

# Native tribes



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BUSTER**

Cormac McCarthy's "Blood Meridian" deals with racism in the form of The Judge's attitude toward the orphans, the tangible efforts of the gang to be more savage, and even in the Kid's role in the border skirmishes between the American settlers, the Native Americans and Mexicans living along the border. In a novel that some have called the greatest American novel since "Moby Dick", McCarthy discusses racism on an inherent level, making people examine the historical context and the situation itself. Remarkably, the novel has a lasting appeal as a commentary on the way Americans address their southern neighbors even today.

The first evidence of racism the book offers is in the Judge's attitude towards the orphans. The Judge is a pedophile, raping the orphans and then killing them or having them killed to hide his indiscretion. In his mind, the Judge justifies his actions with the thought that many of the children in the orphanage are half-breeds and somehow therefore less important than people who are purely Caucasian. In his mind, the Judge and others who look after the orphans, even as wantonly as the Judge does, are doing their Christian duty and providing for children that are otherwise unwanted.

In this way, the book takes a hard and accurate look at the racism that was prevalent in the West regarding children descended from Native Americans and Europeans. The children were dismissed by white society as half savage and by the Native populations because they often represented the humiliation of one of the women of the tribe—either voluntarily or involuntarily. To some extent, these children were more accepted in the Native populations when their parents were both accepted by the tribe, but even then they were mostly second class citizens.

The next evidence of racism and its extreme application comes from the Gang. Though the gang is composed of outlaws of Caucasian and Native descent, as a means of instilling terror in their victims, the gang resorts to scalping those they killed. As history demonstrates, only a very small number of Native Tribes took scalps as counting coup, but the stereotype of the novel and of the gang members was that Injun's took scalps and that would make people more afraid of them. It is also interesting to note that primary targets of the gang were settlers coming up from Mexico or those of Hipic descent.

The stereotype that the Mexican were outlaws or lazy or somehow second-class citizens is prevalent in the novel. Perhaps equally interesting in the long-term is the prejudice within the Hipic/Mexican/Chicano community itself. Even now, those who are descendents of the Spanish Conquistadors are sometimes offended by being identified as Mexicans, whom they identify as those of mixed blood between the conquistadors and the Native American people of Central America. However, Chicanos in Southern California would be equally offended by being called a Hipic as they take pride in their connection to Mexico.

The fact that this racism persists to this day is both interesting and depressing at the same time. The simple reality of Cormac McCarthy's novel is that it portrays an evil man attempting to justify his actions via racism and a gang of thugs using racism to make themselves seem bigger and badder than they are, when in truth murder should have been enough. McCarthy's ability to capture the tenor and reality of the racism without pandering to it does make this a novel worth reading.