

Literature Circle Questions

Use these questions and activities that follow to get more out of reading *Code Talker: A Novel About the Navajo Marines of World War Two* by Joseph Bruchac.

1. Once he arrives at boarding school, how does Ned Begay get his new name?
2. Describe the warfare method the Americans call “banzai.”
3. Ned says that his weeks in training at Camp Elliott are “some of the best in my life” (p. 81). Why is this so?
4. When Ned is terribly worried about crossing the deep waters of the Pacific Ocean in a boat, how does his friend Bill Toledo encourage him (p. 90)?
5. Some of Ned’s classmates, including John Roanhorse, openly defy their boarding school teachers. Ned also disobeys his teachers, but in his own quiet way. How does Ned defy his teachers?
6. On the sign in front of Ned’s mission school is the motto: “Tradition is the enemy of progress” (p. 23). What does this motto mean to the teachers of the mission school?
7. Describing the battle of Iwo Jima, Ned says, “Our Navajo nets kept everything connected like a spider’s strands spanning distant branches” (p. 187). How does this simile describe the work of the code talkers?
8. Throughout his time in training and in service as a code talker, Ned carries a pouch of corn pollen with him. What does this pouch mean to Ned, and how does he use it?
9. Ned notices that the Navajos have a much easier time adjusting to life as Marines than the white men. Why does he feel his life as a Navajo prepared him for being a Marine?
10. When First Sergeant Shinn, the Marine Corps recruiter, comes to Fort Defiance, why is Ned interested in joining the Marines?
11. Ned mentions that the Japanese army does not follow the “rules of modern warfare” (p. 168). List three examples that support Ned’s statement.
12. One of the Marine generals writes a report saying, “The Navajos have proved to be excellent Marines, intelligent, industrious, easily taught to send and receive by key and excellent in the field” (p. 137). Why is Ned so surprised to read this report?

13. How would you describe the teaching methods and classroom styles of Ned's teachers in the boarding school? What do you think of the methods Ned's teachers use, both to teach and to discipline their students?
14. Ned survives both the hardship of boarding school and the trauma of war. How is Ned able to get through these difficulties? Which of his personal qualities do you think helped him most during his trials?
15. In *Code Talker*, the character Ned Begay is telling his grandchildren the story of his time spent as a Marine in World War II. How do you think Ned's grandchildren would feel about their grandfather after hearing about his experiences? What do you think is the most important lesson that Ned's grandchildren might learn from his story?

Note: These questions are keyed to Bloom's Taxonomy as follows: Knowledge: 1-2; Comprehension: 3-5; Application: 6-7; Analysis: 8-10; Synthesis: 11-12; Evaluation: 13-15.

Activities

1. Help other students who read *Code Talker* create a glossary of Navajo words and their definitions as explained in the book. You may put your words in an alphabetical list or create a set of vocabulary flash cards to share with your classmates.
2. Using a map of the South Pacific, trace Ned's travels as a code talker, from Guadalcanal to Okinawa, and all the places he visited in between. Draw a small picture or symbol to show what happened at each of the locations that Ned visited.
3. Imagine that the character Ned Begay is a real person who will be visiting your school to talk about his experience as a code talker. Make a poster advertising Ned's visit that will encourage your classmates to come hear him speak.

Other Books by Joseph Bruchac

Children of the Longhouse

Geronimo

The Heart of a Chief

Sacajawea

The Warriors