THOMAS KING

Thomas King, who is of Cherokee and Greek descent, has become one of Canada’s most beloved and critically acclaimed writers. He is an award-winning novelist, short story writer, scriptwriter and photographer.

King’s first novel, Medicine River, won several awards, including the runner-up for the 1991 Commonwealth Writers Prize, and was made into a television movie starring Graham Greene. Green Grass, Running Water, his second novel, was shortlisted for the Governor General’s Award in 1993 and won the Canadian Authors Award for Fiction. A national bestseller, it was also named one of Quill & Quire’s Best Canadian Fiction of the Century.

King has also written two acclaimed children’s books—A Coyote Columbus Story, which was nominated for a Governor General’s Award, and Coyote Sings to the Moon. The highly praised short story collection, One Good Story, That One, was published in 1993 and became a Canadian bestseller. His most recent novel, Truth & Bright Water, was published by Harper Flamingo Canada in the fall of 1999.

Having received a doctorate in literature from the University of Utah and having taught at the universities of Lethbridge and Minnesota, he currently holds the position of associate professor of English at the University of Guelph.

PLOT SUMMARY

Green Grass, Running Water is a multi-faceted story—part myth, part hilariously off-kilter reality—of contemporary Native experience as it merges and crosses the realities of modern North American life.

It is the story of five Blackfoot Indians who live in Blossom, Alberta, or on its nearby reserve. Although they live seemingly separate lives, their existences are connected in ways that are at once coincidental, comical and cosmic. Albert, a university professor who wants a child but not the trappings of husband and marriage, finds herself involved with not one, but two men, who pull her into their opposing orbits: Charlie the flashy and ambitious big city lawyer, and Lionel, the local TV salesman, self-effacing to the point of near-erasure.

Latisha, Lionel’s sister and guerrilla marketing whiz, runs the Dead Dog Café, a local hangout named for its mythic culinary delights, much to the titillation of gullible tourists. And then there’s Eli, who left Blossom to seek a professorship in Toronto, only to find his destiny in a tiny streamside cabin.

Green Grass, Running Water is a rich tale, weaving subtle, magical humour, revisionist history, muted nostalgia and complex humanity into one bright, whole cloth.

Funny, provocative and illuminating, Green Grass, Running Water involves itself with many of the major questions which face contemporary Native North Americans. It also reminds us of three essential things: the vibrancy of stories, the need for balance, and the transformative capacities of language and people.
QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Discuss examples of the revision of central Judeo-Christian, literary and cultural myths in the novel. What questions do these revisions raise?

2. *Green Grass, Running Water* is a carefully structured novel, revolving around at least three interconnected plot lines. Of these various plots, is there one that is of central importance to the novel? If so, why? If not, how does the structure work?

3. Interesting groups of customers visit Latisha’s Dead Dog Café. Of what significance (literary, political, historical, cultural) are the names and characters of these customers?

4. What role does Coyote play in the novel? What does his relationship with the narrator suggest?

5. The four “Old Indians” are intriguing characters, each with at least three different names. Discuss the significance of the various names they are given.

6. How do the actual Native and non-Native influences on the characters in the “Blossom” plot come across in Latisha, Charlie, Eli, Lionel and Alberta?

7. Where does the title phrase “Green Grass, Running Water” come from? What is the irony inherent in this title?

PRAISE FOR
GREEN GRASS, RUNNING WATER

“Impressively ambitious and funny…”
—The New York Times Book Review

“With this brilliant, enduring novel, King has demonstrated an apparently effortless mastery over narrative…”
—The Globe and Mail

“With this clever, vastly entertaining novel, King establishes himself firmly as one of the first rank of contemporary Native American writers—and as a gifted storyteller of universal relevance.”
—Publishers Weekly

“King has established himself as a first-rate comic novelist. At his best, he is as savagely and darkly funny as Twain...King has produced a novel that defies all our expectations about what Native American fiction should be. It’s a first-class work of art.”
—Newsweek

“...King is equally at home with his vivid, often comic characters and with the vibrant natural world in which their dramas are played out.”
—People

ALSO BY THOMAS KING

*Truth & Bright Water*
0-00-225503-0 • $32.00 cl

*One Good Story, That One*
0-00-224000-9 • $14.95 tpb

PRAISE FOR
TRUTH & BRIGHT WATER

“A storyteller of the first order...(*Truth & Bright Water*) is a world only Thomas King could create, whimsical and contemporary and smart, rooted and knowing and sad.”
—The Globe and Mail

“...a sparkling triumph.”
—The Toronto Star

“The brilliance of misery well done.”
—The National Post

“...master storyteller delivers again.”
—Edmonton Journal

PRAISE FOR
ONE GOOD STORY, THAT ONE

“There’s a sly, tart intelligence at work in many of these stories...the writing is taut, sharp-edged and very funny.”
—The Globe and Mail

“...all these stories clearly display King’s trademark wit and intelligence, his facility with characterization, and his mastery of narrative art...”
—The Ottawa Citizen

“...written with that apparently effortless control of language and imagery which is the hallmark of King’s best work...King excels as a writer of the border zones between races, cultures and individuals.”
—The Canadian Forum
About Green Grass, Running Water. Strong, sassy women and hard-luck hard-headed men, all searching for the middle ground between Native American tradition and the modern world, perform an elaborate dance of approach and avoidance in this magical, rollicking tale by Cherokee author Thomas King. Alberta is a university professor who would like to trade her two boyfriends for a baby but no husband; Lionel is forty and still sells televisions for a patronizing boss; Eli and his log cabin stand in the way of a profitable dam project. The novel Green Grass, Running Water is a multifaceted work of art in the literal sense. The plot circles around an Indian tribe i.e. the Blackfoots, while interweaving myths and the stereotypical attitude towards Native Americans into the macro picture. It takes an extremely sensitive topic and makes sense of it through a comical way. Through the book King raises a voice against the treatment of the Native culture and way of life at the hands of the "white", through humorous and witty settings, plots and dialogues. We will write a custom essay on Green Grass, Running Water specifically for yo