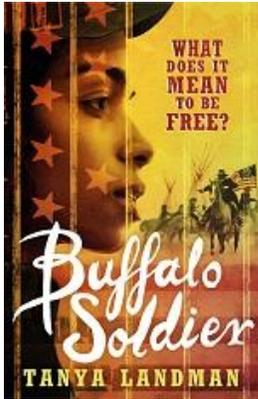


TALKING POINTS CILIP Carnegie Medal Shortlist 2015



The CILIP Carnegie
& Kate Greenaway
Children's Book
Awards

BUFFALO SOLDIER By Tanya Landman



Charlotte/Charley

What's the appeal for her of joining the army?

Charley feels guilty for many things. do you think they were really her fault?

The girl who had been killed the moment Henry took that tomahawk in the head+. what does she mean?

Nearly everyone Charley cares about in the book ends up getting killed. how is she affected? Is she changed? Does she give up?

Overall, how do her experiences change her?

Freedom

Is freedom what Charley is fighting for? And when she gets it, is it like she'd expected?

The way Red Barrel Chest spoke of being free and the way I'd heard white folks speak about it. it was like they was using the same-sounding word but with two entirely different meanings.+The whole book about people fighting for freedom. but ultimately is freedom the same thing to everyone?

Charley keeps comparing the aspiration for freedom to being like Moses seeking the Promised Land. do you think in general her expectations are naïve or realistic?

Prejudice

People refer to native Americans and blacks variously as %ndians+, %savages+, %animals+, %niggers+. what does language tell you about what people think of each other?

How do Charley's expectations of Yankees compare with the reality she encounters when she first finds that army (when she is freed from the Delaney house)?

How do Charley's expectations of Yankees compare with the reality she encounters when she first finds that army (when she is freed from the Delaney house)?

Charley herself calls Indians "heathens", and when she's angry she wants violent revenge against them. Is she just like everybody else, with all the same prejudices?





To begin with Charley thinks all Indians are the same, and on the same side (and not very clever) . how do her views change? What makes them change?

She also thinks all whites are against all blacks and all Indians, as though each of those three groups was simple and united . what are the moments in the story when she learns that things are much more complicated than that?

Jonas

Jonas Beecher stays in Charley's nightmares, haunting them even when she hasn't seen him in years. Why do you think he's the one who sticks out particularly, among so many who mistreated her?

As you read the story, did you ever think, like Charley did, that Jonas might be redeemed?

Charley is constantly comparing Tiberius with Jonas, the two young sons of white men whom she watched growing up. But how did they end up so different?

Do you think Charley was right to kill Jonas at the end?

Fighting the wars

The army consider the Indians %savages+, and claim to be taking territory in order to %civilise+them . what exactly do they mean by that %civilising+, do you think?

Think of the attitudes of Captain Smith and General Michaels towards the black soldiers . what's the difference? Which attitude do you think was more common at the time? (And by the way, of these two men in the book, who do you think makes the better leader?)

Do you see the war between %whites+and %Indians+as just a fight about who's going to occupy a bit of territory, or about whole different world views?

How the story is told

Think about Charlotte's vivid voice telling us the story . is it a writerly, literary kind of voice, or something you can imagine being spoken aloud?

What can you deduce about Charlotte . her background, her character, her home, her education . by the way she talks?

Charley's storytelling races past Cookie and Amos's deaths quite quickly for something so important . this often happens with really terrible moments, she tends not to dwell on describing them. Why might that be?

There are a number of very brief but terribly shocking moments in the book, often of sudden violence . the killing of Reuben's first horse, for example. Can you think of examples that seemed especially powerful to you?





History

Looking back at the epigraph from Frederick Douglass, how does it relate to the whole book? (Is there some irony, do you think?)

When she sees Buffalo Bill's show, in which the whole heroic army is white, Charley says of history: "We was being written out of the pages of that all the while we was making it!" Can you think of other examples you know about, apart from in this story, where this same thing might have happened?

In the "Author's note" at the end, Tanya Landman reveals that she was inspired to write this by a true story! Did this change the way you think of Charley's adventures at all?

