

Additional Vocabulary and Comprehension Questions

Setting & Overview: Northwest states; early 1700s. In the early 1700s, Om-kas-toe (whose name means "raven") finds an injured raven that he rescues and brings back to health. This raven saves the Blackfeet repeatedly: it finds a lost baby, locates food when needed, rescues Om from the enemy, and guides Om's family to him when he lies nearby close to death. Om has other adventures as well. Om steals a horse and ends up back in the camp with his family, his raven, and his elkdog.

Q: What does Om learn from the wolves? (pages 13-20, chapter 1)

A: that they work together—each has a job to do, and then each enjoys the food

Q: Why is Twin Sister almost killed at birth? (pages 13-20, chapter 1)

A: The Blackfeet tribe think twins are bad because women will not be able to do all their work and a girl will take milk from the boy, who needs it more to become strong

Q: Why is Twin Sister not killed? (pages 20-28, chapter 1)

A: Tall Woman promises to do all her work and Old Man says she should be allowed to try since she is the best woman he has ever seen; he recommends the tribe allow her to try to raise both children

Q: Why is Om glad to find a young raven? (pages 20-28, chapter 1)

A: they bring good medicine, or luck, to their owner

Q: Why do the Blackfeet tribe move from site to site? (pages 29-35, chapter 2)

A: for new game, to a warmer climate, for shelter, to meet up with other tribes

Q: When they move, what jobs must different people do? (pages 29-35, chapter 2)

A: dogs, women, and children carry all possessions; men carry weapons only so they can instantly run to kill animals if they see any

Q: Why is the baby hard to find? (pages 35-41, chapter 2)

A: he fell off the travois early in the journey so the Blackfeet tribe were looking in the wrong place

Q: Why was it important to find the baby quickly? (pages 35-41, chapter 2)

A: he could get too cold at night, or a wild animal could smell and find him; without good lights, he needed to be found before nightfall

Q: Why are buffalo dangerous to hunt? (pages 41-49, chapter 3)

A: they are very large, with sharp horns that gore and huge hoofs that kick

Q: How do the Blackfeet hunt buffalo? (pages 41-49, chapter 3)

A: they build up V-shaped walls that end in a corral with pointed stakes sticking inward that would stop the buffalo: the warriors make the buffalo run, the women and children frighten the buffalo so they won't escape through the walls, and the warriors kill the buffalo in the corral

Q: What do the Blackfeet tribe do with the dead buffaloes? (pages 49-56, chapter 3)

A: dry the meat, scrape hides for teepees and clothes, cut off and clean the horns, save bones and tendons for needles and sewing

Q: How does the Blackfeet tribe react when they spot an enemy tribe?
(pages 57-63, chapter 4)

A: the women and children hide and the men prepare to fight, scouts check for additional warriors

Q: How do the Blackfeet and Snake tribes fight? (pages 63-70, chapter 4)

A: they stand in a line—if one side outnumbered the other, they attack immediately, otherwise, they fight at a distance, hold their ground, and go separate ways after dark

Q: Why do the Blackfeet tribe move to a new winter site? Does the move go well? (pages 70-76, chapter 5)

A: to avoid any enemy on elk dogs; no, the camp seemed okay but when a hard winter struck they could not get any food and were hungry

Q: Why does Om follow Wise Bird, and what does he find? (pages 76-84, chapter 5)

A: Wise Bird acts like he's found something special, as he did when he found the baby, but he shows only a half-eaten rabbit

Q: How does Om kill the trapped bull elk? (pages 85-91, chapter 6)

A: he cuts off a branch and sharpens it, then plunges the stake into the animal's neck

Q: Where does Om stay the night and how does he guard against the cold? (pages 91-97, chapter 6)

A: near a hot spring; he uses the elk-skin to make a tent and the warm water and steam to heat the shelter and keep him warm

The Blackfeet tribe use the hot spring as a medicinal soak and a sweatbath.

Q: Did Om's family enjoy all the meat? (pages 97-104, chapter 6)

A: no, each family of the tribe received a portion; it helped them survive

Q: What necessary task does Om learn? (pages 104-110, chapter 7)

A: hunting

Q: What task excites Om initially, then grows dull quickly? (pages 110-119, chapter 7)

A: standing guard

Q: How does Twin Girl capture the elkdog? (pages 119-126, chapter 8)

A: she walks toward it without looking at it, sings softly, then holds its rope

Q: What happens to the elkdog when the twins bring it to the band? (pages 119-126, chapter 8)

A: men cautiously walk around it, then put a stronger rope around its neck and guard it well

Q: How can the Blackfeet get more elkdogs? (pages 126-134, chapter 9)

A: send warriors to capture some from their enemies

Q: At first, what does the Blackfeet tribe need to learn about the elkdogs? (pages 135-142, chapter 9)

A: how to ride, how much time the elkdogs need to eat and rest, and how to use them to hunt

Q: Why does the elkdog diet delight the Blackfeet? (pages 143-149, chapter 10)

A: they just need grass and water, not meat

Q: How does Om get trapped? (pages 150-158, chapter 10)

A: as he seeks to discover the whereabouts of the enemy, he is surrounded by them and has nowhere to go

Q: Why do the enemy warriors leave Om behind? (pages 150-158, chapter 10)

A: Wise Bird does such amazing tricks they think Om has powerful medicine and do not want to hurt this great spirit

Q: How does Om hide his footprints? (pages 159-164, chapter 11)

A: steps on the rocks, pulls off a tree branch and uses the needles to wipe away his footprints; also he walks in water

Q: Where does Om find his tribe's warriors, and what do they do for him? (pages 165-169, chapter 11)

A: by the hot spring; they listen and feed him and make him sit in the hot water until his muscles feel better

Q: Why does Otterman need to know the location of the enemy's camp? (pages 169-176, chapter 12)

A: to know how many warriors they have, where they are going, and, ultimately, to protect their families

Q: What does Om's father tell him to do? (pages 176-184, chapter 12)

A: intercept the warriors and direct them along the river so their trip will take less time

Q: What is the Blackfeet tribe's plan? (pages 185-191, chapter 13)

A: the warriors will attack the enemy and drive the elkdogs to Om, Om and the other warriors will each capture an elkdog, then they will drive the extras in front of them and return home several days later

Q: How does Om escape the enemy? (pages 191-198, chapter 13)

A: the black elkdog runs quickly and well, and goes through a buffalo herd (which does nothing to the elkdog but stampedes the enemy)

Q: How does Om keep from freezing? (pages 199-204, chapter 14)

A: he dozes off through the night but frequently gets up to walk around

Q: Why does Om fall unconscious? (pages 204-210, chapter 14)

A: lack of food and sleep

Q: What changes came to the Blackfeet because of the elkdogs? (pages 210-215, epilogue)

A: hunting is easier so more time is available for "art, dancing, music, jewelry making, games, and practicing religion"