

DISCUSSION GUIDE for

#NATIVE READS

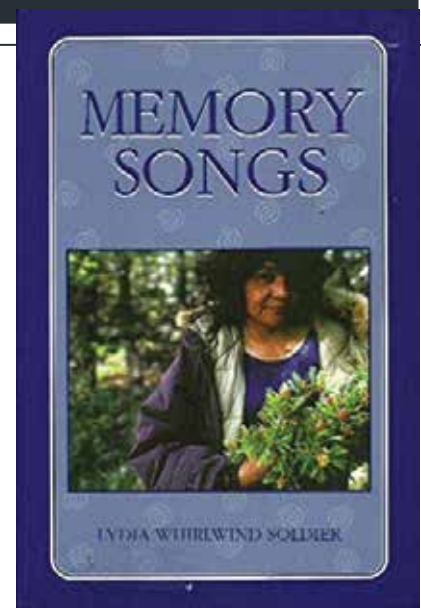
GREAT BOOKS from INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES

Memory Songs

by LYDIA WHIRLWIND SOLDIER

Author Biography

Lydia Whirlwind Soldier is a tribally-enrolled member of the Sicangu Lakota on the Rosebud Sioux Reservation in South Dakota. Education and service to her tribal community have always been important parts of Whirlwind Soldier's life. Her educator role and experiences evolved from that of elementary teacher, to Indian Studies Coordinator for the Todd County School District in Mission, South Dakota. After earning her graduate degree at Sinte Gleska University on the Rosebud Reservation, she went on to graduate with a master's degree in education administration from Pennsylvania State University. Whirlwind Soldier is a poet, business owner and recognized craftswoman, having won first place at the Northern Plains Tribal Arts Exhibition in Sioux Falls, South Dakota, for a traditional cradleboard. She is a charter member of the Oak Lake Writers' Society.



Book Summary

In 1993, Lydia Whirlwind Soldier became a co-founder and charter member of the Oak Lake Writers' Society. From its inception, the Society has held annual writing retreats for tribally-enrolled members of the Oceti Sakowin. While contributing to several Society anthologies, Whirlwind Soldier began writing her first book of poetry that was published by the Center for the Western Studies.

Whirlwind Soldier's poetry invites the reader on a spiritual odyssey across a landscape filled with a living past and a stark presence of spiritual truth as it was and is still lived by triumphant survivors in Native America, as in the land of the Sicangu. Her poems are a star quilt of memory songs that hold vivid images celebrating love and loss that recount history by the landscape of gravesites and the freedom of the prairie beauty. Whirlwind Soldier's poems transcend time and place because they tell of what was, and what still remains when the heart songs of memory are heard.

Discussion Guide

This discussion guide
was created by Oak Lake
Writers' Society member
Lanniko Lee
(*Miniconjou Lakota*).

PRESENTED BY



FIRST NATIONS
DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE



- 1** In "Collision of Time," there is a struggle to reconcile with what has been, what is desired, and what is possible. Does the poet achieve a healing resolution and, if so, how is that achieved?
- 2** Discuss how death is depicted in "Battlefields." What does the poetic line provide for the reader?
- 3** Discuss what references and implications can be made from the lines, "Forever is a promise/we can keep only in the spirit world."
- 4** Discuss the importance of storytelling in the poem "Wana Ku Pedo." What strikes you most about the story?
- 5** A convention of good poetry is density, that is, saying more with less. How does this convention work in the poem "One Day"?
- 6** In the section, "Listen to those strong heart songs," the poet asks the reader to listen but also learn. What does the poet want the listener to know, and why?
- 7** Is the poetic line effective in the poem, "Native Fire"? If it is, discuss how.
- 8** In "New Age," the poet chastises those who "Wanna-be Indians." Discuss what it is that is found repugnant. Discuss what is meant by "you siphon the nectar/from inikaga"?
- 9** How does the poem "Kimimila" differ from metaphoric stories in other cultures? Compare Whirlwind Soldier's poem with another metamorphosis poem of your choosing. Discuss the theme of each.
- 10** Discuss the significance of "mitakuye oyasin" and how it relates to the poem, "Journey Foreseen." Discuss why the poet uses both English and Lakota.