

Murder on the Red River

By Marcie Rendon

Discussion Questions

Most of these questions are adapted from a discussion guide created by the Minnesota Department of Education in 2021 when **Murder on the Red River** was the choice for the summer One Book One Minnesota program.

What is your favorite setting for a murder mystery--in a book you've read OR where you'd set a murder if you were writing the story?

Small towns and rural locales often make atmospheric settings for mysteries. What is it about the Red River Valley as the characters experience it that makes it a fitting place to set a murder mystery? How is the Red River Valley itself a character in the narrative?

Cash remembers her aunties practicing Spanish so they could pretend to be Mexican migrant workers and get into the bars that did not allow Indians. What does this story reflect about the perception of race and ethnicity in the United States? Would it be different now?

Often the amateur detective in a mystery is one or two steps ahead of the police. How does *Murder on the Red River* navigate this dynamic in a way that feels believable? What did you think about Cash's relationship with Wheaton?

In what ways does Rendon's writing remind the reader – sometimes jarringly – that Cash is very young? How does she read differently than the other young people present in the book – the other girls in town (who Cash remembers being a few years behind her at school) and the Day-Dodge children?

Cash has visions that help direct her investigations. Do you think visions or dreams can help people decide which path to take when facing a challenge or decision? Why or why not? Have you ever experienced this?

The opening pages of the book drop the reader deep into Cash's perspective and her character in a way that is immersive and sets the pace for the rest of the novel. What writerly skills is Marcie Rendon using to accomplish this?

Cash makes what some of would consider poor life choices. Knowing her background, were you sympathetic? Were you able to identify with her in any way?

Murder on the Red River draws some of its tension from the jurisdictional puzzle at the center of a crime that takes place at the intersection of tribal, federal, and county law – often a sort of Bermuda Triangle where cases disappear. What unique challenges does this pose for both Cash and Wheaton? What commentary does the book make in its subtext about the way this system works or doesn't?

Cash was removed from her mother's care as a young child and placed into a white foster home. How do the reverberations of this trauma affect the way Cash moves through the world? How do the Day-Dodge children serve as a mirror for Cash?