

John fire lame deer essay sample



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John Fire Lame Deer is a Native American who has been raised in two completely different worlds. One being a world of animistic beliefs tightly binding Native American communities and the other being the capitalistic world of the European-American. John Fire Lame Deer participated in a popular rite of passage among Native American tribes known as the vision quest allowing him his first glimpse of the spirit world. By looking at John Fire Lame Deer's experiences as a Native American growing up in a culture that is slowly being eradicated by a larger more dominant culture we can see how his experiences and actions have created his unique views of American culture today.

The vision quest is one of the defining moments for an adolescent in any Native American tribe for it allows them to discover their personal spirit guides and enlightens them about their life work. The vision quest is by no means an easy task for the youth. It requires going into nature alone attempting to survive while not eating, drinking, or having comfortable surroundings about. This belief in animism directly connects to the vision quest as a rite of passage. The belief that all things in nature are connected and are alive with spirits shows us that Native Americans consider themselves a part of nature, not above it.

In John Fire Lame Deer's vision quest we can see expressions of animistic belief through the visions that he receives. John Fire Lame Deer has an intense desire to become a medicine man, yet he needs the support of the spirit world. It is believed in Native American culture that healing comes from the ability to recognize and "suck out" disease, and one needs spiritual guidance before being able to practice the art of healing. John Fire Lame

Deer receives the vision of a large bird circling indicating his spirit guide is to be that of an eagle. He also receives a vision of his grandfather indicating that he would like John Fire Lame Deer to take his name. By obeying the vision quest, John Fire Lame Deer shows his belief in animism.

Native American lifestyles are based on the animistic ideas of living with nature and attempting to have harmony with the environment. This directly opposes the Euro-American ideals of changing nature to better suit the human being. John Fire Lame Deer criticizes the culture of the “white man” because it is so far detached from nature that human beings are able to rape and pillage the environment without feeling a sense of obligation or guilt. Perhaps it is not the “white man” who is despised most by John Fire Lame Deer, but the United States Government. It is the United States Government that is responsible for creating the bombing ranges that destroyed the environment and pushed the Native Americans to reservations leaving nothing but empty promises and broken dreams as compensation.

John Fire Lame Deer feels that the “white man” is trying to remove himself from the world while attempting to take the spirit out of nature. He observes that the buffalo, the coyotes, the wolves, and the deer all have free spirits yet have been replaced by domesticated animals with no true purpose in the cycle of nature. He feels that the “white man” sees himself as supreme over nature; therefore he views nature as unclean and soiled unfit for him to live in. John Fire Lame Deer believes that the “white man” has ruined nature and by changing it into something unnatural has committed a great travesty against the environment.