

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

In this story of the tribe before white contact there are many rewards and also lessons that may be even more important today than they were 300 years ago when the story takes place. ... *Red Thunder* ... was the best book [I've] read in many years.

—Brent Andrews, *Coeur d'Alene Press*

FOR ADULT READERS

Red Thunder is steeped in Native American history, cultural traditions and customs, and family and relationship values. The following questions are intended to provide the common ground for a shared reading experience—for reading groups, discussion groups, or other topical forums.

- 1.** *Red Thunder* takes place in the early 1700s, before the Schi'tsu'umsh Tribe's widespread contact with European settlers. In what ways is Sun Boy's story a product of the time in which he lives? In what ways are his experiences timeless?
- 2.** In many ways, *Red Thunder* is a spiritual journey. What are the forces that guide Sun Boy and his tribe? How does he view his place in the world?
- 3.** Discuss the Schi'tsu'umsh's relationship with nature. "The beauty of nature was more than something good to look at; more than something to get food or shelter from." What are some of the other benefits of nature that this novel brings to light? In what ways might modern society benefit from their example?
- 4.** Matheson says, "The backdrop to the story is part of our genuine oral history." Why do you think he chose to write this history in novel form?
- 5.** *Red Thunder* follows several generations of a family from birth to adulthood, old age, and death. How are these four cycles of life depicted in this story?

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- 6.** Discuss the numerous ways in which animals help in the telling of this novel.
- 7.** What roles do the women play in *Red Thunder*? How do they shape Sun Boy's character?
- 8.** The Schi'tsu'umsh tread very carefully around a woman expecting a child. "You must not yell around them, argue or tell scary or frightening stories. Never say hurtful or critical things. All this will affect the baby." Do you think this is mere superstition, or is there merit to their concerns? Why?
- 9.** When Berry Woman is beaten by her husband, Peepa takes her back home. Do you think this is an effective method for dealing with spousal abuse? How effective would this method be if it were used in today's world?
- 10.** In what ways does Matheson challenge the traditional depictions of Native Americans? Which characters do you find especially surprising?