



## Classroom Guide for CRAZY HORSE'S VISION

by Joseph Bruchac  
illustrated by S. D. Nelson

### Reading Level

\*Reading Level: Grade 3  
Interest Level: Grades 1–5  
Guided Reading Level: P  
Accelerated Reader® Level/Points: 4.0/.5  
Lexile™ Measure: 420

### Themes

Selflessness, Bravery/Courage, Leadership, Native American History

### Synopsis

The narrative of this story focuses on events from the early life of Crazy Horse, the daring and dedicated leader of the Lakota (Sioux) in the mid-1800s. As a young boy, Crazy Horse was nicknamed Curly, because of his curly hair. Even as a child Curly was a leader among his peers, and he exhorted the other boys to be brave so “we can help our people.” After witnessing a bloody attack by white soldiers on the Lakota, Curly ignored tradition and went on his own to the hills to seek a vision which would provide him with guidance to defend his people. A few years later, after Curly had grown into a wise and serious young man, his father explained Curly’s vision to him and gave his son a new name—Tashunka Witco. In English this name meant Crazy Horse, the name by which we still know this famous Native American leader who fought to defend his people.

### Background

Crazy Horse was an Oglala Sioux born in the early 1840s in the Black Hills near the border of what is now South Dakota and Wyoming. The Sioux were one of the most well-known of the Plains Indians. During Crazy Horse’s childhood, there were numerous incidents between the Sioux and white settlers. When the Civil War ended in 1865, these skirmishes grew into hard-fought wars as more settlers came west and began to cast their eyes on the lands of the Plains Indians. The Plains Indians were hunters who followed herds of buffalo, deer, and antelope across vast tracts of free and uncultivated land. The settlers were farmers who wanted to own the land, clear it, and cultivate it. The two ways of life clashed sharply.

The United States government began setting up reservations on which to confine the Indians; under the Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1868, some Sioux agreed to live on a reservation. However, a gold rush in the region in 1874 brought miners to the area, and once again the Indians' rights were overlooked. When the government ordered all the Sioux onto the reservation, Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull, another leader, refused to bring in their people. The U.S. Army attacked. Said Sitting Bull, "These soldiers want war. All right, we'll give it to them." In 1876, the Sioux defeated the troops of Lieutenant Colonel George A. Custer on the Little Bighorn River. The massacre became known as "Custer's Last Stand."

Crazy Horse was killed by soldiers at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, the following year (1877). The last major armed conflict between Indians and whites took place at Wounded Knee, South Dakota, in 1890.

*Teacher Tip*

You may want to include *Crazy Horse's Vision* on your reading table during November, which is celebrated as Native American Heritage Month.

## **BEFORE READING**

### **Prereading Focus Questions**

Before introducing the book, share the background information with students. Then you may wish to explore one or more of the following questions with them.

1. What is a nickname? How do people get them? Do you have a nickname? On what is your nickname based?
2. What is your idea of a strong leader? How does a leader act?
3. What does it mean to show courage? What are some things you have done that took courage? Why did you do them?
4. What do you do when you need guidance about making a decision, or figuring out what to do about something?
5. When something is unfair, what do you say or do about it?
6. Why is it important to respect the rights and beliefs of others?

### **Exploring the Book**

Display the book and read aloud the title. Explain that a vision is a kind of mental image or dream. In the case of the Lakota or Sioux, it was an important time in a boy's life when he was about twelve years old. Through a vision, the boy would seek the spirit that would protect him for the rest of his life. The vision would then be interpreted by a medicine man or holy man.

Have students examine the illustration on the book's front cover. Ask them how the illustration suggests a dream or vision.

Open the book and display the endpapers. Invite students to describe what is happening. Ask them to think about how this illustration might relate to the story.

Draw attention to the Author's and Illustrator's Notes at the end of the book. Plan to share these with students before or after they read the story.

### Setting a Purpose for Reading

Have students read to find out what Crazy Horse's vision was and why he felt he needed it.

### Vocabulary

Write the following verbs from the story on the chalkboard. Have students take turns choosing a verb to act out. If the class can't guess the verb, the actor must then use it correctly in a sentence. If someone guesses the verb when it is acted out, that student must use it correctly in a sentence. Continue until all the verbs have been identified.

hesitated  
announced  
trampled  
grazed

rushed  
stumbled  
strike  
perched

strayed  
demanded  
ignored  
floated

witnessed  
staggered  
wounded  
climbed

## AFTER READING ACTIVITIES

### Discussion Questions

After students have read the book, use these or similar questions to generate discussion, review comprehension, and develop students' understanding of the book. Encourage students to refer back to the text and illustrations to support their responses.

1. How was Curly different from other children?
2. Why was being brave important to Curly?
3. After the buffalo hunt, what qualities did Curly show?
4. Who were the settlers? Why did they pass through Lakota land?
5. Do you agree or disagree that building a fort is a way of keeping the peace? How do you think the Lakota felt about the fort?
6. How did the stray cow cause trouble between the settlers and the Lakota? Why did this incident upset Curly so much?
7. Why do you think the soldiers ignored Conquering Bear's offer to replace the cow?
8. Why didn't Curly follow tradition when he went on a vision quest? How did this make his father feel? What lesson did Curly learn about following the ways of his people?
9. How could Curly hear words "which were not spoken" in his vision? What did the words mean?

10. In the vision, why were some Lakota holding Curly up while others were pulling him from his horse?
11. Why did his father wait three winters (years) before speaking to Curly about his vision?
12. How did Curly's father interpret the vision?
13. Why did Curly's father give his son his own name? How did the name Crazy Horse fit with the vision?

### Literature Circles\*

If you are using literature circles during reading time, students might find the following suggestions helpful in focusing on the different roles of the group members.

- The **Questioner** might use questions similar to those in the Discussion Questions section.
- The **Passage Locator** might look for passages that reveal Crazy Horse's character.
- The **Illustrator** might draw pictures of scenes from the story using a more realistic style.
- The **Connector** might find biographies about other Plains Indians.
- The **Summarizer** should provide a brief summary of the group's reading and discussion points for each meeting.
- • The **Investigator** might find other books about the Sioux or Lakota.

\*There are many resource books available with more information about organizing and implementing literature circles. Two such books you may wish to refer to are: *Literature Circles: Voice and Choice in the Student-Centered Classroom* by Harvey Daniels (Stenhouse, 1994) and *Literature Circles Resource Guide* by Bonnie Campbell Hill, Katherine L. Schlick Noe, and Nancy J. Johnson (Christopher-Gordon, 2000).

### Reader's Response

Use the following questions or similar ones to help students practice active reading and personalize what they have read. Suggest that students respond in reader's journals, oral discussion, or drawings.

1. How do the illustrations in this book suggest a vision or dream?
2. What words would you use to describe the character of Crazy Horse? Give a reason for each word.
3. Why is this an important story in United States history?
4. Crazy Horse said: "We did not ask you white men to come here. The Great Spirit gave us this country as a home. . . . We do not want your civilization! We would live as our fathers did, and their fathers before them." What did Crazy Horse mean? What did he understand about the future?

### Other Writing Activities

You may wish to have students participate in one or more of the following writing activities. Set aside time for students to share and discuss their work.

1. In the story, Crazy Horse earns his father's name. If you had to earn a name, what would it be? Write an explanation of what your new name would be and what you would have to do to earn it.
2. Retell the story of Crazy Horse's vision as a poem or a play.
3. In his vision Crazy hears the words "Keep nothing for yourself." How might these words apply to you and your life? Write a paragraph to explain.
4. Think of a way that you might honor Crazy Horse. Write a description of your idea.

### ESL Teaching Strategies

These strategies might be helpful to use with students who are English language learners or who are learning to speak English as a second language.

1. Select simple illustrations from the book and talk about them using a basic language frame. For example: This is a \_\_\_\_\_. (horse, feather, tent, eagle) Have the student repeat each sentence after you. Continue until the student can say the sentences correctly and with understanding.
2. Preteach key English vocabulary to help keep students focused on the story. Post these essential words on the chalkboard.
3. Make an audiotape of the story and invite students to listen to it as they read along in the book.

### INTERDISCIPLINARY ACTIVITIES

To help students integrate their reading experiences with other curriculum areas, you might try some of the following activities.

#### Language Arts

Make students aware of the poetic qualities of the text by pointing out literary devices such as **repetition** ("no spirit, no bird, no animal . . .") and **simile** ("Their hooves sounded like thunder.") Challenge students to find additional examples of these devices in the text.

#### Social Studies

1. Read aloud the Author's Note at the back of the book. Then have students do further research on Crazy Horse. Ask them to create a mini-biography of his life.
2. Locate the Great Plains on a map of the United States. If possible, also display a map that shows how Indian lands west of the Mississippi River were gradually ceded to settlers in the second half of the nineteenth century. Have students answer questions such as:
  - In what part of the United States are the plains?
  - What states do the plains cover? When did these states gain their statehood?

- What are the main rivers in this region?
3. Remind students that Curly joined the men on a buffalo hunt. Explain that a buffalo hunt was a very serious and carefully planned event. Before a hunt began, scouts were sent out to locate a herd. Once a herd was found, the Lakota moved to the area. During a hunt, the women followed the hunters to skin the animals, cut up the meat, and take it back to camp. The buffalo was a source of food, tools, clothing, and shelter for the Lakota. Have students research the many items the Lakota made from a buffalo and then create a large illustrated web to show at least ten different items.
  4. Tell students that the world's largest sculpture is the unfinished Crazy Horse Memorial in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Have students use a Web site such as [crazyhorse.org](http://crazyhorse.org) and plan a make-believe trip to see this sculpture.

### Science

Have students review the text to determine how the passage of time is marked in this story. Suggest that students compile examples of other ways that people mark time and use them to make a bulletin board display.

### Art

1. Read aloud the Illustrator's Note at the back of the book. Suggest that students make a chart showing what colors mean to the Lakota. Have them find out what these same colors mean to people in other cultures and add this information to the chart. Students might also include a section telling what the colors mean to them.
2. Students might also make a symbol chart, again beginning with symbols important to the Lakota and then adding symbols important to other groups and themselves.
3. Ask students if they have ever drawn pictures in a lined notebook. Then discuss the ledger art that Native Americans developed in the nineteenth century. Point out that throughout history, artists have used all sorts of materials for their pictures. Help students collect different examples to display in the room.

### ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND ILLUSTRATOR

**Joseph Bruchac** is a storyteller, author, and poet. He lives with his wife in Greenfield Center, New York, in his childhood home. Bruchac has two adult sons, James and Jesse. Although he is of Slovak as well as Abenaki descent, Bruchac has spent most of his life exploring his Native American roots and writing about Native American beliefs, culture, and heroes for readers of all ages. He is the author of several award-winning books including *Bowman's Store: A Journey to Myself*, and *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path*, both published by LEE & LOW. Bruchac is a Rockefeller Fellow, the recipient of the Native Writer's circle of the Americas Lifetime Achievement Award, and an NEA Poetry Writing Fellow.

**S. D. Nelson** is a full-time illustrator and author and former middle school art teacher. He is of Lakota descent and a member of the Standing Rock Sioux tribe. Nelson attended Moorhead State University in Minnesota. In addition to *Crazy Horse's Vision*, he illustrated Bruchac's *Jim Thorpe's Bright Path*. Nelson is also the author and illustrator of

LEE & LOW's *Quiet Hero: The Ira Hayes Story*, and several stories inspired by the traditions of his Lakota heritage. Nelson lives in Flagstaff, Arizona.

*Crazy Horse's Vision* has received numerous awards and honors. These include:

- ALA Notable Children's Book
- Notable Books for a Global Society, International Reading Association (IRA)
- Teachers' Choices, International Reading Association (IRA)
- Parents' Choice Award
- Best Children's Books of the Year, Bank Street College
- "Choices," Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC)
- Best Books of the Year Award, *Parenting* magazine
- Reading Magic Award, *Parenting* magazine
- Parent's Guide Children's Media Award
- Original Art Show, Society of Illustrators

### Resources on the Web

Learn more about *Crazy Horse's Vision*:

[http://www.leeandlow.com/books/38/hc/crazy\\_horse\\_s\\_vision](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/38/hc/crazy_horse_s_vision)

Also by Joseph Bruchac:

***Bowman's Store: A Journey to Myself***

[http://www.leeandlow.com/books/24/pb/bowman\\_s\\_store\\_a\\_journey\\_to\\_myself](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/24/pb/bowman_s_store_a_journey_to_myself)

***Jim Thorpe's Bright Path***

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***Buffalo Song***

[http://www.leeandlow.com/books/171/hc/buffalo\\_song](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/171/hc/buffalo_song)

Also by S. D. Nelson:

***Quiet Hero: The Ira Hayes Story***

[http://www.leeandlow.com/books/93/hc/quiet\\_hero\\_the\\_ira\\_hayes\\_story](http://www.leeandlow.com/books/93/hc/quiet_hero_the_ira_hayes_story)

BookTalk with Joseph Bruchac about *Crazy Horse's Vision*:

<http://www.leeandlow.com/p/bruchac.mhtml>

BookTalk with Joseph Bruchac about *Buffalo Song*:

[http://www.leeandlow.com/p/buffalo\\_song\\_talk.mhtml](http://www.leeandlow.com/p/buffalo_song_talk.mhtml)

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Scholastic Reading Counts!™: 3.5

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