. How did that make you feel about her?
10. Partway through his journey with Johanna, Kidd feels as though he was "drawn back into the stream of being because there was once again life in his hands." What do you think this means? What does it tell you about Kidd's emotional life?