

# Sing Down The Moon

by Scott O'Dell

## Classroom Favorites

Teacher's Guide by Mary Ellen Snodgrass

A Perma-Bound Production

### SYNOPSIS

On the high mesas above the Canyon de Chelly, Bright Morning, a sturdy fourteen-year-old shepherdess, watches her mother's sheep. The peaceable Navaho tribe prides itself on healthy flocks of sheep, from which they produce handwoven blankets, and on its peach orchards and gardens of melons and squash. Bright Morning loves the verdant hill country around Spider Rock and Lost Sheep Mountain. Her pleasure in the coming spring is marred by heavy rains which turn to snow. Alarmed by the hostile forces of nature, she abandons her sheep in the aspen grove and shamefacedly creeps into the family hogan.

Because sheep are the province of Navaho women, it is Bright Morning's mother's job to chastise her daughter for lack of responsibility and dereliction of duty. Lapaná, Bright Morning's sixteen-year-old sister, makes matters worse by acting superior. Bright Morning's mother leads her daughter back to the aspen grove where the two women wrap themselves in blankets. The girl endures a dismal night of silent accusation. After the incident, Bright Morning is denied the privilege of watching her mother's sheep.

Another spring comes to the valley. Accompanied by White Deer and Running Bird, Bright Morning again herds the sheep. The girls discuss the future responsibilities of marriage and motherhood. Although she is not so pretty as her two friends, Bright Morning anticipates marriage to Tall Boy, who earned his name after he killed a bear. It is rumored that his parents want him to marry a girl whose mother owns many sheep. The girls taunt Bright Morning for her weaknesses—a large appetite and plain features. They whisper that Tall Boy may find a prettier wife among the Utes, whom he will visit the next day when the warriors ride west.

The next morning the twelve braves dress in red paint and gray eagle feathers. Tall Boy, whom Bright Morning's mother disdains for his conceit, leads the way. Alone again on the mesa, the girls separate at noon. Running Bird calls to Bright Morning and points down the canyon, where the sound of a gun reports the arrival of a line of white soldiers from Fort Defiance. The "Long Knives," named for their bayonets, remind Old Bear that his tribe has pledged to keep the peace or else the village will be burned and every person and animal in it killed. Old Bear declares that his tribe will keep the peace if no one attacks them.

The next day on the mesa, two Spaniards, slavers who pretend to need directions, ask the way to Corn Mountain. Before Bright

Morning can escape, she and Running Bird are captured. Traveling by night and sleeping during the day, they force the girls on horseback down the Dawn Trail to the lowlands. Three days later Bright Morning's black dog catches up with them. On the fourth day they arrive at a white settlement. A Jicarilla Apache woman sells the slaver food. The slaver leaves Running Bird with the woman and drags Bright Morning away from her friend and delivers her to the last house on the street.

Bright Morning enters the service of a white woman and works in the kitchen with Rosita, another Navaho who has adapted well to captivity. Bright Morning sleeps in a roomy adobe building and receives two dresses and a pair of red shoes with buttons. One morning while Rosita and Bright Morning run errands in the market, a somber Nez Percé slave named Nehana urges Bright Morning not to trust Rosita and whispers information about the location of Running Bird. After a party where Nehana joins Bright Morning and Rosita to serve guests, the two friends plan to escape in ten days.

They meet at the church for Easter services, but Bright Morning's mistress keeps too close a watch. The girls plan to try again the next night. Bright Morning pretends to have a headache. When she is alone, she escapes over the wall with her dog. Nehana and Running Bird join her at the church. During the service when everyone extinguishes his candle, the girls steal horses and escape. They follow a desperate scheme of hard riding punctuated with snatches of rest. On the trail they are overtaken by Tall Boy and his friend Mando. Tall Boy spears a pursuing Spaniard with his lance. Tall Boy himself receives a gunshot wound in his right shoulder. The others rig a travois to ease his ride home to Canyon de Chelly.

Back home with the tribe, Bright Morning concentrates on helping Tall Boy. Bitter Water, the medicine man, tends the wound, but Tall Boy loses the use of his right arm. Having lost his status of warrior, he is pitied and treated like a woman. Bright Morning continues to think of him as her future husband and defends his honor. She takes part in the Womanhood Ceremony and slows her run from potential suitors so that Tall Boy will have a chance. Humiliated by her gesture, Tall Boy sneers at Bright Morning for accommodating his handicap.

That winter, soldiers command the Navahos to leave Canyon de Chally. Tall Boy tears their orders into shreds and hurls them into the river. Bright Morning's father leads the tribe into the high country to escape capture. They hide sheep and goats in a secret canyon, pack a week's supply of food, and follow slabs of stone up

the canyon. The soldiers move into Canyon de Chelly and destroy it, burning hogans, hacking peach trees, and trampling the garden. Tall Boy drags himself up the steep ridge to join the tribe.

The soldiers remain in the village in order to starve the tribe out of the hills. Tall Boy fashions a lance and attempts to spear a soldier, but fails. His despair deepens. The soldiers round up the Navahos and lead them into a greater march southward toward Fort Sumner. Along the way, Bright Morning meets Little Rainbow and helps her tend one of her two small children. Tall Boy, spiritually beaten and shamed, rejoins the tribe. As the number of captives increases, Bright Morning and the child are separated from Little Rainbow. Bright Morning names the girl Meadow Flower.

As thousands of Indians join the march southward, food becomes scarce. Old and young members die. The captives are settled at Bosque Redondo on the bend of a river at noon of the third day. Meadow Flower dies; Bright Morning searches for the child's mother and comforts her for the loss of her second child, who also died.

Despair deepens as supplies are limited, crops fail, and a band of quarrelsome Apaches makes life difficult for the peaceloving Navahos. People sit idle in their makeshift shelters. Rumors of a massacre at Sand Creek intensify the oppressive atmosphere of their captivity. Tall Boy, who endears himself to his future in-laws by helping them establish a more comfortable shelter, marries Bright Morning in a traditional ceremony. They build a lean-to of willow poles and earth adjacent to Bright Morning's parents' shelter.

Bright Morning dreams of returning to Canyon de Chelly. She saves bits of food and trades her turquoise bracelet for old blankets. During a woodcutting expedition, Tall Boy gets into an argument with Mangus, an Apache, and breaks his arm. The soldiers imprison Tall Boy, but he escapes through a garbage hole in the wall. At first he sits in a daze while Bright Morning calls him an old woman and her mother harangues him for his lack of spirit. Tall Boy changes his attitude and departs with his wife for home.

By a pond in Elk-Running Valley, Bright Morning gives birth to a son. Eventually the little family makes their way back to the canyon. They take shelter in a cave high up the canyon. Bright Morning locates a sheep and a lamb. Despite their loss of peach orchards and tribal support, she greets her return home with a hopeful outlook.

[A postscript to the novel describes the Long Walk which forced 8,491 Navahos into a prison camp three hundred miles south of their ancestral home. Four years later the surviving 1,500 Indians were released and resettled at Four Corners, the place where Utah, Arizona, Colorado, and New Mexico touch.]

## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Scott O'Dell (1898-1989) filled his works with a love and appreciation of nature, which he derived from his travels in many European countries and the United States and from observations of his native Los Angeles, which he described as a "frontier town" during his early childhood. The son of a railroad man, O'Dell enjoyed the early years of his education, but rebelled against the

lockstep courses and large classes of college. During his studies at Occidental College, the University of Wisconsin, Stanford, and the University of Rome from 1919-1925, he took the courses that pleased him and that facilitated his ambition to make writing a career.

O'Dell worked as cameraman and book editor of a Los Angeles newspaper. During the filming of *Ben Hur*, he operated one of the first technicolor cameras. After serving time in the Air Force, he devoted his life to writing. The first ten years he wrote for adults, but he spent the next decade writing for children, whom O'Dell preferred as an audience because of their ability to identify with the character's experiences.

O'Dell found writing hard because of the distractions that lured him away from the typewriter. He claimed to write out of inner need and observed a strict 7:00 A. M. to noon schedule. He enjoyed especially the three to four months of research that precede the six months of writing each work. In addition he liked gardening, fishing, and observing the sea birds, whales, dolphins, and changes of the seasons outside his California home.

## CRITIC'S CORNER

O'Dell earned a broad range of awards and honors during his half century career. Outstanding among them are three Newbery Awards for *The King's Fifth*, *The Black Pearl*, and *Sing Down the Moon*. In addition he received the Rupert Hughes Award, Hans Christian Andersen Medal, William Allen White Award, German Juvenile International Award, Nene Award, and University of Southern Mississippi Medallion.

*The Island of the Blue Dolphins* has been made into a film, as has *The Black Pearl*. Also, a biographical sketch of Scott O'Dell's life and work is available on filmstrip.

## GENERAL OBJECTIVES

1. To explain the style and purpose of historical fiction
2. To list specific details about the speaker
3. To note the limitations of first person narration
4. To evaluate the historical situation from the Indian point of view
5. To characterize the differences in cultural expectations between whites and Indians
6. To explain family roles among Navahos
7. To probe the theme of responsibility as it is presented in the book
8. To contrast the change in settings
9. To note the division of labor by age

## SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES

1. To note signs of maturity in Bright Morning
2. To evaluate Bright Morning's resourcefulness and courage
3. To contrast Bright Morning and her husband in terms of their ability to adapt to hardship and change
4. To contrast the loyalties and behavior of Navahos, Utes, and Apaches
5. To predict the ability of Bright Morning's family to survive in the cave
6. To summarize the events which lead to Bright Morning's first and second returns to Canyon de Chelly
7. To describe Bright Morning's relationship with her mother
8. To characterize Indian ceremonies of marriage, coming of age, and healing
9. To summarize the human costs of the Long Walk
4. There were white soldiers who lived to the south of our canyon, at Fort Defiance. (Chapter 3, p. 15)  
(A fortification in the northwest corner of Arizona on the Arizona-New Mexico border, Fort Defiance was built to keep the peace after severe and treacherous raids led by Apaches hindered trade along the Colorado River. Canyon de Chelly lies 40 miles to the north of Fort Defiance in the Chinle Valley.)
5. The floor was not made of common earth like ours, but of adobe mixed with blood. (Chapter 7, p. 35)  
(Adobe, a common building material in the American southwest, is composed of unburnt clay formed into bricks, baked in the sun, and used for construction of Spanish dwellings. The bricks take on a characteristic deep red color which resembles the color of human blood.)
6. There is a baile at your house tonight. (Chapter 8, p. 39)  
(Baile is the Spanish word for dance or party.)
7. "That is where the Penitentes meet," Nehana said. "I do not belong to them, but they will not harm us." (Chapter 9, p. 46)  
(The Spanish spelling for penitents refers to a group of Christian worshippers who perform a reenactment of Christ's crucifixion at the annual Easter service. The ceremony ends in darkness to commemorate the time that Christ spent in the grave before his resurrection. In some churches the service is called Tenebrae or the Service of Darkness and characterizes the period between Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.)

## MEANING STUDY

Below are words, phrases, sentences, or thought units that have a particular meaning in the novel. Explain each. Chapter and page numbers are given so that you can note the context from which the item is taken.

1. On the high Mesas above our canyon spring came early that year. The piñon trees shook off their coverings of snow in the month of the deer. Warm winds melted the snow and blue water gathered under the trees and ran through the meadows and down the steep barrancas. (Chapter 1, p. 1)  
(As indicated in the opening paragraph, the book is sprinkled heavily with Spanish terms, such as mesas, piñon, and barrancas meaning tableland, pine, and ravines. Because the setting is heavily populated with Hispanic, white, and native American settlers, the local dialect is a mixture of Spanish, English, and Indian terms.)
2. "They have gone to raid our enemies, the Utes," Isaid. (Chapter 3, p. 15)  
(The Utes are a nomadic Shoshonean tribe of the Uto-Aztecan language family, which includes Shoshone, Comanche, Paiute, Hopi, and Ute Indians, and which ranges throughout Colorado, Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona.)
3. Then Old Bear came out of the hogan and greeted the soldier and they went inside. (Chapter 3, p. 15)  
(Hogan is the Navaho word for a typical dwelling, which is a dome-shaped framework of logs or supports covered with brush, bark, or grass, and roofed with earth or sod. There is a smoke hole at the high point of the roof and a door on one side. The shelter is temporary and is destroyed when a death occurs inside.)
8. The three horses are pintos and they are tethered near the far side of the grove. (Chapter 9, p. 47)  
(A pinto is a small, sturdy pack horse or herder's mount named from the Spanish word for painted. The pinto's markings are large irregular brown or liver-colored spots on a white background.)
9. The soldier said, "Fort Sumner." (Chapter 17, p. 92)  
(The Navahos cover the distance from Four Corners, where Utah, Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico join, to Fort Sumner, 180 miles southwest of Santa Fe on the Pecos River near the Alamogordo Reservation. Other historic events mark the area. William H. Bonney (Billy the Kid) was killed at the fort in 1881. The area is also famous as the place where the first atomic bomb was exploded in 1945.)
10. The place was called Sand Creek and it was near a town which was in the mountains. (Chapter 19, p. 105)  
(During the Long Walk, rumors reach the Navahos of a massacre at Sand Creek in the northeast corner of Colorado 300 miles from Denver. On November 29, 1864, Colonel John M. Chivington led over 900 cavalrymen to Kiowa County, Colorado, to drive out a settlement of Cheyenne and Arapaho who had been murdering and pillaging the area for three years. The appalling massacre of innocent people has been clouded by conflicting reports of losses. Some say as many as 500 Indians and 9 whites died at the encampment.)

## COMPREHENSION STUDY

Answer the following questions in your own words. There is not always a right answer. Your judgment is important and you should be ready to defend your answers by referring to passages in the book.

### Questions 1 - 5 Literal Level

1. Describe the satisfying qualities of life in the Canyon de Chelly. *(The Navahos seem satisfied to hunt game, grow melons and corn and squash, graze their sheep, weave blankets, and tend the peach orchard. Their needs are met by adequate shelter, plentiful water, and a livable peace treaty with the Utes and Long Knives. As the tribe departs on the Long Walk, Bright Morning describes how the Indians pass the "ruined fields of beans and corn and melons, the peach trees stripped of their bark and branches, our burned-out homes. We turned our eyes away from them and set our faces.")*

2. Explain why life at the fort is hard on the captives. *(During their absence from the Canyon, the Navahos miss the purposeful lifestyle that kept them busy and productive. The hardships of hunger, disease, confinement, and exposure to harsh weather brings death to the very old and the very young. The arrival of the quarrelsome Apaches, who exert their importance by intimidation and threats, causes hard feelings among the more peaceable Navahos.*

*The Navahos' futile attempts to establish gardens along the "gray flatland between the banks of the river" are hindered by drought. Without crops to tend, hides to dress, sheep to shear, or wool to weave, the Indians sit idle on the banks of the Bosque Redondo. Their days are filled with ignoble activities, such as bragging, gossiping, plotting, and reminiscing. Their sleep is filled with bad dreams and fear of ghosts and witches. They await their destiny at the hands of gods whom they believe are punishing them.)*

3. How does Tall Boy court his bride? *(Confined by the hardships of the internment camp, Tall Boy endures the boredom and loss of self-esteem that all braves feel. He copes with his damaged shoulder by keeping himself occupied. When Bright Morning takes charge of Meadow Flower, he fashions a "carrying board from brush and pieces of cloth" to lighten the load of bearing a small child.*

*Gradually, he takes over some of the domestic chores of Bright Morning's household, such as strengthening the hut against winter cold and cutting firewood. Bright Morning is not surprised when Tall Boy's father and two uncles begin the negotiations for the wedding.)*

4. What does Bright Morning save for their return trip from Fort Sumner? *(As Bright Morning awaits the birth of her first child, she vows that the baby will not be born "in the shadow of the gray fort." She searches for wool to weave, but has to settle for three old blankets, which she receives in exchange for a turquoise bracelet. She uses one to repair the other two and saves them for their journey from Bosque Redondo.*

*Each morning she stores two pinches of flour in a gourd and eats less gruel at mealtime so that there will be food for the*

*three-day journey to the Canyon de Chelly. After Tall Boy's arrest, Bright Morning saves enough flour for six days' journey. In addition to food and blankets, she finds and hides a bayonet, which she sharpens on a stone. Bright Morning keeps the red velvet cloth in which the knife is wrapped to make clothing for her baby. After convincing Tall Boy that they must make an effort to escape, they load their goods on the speckled horse and leave with the faithful black dog that accompanied Bright Morning during her enslavement.)*

5. Why are the Navahos defeated after their escape to the ridge? *(Bright Morning's father discourages war with the Long Knives and leads the tribe up the mesa trail along with five horses, a week's supply of food, and five sheep to slaughter—enough to last until the soldiers leave. They eat cold food and conceal their path up the rocky slope. They gather stones and post guards at the entrance to the ridge.*

*From their vantage point the Navahos observe the damage to their village, but console themselves that they can begin again when the soldiers depart. On the third day, the Indians realize that the soldiers are cutting poles and building a lean-to and a fire pit so that they can stay. Their strategy is clear—they plan to starve out the Indians.*

*At first the Navahos cope well with the situation by refilling their water jars and eating less food. Rains replenish their water supply, but they run out of food. Old Bear and Shining Tree's baby dies. The tribe exists on roots and berries and attempts to build a camp of lean-tos, but in their weakened and hopeless position, they are easily captured by the soldiers.)*

### Questions 6 - 8 Interpretive Level

6. Why is Bright Morning able to survive captivity and enslavement?

*(Bright Morning is a sturdy girl with a healthy appetite and a strong will to live. She refuses to kowtow to either her Spanish captor or the Señora. During her enslavement, she stays alert, looks for a chance to escape, and makes the most of her opportunity by pretending to have a headache. She puts her trust in Nehana, whose defiance of authority is more encouraging than Rosita's weak compliance. Bright Morning's pluck and tenacity enable her to learn to ride horseback and to follow the demanding trail home to the Canyon de Chelly.*

*At Bosque Redondo, Bright Morning's grip on reality focuses her attention on the possibility of escape. She avoids the despair that destroys Tall Boy's will to fight back. She berates his lack of courage. With her farsighted preparations for the journey, Bright Morning enables them to leave the crowded camp and to travel in relative safety so that their son can be born in freedom. All of Tall Boy's dire warnings about her sheep come to nothing. Bright Morning has faith that the canyon will provide them a home, that the sheep will still be there, and that life will go on as it once was.)*

7. How does Tall Boy exhibit his loss of self-esteem? *(Tall Boy accepts his wound with courage and hope, but when his return to health does not include use of his right arm, he is forced to give up his position among the braves. At Bright Morning's womanhood ceremony, Tall Boy resents her accommodation of his handicap when she slows her steps so that he*

can keep up. Humiliated, he retorts, "You think that I went to the white man's village just to rescue you . . . You are wrong. I went there for another reason."

When Bright Morning's father questions how Tall Boy will fight the Long Knives, the boy hides his feelings in silence. He forces himself to scramble over the rocky path to the ridge and uses his left hand and his teeth to fashion a lance. After Bright Morning observes that he has lost a moccasin during his laborious climb, she discerns a look on his face that is either shame or anger. Because Tall Boy's lance fails to kill a soldier, Tall Boy disappears into the brush, a look of defeat on his face. He creeps back among his people after they begin the Long Walk.

Soon after Tall Boy escapes from the stockade, he lapses into deep depression, eats in silence, and sleeps by the fire. His belly bulges from lack of exercise. Fortunately for him, the sight of his wife's tears jolts him free of his lethargy and starts him on the way to recovery.)

8. What does the experience with Little Rainbow's baby suggest about Bright Morning's character?

(Bright Morning has a loving, outgoing nature toward children and people who suffer hardship. She accepts the responsibility for Meadow Flower because Little Rainbow has two children to tend on the long walk. Despite hurtful words from Lapana and their mother about the extra weight and an additional mouth to feed, Bright Morning sticks by her principles.

As food grows scarce, Bright Morning feeds the girl first from her own portion so that no one else will suffer. She performs the ceremonial chant for the child during her illness and weeps when Meadow Flower dies. By taking the responsibility for a weak human being, Bright Morning exhibits her strong maternal instinct, which is the goad that drives her to escape the Bosque Redondo encampment so that her own child can enjoy a free life.)

#### Questions 9 and 10 - Critical Level

9. How does O'Dell typify the Indian struggle for survival? (O'Dell's description of the Navaho life before, during, and after their forced march to Fort Sumner suggests that the Indians suffered unfair treatment as a result of forces they could neither understand nor control. Their ability to cope with normal stress—relations with the Utes, weather, an agricultural lifestyle—is unquestioned. It is the external force of white racism against native Americans that leads to their capture and decimation.

The bit of information about the Sand Creek massacre suggests that the Indians deplored the white man's treatment. Their self-control at the sight of the destruction of their village is admirable. Because they live in a simple, non-acquisitive society, they stoically face loss and cling to hopes that they will be allowed to return and pick up where they left off. This innocence in the face of their near-annihilation is a bitter testimony to the true history of the settlement of the American West.)

10. What do displaced peoples lose when they are uprooted and herded into temporary shelters? (Not only do the physical hardships of hunger, disease, and toil

exact a severe toll on the Navahos; the emotional stress is also a great blow to the Indians' innate sense of well-being, self-respect, and harmony with nature. When they crouch all day in their makeshift huts in a hostile environment, their minds retreat to better times and to vain hopes of revenge. The fact that great numbers succumbed to small pox, malnutrition, and exposure is to be expected.)

#### Questions 11 and 12 Creative Level

11. Using as a springboard Chief Joseph's famous statement, "I Will Fight No More Forever," compose a paragraph in tribute to native American leadership.
12. Create an additional chapter about Bright Morning's motherhood and the stories she tells her child about Navaho history.

#### STUDENT INVOLVEMENT ACTIVITIES

1. Draw Canyon de Chelly. Mark the location of the peach orchard, hogans, grazing areas, spring, cave, vegetable garden, and ridge. Draw an arrow toward Fort Defiance.
2. Compose a short biographical speech about a famous Indian, such as Sacajawea, Powhatan, Chief Joseph, Wilma Mankiller, Crazy Horse, Sitting Bull, Bright Eyes, Cochise, Datsolali, Molly Brant, or Sequoia. Include information about the tribe and historical contributions of each.
3. Select an appropriate name for Bright Morning's baby. Justify your choice by connecting the name with some aspect of family history or nature.
4. Imagine being enslaved in a society that is different from your own, such as a south seas island, a desert climate, a refugee camp, or an alien planet. Write a diary about your adaptation to new foods, clothing, work, furniture, and expectations. Explain how and why you would escape and make your way home again.
5. Describe a tenebrae service. Explain where it gets its name, the purpose of the ceremony, the day it is held each year, and the reason it ends in darkness.
6. Write a paragraph describing how Tall Boy adapts to his handicap. Note signs of progress in attitude, agility, and strength.
7. Combine efforts with a partner and write a song about shepherding. Compare your effort with the Psalms of David, particularly numbers 8, 23, and 100.
8. Select an alternate title to *Sing Down the Moon*.

#### ACROSS THE CURRICULUM

##### Math

1. Collect lines from the novel which disclose passage of time and the relative ages of the characters. Include information from the

postscript on pp. 134-136. Add data concerning the Utes, Apaches, and other southwestern U.S. Indians during this same period.

2. Compute the distance from Canyon de Chelly to Fort Sumner, Four Corners, Sand Creek, and Santa Fe, New Mexico. Suggest modern modes of transportation for conveying a large population over desert.

#### **Economics**

Give an oral report on sheep herding and its role in stabilizing the lives of Navahos. Include information about weaving and the sale of goods to tourists.

#### **Social Studies**

1. Write a speech describing Kit Carson, Colonel J. M. Chivington, General George A. Custer, and other white military leaders whose actions brought hardship, resettlement, disease, war, and death to native Americans.
2. Give a historical overview of the diaspora or displacement of native Americans, particularly the infamous Trail of Tears and the Long Walk.
3. Make a map of North, Central, and South America. Mark the current locations of major Indian tribes as well as their ancestral homeland. Include a chart which details current population figures for each.

#### **Psychology**

1. List the difficulties all refugees or internees face when they leave their homes and live in confining, makeshift quarters. Explain why the very old and the very young have a higher mortality rate and why people have difficulty getting along with each other.
2. Using *Bright Morning* as a model, create an extended definition of *dilemma*. Explain how her determination to return to Canyon de Chelly bolsters her during the Navaho exile.

#### **Cinema**

1. Make a list of dramatic scenes from the novel which would require intense use of lighting, costume, makeup, music, props, and stunts, particularly capture by the slaver, the departure from the chapel, escaping pursuers, tending the abandoned children, Tall Boy's treacherous climb up the canyon walls, and the birth of her infant.
2. Screen movies which capture the history of Indians who are beset by white soldiers, settlers, and law enforcement officers, notably *Cheyenne Autumn*, *Dances with Wolves*, *Little Big Man*, and *Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here*. Discuss with a group the reasons for racist suppression of a minority group.

#### **Science and Health**

1. Sketch a design of plants, animals, or some aspect of nature which characterizes the Navahos. Consider sheep, piñon trees, willows, barrancas, or mesas. Include descriptions of these characteristics of southwestern Indian life.

2. Give an oral report on methods by which handicapped people compensate for a damaged limb.

#### **Language**

1. Using examples from the novel, compose a hymn about the natural beauty of Canyon de Chelly.
2. Make a report on myths, legends, prayers, poems, and songs of the Navaho.

#### **Art and Music**

1. Use desktop publishing or other artistic forms to create a poster describing the displacement of Navahos to Fort Sumner or the Sand Creek Massacre, an announcement of the tenebrae service, a map showing the route Bright Morning takes in her escape from slavery, a wall chart of Navaho dress, or a recipe book of southwestern recipes which use native foods, particularly corn meal, piñon nuts, mutton, and juniper berries.
2. Select music for a tenebrae service or a cavalry troop on the march.

### **ALTERNATE ASSESSMENT**

1. List in chronological order significant events in Bright Morning's life, particularly her abandonment of the sheep herd, the birth of her child, enslavement, the Tenebrae service, shopping for the Señora, the Womanhood Ceremony, return to Canyon de Chelly, and Meadow Flower's death.
2. Make a list of scenes from the novel which express contrasting attitudes toward oppression, loyalty, duty, friendship, self-esteem, loss, courage, charity, deception, and violence. Next to each, indicate what you think is the author's personal philosophy.
3. Compose a brief definition of maturity as it applies to Bright Morning, Lapana, Running Bird, Nehana, Rosita, and Tall Boy.
4. List scenes which depict conflict, particularly the attack on Bright Morning's village, mistreatment of slaves, pursuit, arguments with Tall Boy, and Tall Boy's fight with the Apache. Explain the action in each.

### **O'DELL'S PUBLISHED WORKS**

*Representative Photoplays Analyzed: Modern Authorship* (1924)  
*A Woman of Spain: A Story of Old California* (1934)  
*The Hill of the Hawk* (1947)  
*Man Alone* (1953)  
*Country of the Sun: Southern California, an Informal History and Guide* (1957)  
*The Sea Is Red* (1958)  
*The Psychology of Children's Art* (1967)  
*Island of the Blue Dolphins* (1960)  
*The King's Fifth* (1966)  
*The Black Pearl* (1967)  
*Dark Canoe* (1968)  
*Journey to Jericho* (1969)

*Sing Down the Moon* (1970)  
*Treasure of Topo-el-Bampo* (1972)  
*Cruise of the Arctic Star* (1973)  
*Child of Fire* (1974)  
*The Hawk That Dare Not Hunt by Day* (1975)  
*Zia* (1976)  
*The 290* (1976)  
*Carlota* (1977)  
*Kathleen, Please Come Home* (1978)  
*The Captive* (1979)  
*Sarah Bishop* (1980)  
*The Feathered Serpent* (1981)  
*The Spanish Smile* (1982)  
*The Castle in the Sea* (1983)  
*The Amethyst Ring* (1983)  
*Alexandria* (1984)  
*The Road to Damietta* (1985)  
*Streams to the River, River to the Sea* (1986)  
*The Serpent Never Sleeps* (1987)  
*Black Star, Bright Dawn* (1988)  
*My Name Is Not Angelica* (1989)

### RELATED READING

Hal Borland's *When the Legends Die*  
 Dee Brown's *Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee* or *Creek Mary's Blood*  
 Jean Craighead George's *Talking Earth* and *Julie of the Wolves*  
 Paul Goble's *Gift of the Sacred Dog*  
 Jan Hudson's *Sweet Grass*  
 Gary Paulson's *Dogsong*  
 Conrad Richter's *The Light in the Forest*  
 Elizabeth George Speare's *Sign of the Beaver*  
 John Steinbeck's *The Pearl*  
 Theodore Taylor's *The Cay*

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**SING DOWN THE MOON**  
**VOCABULARY TEST**

Choose words from the list below to complete each of the following sentences. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. I was not certain that we were going home until on the evening of the fifth day I saw the high \_\_\_\_\_ against the northern sky.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. I tried to make him smile but he would not forgive me for running fast, even though he had \_\_\_\_\_ me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Toward evening when the fire died down, the women lined the hole with corn \_\_\_\_\_ and poured in a lot of mush . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. They talked like the Anglos who come to our canyon and \_\_\_\_\_ over the price of wool.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. They were \_\_\_\_\_ me to speak, but still I kept silent.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. It is the only trail out of the canyon for a distance of two \_\_\_\_\_ .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. It is still watery and thin, but the sheep will find it good after a winter of \_\_\_\_\_ .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. On the high \_\_\_\_\_ above our canyon spring came early that year.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. I had not gone far when out of the tall grass I saw a \_\_\_\_\_ looking at me.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Everyone shared alike and each family built some sort of a shelter—a cave in the earth, a brush \_\_\_\_\_ , or a hut—out of whatever things could be gathered.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. There were no sheep to tend or wool to \_\_\_\_\_ and weave into blankets.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. We spread out along the trail for miles, each clan keeping to itself, by command of the soldiers, who rode at the head of the \_\_\_\_\_ and at the rear.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. A new moon showed in the west and grew full and \_\_\_\_\_ and still we moved on.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. The river flowed slower now and many old people began to \_\_\_\_\_ .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. We also discovered a deep stone \_\_\_\_\_ filled with rainwater, enough for the rest of the summer.

A. column  
B. crevice  
C. ewe  
D. falter  
E. goading

F. haggle  
G. husks  
H. leagues  
I. lean-to  
J. Mesas

K. mesquite  
L. ramparts  
M. shear  
N. taunted  
O. waned



## COMPREHENSION TEST A

### Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)

Match the following quotations with the correct speaker from the list below. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left. Some answers will be used more than once and some not at all.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. It is time for the girl to become a woman.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Oh, Coyote Brothers in the far and near hills, I am tired of sheep.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. In the land of the Utes, the girls are beautiful . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Without horses they would catch us before we went far, as they caught me once.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. You think that I went to the white man's village just to rescue you . . .
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. The old die now. The young die later. But we all die.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. . . . I will show you how to carry the food in and put it on the table.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Happy girls bring better prices than unhappy girls.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Whose fault it is . . . is for me to decide, not you.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. They will ride away now that they have destroyed our village.

- |                            |               |
|----------------------------|---------------|
| A. Bright Morning's father | F. officer    |
| B. Bright Morning's mother | G. Rosita     |
| C. Mando                   | H. Spaniard   |
| D. Mangus                  | I. Tall Boy   |
| E. Nehana                  | J. White Deer |

### Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

Supply a word or phrase to complete each of the following statements.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Bright Morning's mistress is displeased when she examines the girl and finds a broken \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The Señora gives Bright Morning a drink of medicine to cure her \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. At their wedding, Bright Morning and Tall Boy eat pinches of \_\_\_\_\_.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Tall Boy chips out the \_\_\_\_\_ in order to climb to the cave.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Bright Morning and Tall Boy hold their \_\_\_\_\_ to the earth to determine if they are being followed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Bright Morning and \_\_\_\_\_ go to the fort to learn of Tall Boy's fate.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. At Bosque Redondo, the \_\_\_\_\_ are fed first.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The woodcutter finds the initials \_\_\_\_\_ on Nehana's horse's bridle.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. The Señora forgets her promise to buy \_\_\_\_\_ for Bright Morning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. \_\_\_\_\_ refuses to tell her secret name to the officer.

**Part III: True/False (30 points)**

Mark the following statements either **T** for true or **F** if any part is false.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Mangus plays the part of Jesus Christ at the Easter festival.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. The old speckled horse collapses before Bright Morning returns to Canyon de Chelly.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Lapana thinks it is a bad idea for Bright Morning to care for Meadow Flower.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Running Bear brings Bright Morning news from Old Bear about the soldiers' visit.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Bright Morning breaks the willow spear which Tall Boy made for their son.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. Tall Boy and his bride run a footrace as part of the wedding ceremony.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Bright Morning is startled to see the ghost of her grandfather among the Penitentes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. Tall Boy's father trades a valuable silver and turquoise belt for the speckled horse.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Many Nez Percé join the column of captives at Bosque Redondo.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. Mangus accuses Tall Boy of taking wood from Apache land.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Bright Morning steals tortillas from the platters of party food to save for her escape south.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Tall Boy realizes that their escape party cannot outride the pursuing Spaniards.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Bright Morning is chilled by the war cry of Tall Boy and Mando.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. The Apache woman makes stew out of Bright Morning's dog.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. After her return home, Bright Morning's sheep are wild and dangerous.

**Part IV: Essay (30 points)**

1. Contrast the courage of Nehana and Bright Morning on the escape from the white settlement.

2. Describe Bright Morning's relationship with her mother.

3. Project how Tall Boy will manage as husband and father in a canyon where he is the only brave.

## COMPREHENSION TEST B

### Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

Select an answer to complete each of the following statements. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. After her tribe's capture by the Long Knives, Bright Morning longs to return to  
A. Corn Mountain. C. Canyon de Chelly.  
B. the Utes. D. Bosque Redondo.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Tall Boy escapes from Fort Sumner  
A. through the garbage hole. C. with Mangus's help.  
B. after Bright Morning's father's intervention. D. so that he can marry Bright Morning.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Bright Morning is surprised to see the Spaniard  
A. playing the part of Jesus. C. riding with the Long Knives.  
B. among the Señora's party guests. D. cooking and eating dog meat.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Rosita seems pleased with  
A. her part in the Easter festival. C. Bright Morning's new hair ribbons.  
B. Nehana's choice of a time of escape. D. her role as the Señora's slave.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. By the rules of the tribe, a mother-in-law is not allowed to  
A. complain about her daughter's treatment. C. help with the birth of a grandchild.  
B. look angrily into her son-in-law's face. D. watch over her daughter's sheep.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. After River Boy kills the brown bear, he  
A. gives up his job as shepherd. C. changes his name.  
B. makes his son legging from the hide. D. searches the Ute tribe for a proper wife.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Bright Morning's mother complains that  
A. she has seen a disturbing vision of Grandfather's ghost. C. Apaches trampled the melons and squash.  
B. Meadow Flower eats too much. D. the sheep are as woolly as buffaloes.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The most outstanding thing Bright Morning remembers about the slaver is  
A. his pinto horse. C. his Jicarillo Apache wife.  
B. the long leather whip. D. his white teeth.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Near a pond in Elk-Running Valley, Bright Morning  
A. finds a ewe and her lamb. C. hides her shears from the Long Knives.  
B. gives birth to a son. D. summons Bitter Water to tend Tall Boy's wound.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A groaning stick is a  
A. piece of wood from a lightning-struck tree. C. useful tool for hunting small game.  
B. tribal tool used for planting squash and melons. D. board on which infants are bound.

**Part II: Character Identification (20 points)**

Fill in the following blanks with the name of the appropriate character.

1. \_\_\_\_\_ helps Tall Boy bring the girls back from slavery.
2. \_\_\_\_\_ discusses with the Long Knives the tribe's effort to keep peace.
3. \_\_\_\_\_ and Bright Morning are captured on the mesa by two slavers.
4. \_\_\_\_\_ is a healthy girl and good at weaving, but not pretty.
5. \_\_\_\_\_ is unable to work with a broken arm.
6. \_\_\_\_\_ follows Bright Morning and Nehana to Easter services.
7. \_\_\_\_\_ suggests that Tall Boy change his name to Crawling-Through-a-Hole.
8. \_\_\_\_\_ is the Nez Percé girl who was sweeping under the trees.
9. \_\_\_\_\_ shops carefully for chilies.
10. \_\_\_\_\_ throws a lance at a Long Knife but misses the target.

**Part III: Matching (30 points)**

Match the following events with their location. Place the letter of your response in the blank provided at left.

- \_\_\_\_\_ 1. Running Bird sees soldiers approaching the village.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 2. Mounds of gray ashes mark the former locations of the hogans.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Rainwater fills a stone crevice.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 4. Bright Morning refuses to smile at guests.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 5. Ghosts and witches disturb the Navahos.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 6. A minister leads a raid on a village of Cheyennes and Arapahos.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 7. Bright Morning waits in vain by the gates.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 8. The girls are beautiful.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 9. Bright Morning and Tall Boy build a hut by a pond.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 10. A tall figure carries a heavy wooden cross.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 11. Nehana selects three pintos for stealing.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 12. Nehana tells Bright Morning it is better to run, even if she is killed.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 13. Old Bear dies.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 14. Bright Morning locates Little Rainbow and comforts her.
- \_\_\_\_\_ 15. Bright Morning finds a knife and keeps it for the journey.

A. Bosque Redondo

B. church

C. Corn Mountain

D. Elk-Running Valley

E. Fort Sumner

F. land of the Utes

G. mesa

H. Navaho village

I. ridge

J. Sand Creek

K. the Señora's house

L. street in the white settlement

**Part IV: Essay (30 points)**

1. Account for Bright Morning's loyalty to Tall Boy.

2. Explain how Bright Morning demonstrates her ability to act responsibly.

3. Discuss how historical fiction clarifies the human reactions to significant events, such as the Long Walk.

## ANSWER KEY

### VOCABULARY TEST

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. L | 6. H  | 11. M |
| 2. N | 7. K  | 12. A |
| 3. G | 8. J  | 13. O |
| 4. F | 9. C  | 14. D |
| 5. E | 10. I | 15. B |

### COMPREHENSION TEST A

#### Part I: Quotation Identification (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. B | 6. B  |
| 2. I | 7. G  |
| 3. J | 8. H  |
| 4. E | 9. F  |
| 5. I | 10. A |

#### Part II: Short Answer (20 points)

- |              |                    |
|--------------|--------------------|
| 1. tooth     | 6. her father      |
| 2. headache  | 7. Apaches         |
| 3. gruel     | 8. R. R.           |
| 4. handholds | 9. ribbons         |
| 5. ears      | 10. Bright Morning |

#### Part III: True or False (30 points)

- |      |       |       |
|------|-------|-------|
| 1. F | 6. F  | 11. F |
| 2. F | 7. F  | 12. T |
| 3. T | 8. T  | 13. T |
| 4. T | 9. F  | 14. F |
| 5. T | 10. T | 15. F |

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

### COMPREHENSION TEST B

#### Part I: Multiple Choice (20 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. C | 6. C  |
| 2. A | 7. B  |
| 3. A | 8. D  |
| 4. D | 9. B  |
| 5. B | 10. A |

#### Part II: Character Identification (20 points)

- |                   |                            |
|-------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Mando          | 6. the Señora              |
| 2. Old Bear       | 7. Bright Morning's mother |
| 3. Running Bird   | 8. Nehana                  |
| 4. Bright Morning | 9. Rosita                  |
| 5. Mangus         | 10. Tall Boy               |

#### Part III: Matching (30 points)

- |      |       |
|------|-------|
| 1. G | 9. D  |
| 2. H | 10. B |
| 3. I | 11. B |
| 4. K | 12. L |
| 5. A | 13. I |
| 6. J | 14. A |
| 7. E | 15. A |
| 8. F |       |

#### Part IV: Essay (30 points)

Answers will vary.

## TEACHER'S NOTES



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