

From the Author's Desk:

Hello Parents and Teachers! Thank you for sharing "The Legend of Jimmy Spoon" with your readers. It was a lot of fun researching and writing this prequel to the best-selling "Jimmy Spoon and the Pony Express." I hope this discussion guide helps students reflect on the story and enjoy it on a deeper level. I've added some activities, a recipe, and personal tidbits that might be fun for them.

*My best,
Kristi*

The Legend of Jimmy Spoon:

About this book: Setting: Salt Lake City, Utah Territory in 1854. Twelve-year-old Jimmy Spoon yearns for the life of adventure that he is certain a horse would bring. So when two Shoshoni boys offer to give him a pony on condition he ride with them to their camp, he sneaks away from his family to follow the boys. But the journey is harder and much longer than he thought it would be, and when Jimmy arrives at the Shoshoni camp he discovers that he is expected to stay -- he is to become the son of the chief's mother.

Too far from home to find his way back alone, Jimmy struggles to adjust to the Shoshoni way of life. The careful teachings of Chief Washakie and Old Mother, together with Jimmy's growing affection for the beautiful Nahanee, help lessen his homesickness. Excitement and danger fill his days as he practices with bow and arrows, gentles a wild horse, and aspires to earn the right to wear an eagle feather.

This historical adventure was inspired by *Among the Shoshones*, the memoirs of Elijah Nicholas Wilson. The Wyoming town of Wilson, at the southern base of the Tetons, is named for him.

For ages 10-14. Shoshoni glossary and historical note included.

ISBN 0-15-216776-5

Discussion ideas:

<> Part I [Chapters 1-11]:

1. What do you think about Jimmy's choice to disobey his father?
2. Explain what Washakie means when he tells Jimmy, "An owl listening from his branch has more wisdom than a magpie that chatters all day long."
3. Tell about a chore or activity that makes you ache with boredom.
4. What was Washakie trying to teach Jimmy when he told him to remove the arrow holes from the tree?

<> Part II [Chapters 12-40]:

1. Why is it hard for people to never argue or fight?
2. What would you do if someone bullied you or a friend, like Poog did to Jimmy?
3. Jimmy learns two reasons to return a female salmon to the river. What is the most important?
4. What do you think of Jimmy's decision to keep peace? What would you have done?

Activity suggestions:

<> **Write** -- These can be a brief paragraph or several pages:

1. "If I could grow up in a different culture I would live ..."
2. Describe a club you would like to start and what you would name it.
3. Explain how you would make friends with someone who doesn't speak your language.

<> **Draw**

1. A map of Chief Washakie's summer encampment
2. One of the animals in the story
3. Inside Spoon's Fancy Store

<> **Make**

1. Diorama of a Shoshoni village
2. Miniature of Old Mother's tipi

<> **Read** -- More adventures about the Wild Old West:

1. Jimmy's sequel: Jimmy Spoon and the Pony Express -- ISBN 9781505329001
2. Jimmy and Nahanee appear again in The Great Railroad Race: The Diary of Libby West -- Utah Territory, 1868 [A Dear America book: ISBN 0-590-10991-x].

<> **Cook**

Mrs. Spoon's Chicken Soup -- Mrs. Spoon would have needed at least two plump chickens from her yard with extra vegetables from her garden to feed Jimmy and his many sisters. For now, here's a simple recipe for a smaller family. It's nourishing and delicious, and can be served with crackers or bread and butter. I love crispy toast with my soup!

Ingredients:

- 1 (3 pound) whole chicken
- 4 carrots, halved
- 4 stalks celery, halved
- 1 large onion, halved
- water to cover
- salt & pepper to taste

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1. Put the chicken, carrots, celery and onion in a large soup pot and cover with cold water. Heat and simmer, uncovered, until the chicken meat falls off of the bones, about an hour (skim off foam every so often).

2. Take everything out of the pot. Strain the broth. Pick the meat off of the bones and chop the carrots, celery and onion. Season the broth with salt & pepper. Return the chicken and vegetables to the pot, stir, and serve.

**Behind the scenes of this story:**

Originally this was to be a biography of Nick Wilson, based on his memoirs from living with Chief Washakie's tribe in the mid-1800s. I corresponded with Nick's son, Charlie Wilson, who gave wonderful details about his dad and their Mormon family. He approved of my title: *Nick, the White Indian Boy*. When the book was finished the publisher asked for a formal permission note from Charlie so I mailed a letter to him in Wilson, Wyoming. But his terse response shocked me. He had changed his mind! He would not allow me to write about his father.

I called him right away. A caretaker said he'd just had surgery and couldn't come to the phone. I felt sick with anger and despair. Now what? My publisher said, "Oh, just rewrite it." Rewrite a novel? It was like pulling a thread on a quilt until it unraveled then starting from scratch. After grieving for several days I perked up and thought, "Aha! Fiction is fun." I invented Jimmy Spoon, his friends and family, while keeping historical figures such as Chief Washakie and Brigham Young. It turned out to be enormously freeing, not to be bound by the rigors of biography, which must be 100% accurate. Fiction allowed me creative license.

**A secret about the author:**

When writing this story I lived in Pocatello, Idaho and tutored teenagers for the high school Indian Club. As we became friends, they wanted to help with my research. They explained tribal traditions, oral history and vocabulary. One Shoshone boy described an outing in the woods with his uncle, where he learned to capture an eagle for its feather without killing the bird. I wove this poignant scene into Jimmy's adventure.

**Contact:** I would love to hear about your discussion. Just click the Contact button on my website, [kristianagregory.com](http://kristianagregory.com), and I'll answer you!