

“The Red Convertible” Response Questions

(Pre-Reading Question)

1. From the title, make a prediction about what the story might be about. What do we associate with red convertibles? What could it possibly represent/symbolize in the story?

(Before the war)

2. Describe what we know about Lyman’s character before the war. What makes him different from the others on his reservation? From his brother?
3. In paragraph 6 on page 3, the narrator claims that the military only wants his brother for his “Indian nose.” What do you think he means by that?

(During the war)

4. What details do we know about what Henry experience during the war? Predict: How do you think these experiences will change him?
5. Why do you think Erdrich kept the details of his experience so sparse?

(After the war)

6. In the 2nd paragraph on page 7, the narrator describes the river as “at its limit, hard and swollen, glossy like an old gray scar.” What might be a possible symbolic meaning for the river?
7. Why do you think Henry went into the river? Was his intention to kill himself, or did he have another goal?
8. What do you think the red convertible represented to Lyman? Why did Henry want to give his brother the car and why did Lyman say he didn’t want it? Remember to consider the symbolic meaning of the car.