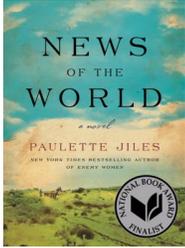


Books by the Stack



News of the World by Paulette Jiles

In the aftermath of the Civil War, Captain Jefferson Kidd, an elderly widower and itinerant news reader, is offered fifty dollars to bring an orphan girl, who was kidnapped and raised by Kiowa raiders, from Wichita Falls back to her family in San Antonio.

Why you'll like it: *Historical. Character-driven. Descriptive.*

About the Author: Paulette Jiles is a poet, memoirist, and novelist, born in 1943, and based in San Antonio, Texas. She is the author of a memoir entitled, *Cousins*. Her novels include *Enemy Woman*, *Stormy Weather*, *The Color of Lightning*, *Lighthouse Island*, and *News of the World*. (Bowker Author Biography)

Questions for Discussion

1. Discuss Captain Jefferson Kyle Kidd's work as a newspaper reader. What does he bring to his audience, and what does he gain from his work besides financial compensation?
2. Why does Kidd accept the difficult job of returning Johanna home? What drives him to complete the job despite the danger and obstacles?
3. Why do you think Johanna wants to stay with her Kiowa family? What do you think she remembers of her life before she was taken?
4. What connects Kidd to Joanna? Why does she seem to trust him so easily?
5. What does Kidd worry may become of Johanna once she's returned to her family? What does he know of the fate of the "returned captives"?
6. Doris Dillion says that Johanna is "carried away on the flood of the world...not real and not not-real." She describes her as having "been through two creations" and "forever falling." Do you agree with her assessment? Does Johanna remain this way through the course of the novel?
7. Discuss the various tensions in the novel: Indians and whites; soldiers and civilizations; America's recent past and its unsure future. In what ways do these tensions underlie the story of Kidd and Johanna?
8. Imagine the perspective of Johanna's Kiowa family. Why, do you think, they would've taken her in and raise her? Why would they give her up? How do you think they felt when they let her go?
9. Discuss the troubling moment when Johanna wanted to scalp her fallen enemy. How did that make you feel about her?
10. Partway through his journey with Johanna, Kidd feels as though he was "drawn back into the stream of being because there was once again life in his hand." What do you think this means? What does it tell you about Kidd's emotional life?

11. How does Jiles depict post-Civil War Texas? What kind of place is it? Talk about the landscape and the type of people Johanna and Captain Kidd encounter. Also, consider the effects of the Civil War on the populace: is the war actually over?

12. All literary journeys follow the arc of the hero's journey. How does this novel adhere to that ancient narrative? Who is the hero – and in what way? How do both Johanna and Kidd change or grow as individuals during the course of their travels?

13. Were you satisfied by the novel's ending? Does Captain Kidd do the right thing for Johanna? Would you have made the same choice, or a different one?

(Questions provided by the publisher and LitLovers.)



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