

Study Guide Questions  
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**Contact: The Yanomami of Brazil. 1990**

1. Imagine yourself to be a Yanomami Indian. Describe your subsistence economy before outsiders came onto your lands in the 1950s. Think of the kinds of tools you would have used to obtain food, including what you would have used to hunt game and fish. How would you have cut fruits from trees or dug tubers?
2. Now, imagine yourself to be a Yanomami in the present. What have you adopted from outsiders and incorporated into your ways of obtaining food? What Western tools did you see in the program that you now use to hunt, fish, and gather crops?
3. Describe the effects mining operations have had on your subsistence economy. In what ways is mining affecting the game population in your territory? How is it affecting fish in the rivers? What are the effects on the environment in general? Are there new ways of obtaining food that have come about as a result of the miners' invasion? Have miners influence ways in which food transactions are conducted (bartering vs. begging, exchange)? Have the miners introduced new foods?
4. How do the miners see the Indians? How do they perceive themselves in relation to the Indians? Do they think they are influencing the Indians in positive or negative ways, or a combination of both? Explain.
5. How do the Yanomami perceive the miners? Does more than one viewpoint exist, as shown in the program? What are Yanomami views about taking things from outsiders? Are they unanimously in favor? If not, what kinds of individuals are opposed? Why?
6. How has mining affected Yanomami health? What new diseases have they brought? Why are these so devastating?
7. To what do the Yanomami traditionally attribute disease? In what ways are their views of disease similar or different from Western understandings? How have outsiders and their diseases changed the ways that Yanomami understand disease? cure disease? How, according to Yanomami thinking, are illnesses cured and what role do Western medicines have?
8. What is the miners' position on the illnesses that have devastated the Yanomami in recent years? Do they think they are responsible in any way? To what cause, as articulated by the leader José Altino, do miners attribute the remarkable decrease in the Yanomami population?

9. How do you think the miners would view their portrayal in this program? Do you think the program is unfair to them [OR, alternatively, biased]?
10. Do you think the Indians should receive a share of the wealth generated from gold extraction in their territories? What kinds of arrangements did you see being explored in the program? What ideas do you have about ways that profits could be distributed?
11. What strategies, as shown in the program, have some Brazilian Indians begun to use to assert their rights? In what ways are the Yanomami different from other indigenous groups that have been organizing for their rights, for example those who had a strong presence at the Altamira protest? What other strategies for organizing and achieving rights do you think might be effective for remote indigenous peoples?
12. What sorts of solutions do you envision for the situation portrayed in the program? In what ways might you help? Here, provide information about human rights organizations and NGOs working on behalf of the Yanomami and other indigenous groups in Brazil.

#### Bibliography

- 1) "Sanuma Memories: Yanomami Ethnography in a Time of Crisis," Ramos, Alcida. University of Wisconsin Press, 1995.
- 2) "The Fierce People," Chagnon, Napoleon. Holt, Rineheart, & Winston, 1988.
- 3) "Amazon Journal: Dispatches from a Vanishing Frontier," O'Connor, Geoffrey. Plume, 1998.
- 4) "Yanomami Warfare," Ferguson, R. Brian. School of American Research, 1995.
- 5) "Darkness In El Dorado: How Scientists and Journalists Devastated The Amazon," Tierney, Patrick. W.W. Norton, 2002.
- 6) "La Fumee du Metal: Histoire de Contact chez les Yanomami (Bresil)," Albert, Bruce (article).

Study Guide Questions

**At the Edge of Conquest: The Journey of Chief Wai-Wai, 1992.**

1. What activities do the Waiãpi use to express and maintain their traditional culture and beliefs? Do economic activities as well as rituals play a role in this? What is the purpose of the Fish Dance?
2. Why do the Waiãpi believe that they have the right to claim the lands they occupy?
3. Until recent times the Waiãpi have avoided contacts with outsiders. What events have caused them to have greater interaction with outsiders?
4. Why do the Waiãpi want the government to demarcate a boundary around their lands? What events have caused their need to negotiate with representatives of the Brazilian government? Why is the demarcation of their land so important to them? What will happen, according to Chief Wai-Wai, if they do not secure the lands they need? What are the long-term implications of the government's plan to designate portions of Waiãpi land as National Forest?
5. How are Waiãpi leaders adapting to the changes increased contact with outsiders is bringing to their society? Why does Wai-Wai feel it is necessary to make a trip to Brasília, the nation's capital? What are the objectives of this trip?
6. What is an anthropologist? What is the anthropologist's role in the Waiãpi leaders' visit to Brasília?
7. Why is it so important, according to the Waiãpi leaders, to keep miners out of certain areas? How do the Waiãpi leaders propose the government should deal with the issue of mining in areas within and adjacent to their land? Do you think their proposal is reasonable? Do you think the various government representatives engaged in sincere efforts to negotiate with the Waiãpi leaders?
8. What things in the city impressed Wai-Wai and the other leaders during their visit to Brasília? What did they admire? What did they think was strange?

9. What scenes of Wai-Wai and the other leaders made you laugh? Can you explain why these scenes struck you as funny?
10. The Brazilian Indian Agency (FUNAI) representative states his belief that once Indians are exposed to Western things, they no longer have the ability to maintain their own culture. The use of Western material objects, he says, causes Indians to lose their identity. What signs of Western culture in contemporary Waiãpi life did you notice in the film? Do you think that the presence or use of these things makes the Waiãpi not Waiãpi? Do you think traditional practices and Western things can exist side by side? What evidence did you see of this in the film?
11. What, according to the Brazilian Indian Agency (FUNAI) representative, are the implications of the Waiãpi's use of violence to expel miners from areas they claim? [OR, What will happen, according to the Brazilian Indian Agency (FUNAI) representative, if the Waiãpi forcibly begin to expel miners from areas they claim?] How does he believe the use of violence will influence the ways that outsiders perceive the Waiãpi?
12. How did the Waiãpi leaders respond to this line of reasoning? Have they used violence in the past?
13. What do you think of the fact that the Waiãpi now engage in mining themselves? How have they used the profits from their mining ventures?
14. How did the Waiãpi leaders feel about the way they were treated in their meeting with those responsible for making the final decision about their lands? How did you feel about this encounter? What was the outcome of the meeting?
15. How would you characterize the Indians' overall experience in Brasília with representatives of various government agencies? How do you think the leaders felt about their trip? Was it worthwhile?

Here, provide information about the eventual outcome of Waiãpi efforts to secure their land.

Study Guide Questions

**Amazon Journal, 1996**

Note to Instructors:

Because some material in this film is also included in the film *Contact*, several questions for *Amazon Journal* raise issues that may have been discussed in relation to that film. If students have seen both films, the instructor may wish to discuss the ways in which the filmmaker's ideas and representations of Indians evolved during the time that elapsed between the making of the two films. For example, are the depictions of Indians more idealized or romanticized in *Contact*? What may have caused the filmmaker to change his views? How does the filmmaker use some of the same material in new ways, specifically how does he consider images to reflect Western ideas, perhaps telling us more about ourselves than the subjects of the films?

Question 1 (Part A) and Question 2 (Parts A, B, and C) are designed to be assigned *before* viewing the film. Students' answers to *all* parts of Questions 1 and 2 should be discussed *after* the film has been screened. In this discussion, instructors might also ask students to consider how they might wish to change their responses to the questions they answered before viewing the film.

1. Part A (Before viewing the film): List five adjectives that characterize indigenous people.

Part B (After viewing the film): How did the film cause you to rethink the ways you characterize indigenous peoples?

2. Part A (Before viewing the film): Draw a picture or describe in writing a typical Indian, as you see her or him. What does the Indian look like? How is the hair worn? What types of body ornamentation are used? What type of clothing is worn, if any?

Part B (Before viewing the film): In what part of the world does the Indian you have described live? If you have described or drawn a North American Indian, now provide an answer to Part A for an Amazonian Indian. If the Indian you have already described is Amazonian, do the same for a North American Indian.

Part C (Before viewing the film): Thinking about the Indians you have drawn or described in Parts A and B, consider where your ideas about these Indians come from. What images or media have influenced your ideas? Do your ideas come from representations of Indians in books? T.V.? Movies? Which ones (be as specific as possible)?

- Part D: (After viewing the film) Does having seen the film *Amazon Journal* make you think twice about the ideas you have about Indians? Do you think that those images have been, at least to some extent, constructed or fabricated by book authors, TV or film producers? Do you think that these images might change over time or according to historical circumstances? What kinds of circumstances might account for Westerners' having different ideas about Indians (give historical examples, if you can)?
3. As shown in the film, how do the miners see the Indians? How do they see themselves in relation to the Indians? Do they think they are influencing the Indians in positive or negative ways? Explain.
  4. How do the missionaries view the Indians? How do they perceive their role in relation to the Indians? What kind of activities do missionaries typically engage in when they work in other cultures? What are their objectives? Do you think the ideas these missionaries have of Indians are typical of missionaries working with indigenous peoples in other parts of the world?
  5. What sorts of Westerners were enthralled by the Indians at Altamira and the Carioca Conference in Rio? What did these Westerners find so appealing about the Indians at these events? Why did some Westerners want to paint themselves as Indians, to be photographed with Indians, or to engage in "indigenous-inspired" cultural performances? What can their ideas tell us about contemporary Western society?
  6. How does Marchedon, the Yanomami Shaman, think about outsiders? Why does he consider them dangerous?
  7. How is the Kayapó view of outsiders similar to or different from that of the Yanomami? In what ways are Kayapó goals in dealings with outsiders similar or different from those of the Yanomami? To what might you attribute the similarities and differences?
  8. Why did the Kayapó encourage Western fascination with Indians as exotic people at Altamira?
  9. To what do you attribute the widespread popular attention to Amazonian Indians of the late 1980s and early 1990s? Why do you think the images of Amazonian Indians that circulated in the media had such popular appeal? Do you think the Kayapó cause would have garnered much international attention without the support of celebrities

such as Sting? How come this attention (and the West's fascination with the Amazon in general) was so short lived?

10. How does the Amazonian "Noble Savage" of the late 1980s and early 1990s fit within a tradition of ideas in Western history? What notions are embodied in the Noble Savage ideal? What can you identify as new or different about the recent incarnation of the Noble Savage ideal?
11. What did the Indians gain by representing themselves as "noble," "innocent" and "childlike protectors of the forest?" What did they sacrifice? What did Indians gain, and what did they lose because of Westerners' fascination with them?
12. Do you think backlashes, such as the media smear of Payakan, are inevitable in cross-cultural encounters? Do you think Payakan's exploitation of the press for Indian gains made the backlash inevitable? How might Payakan have avoided this situation?
13. Do you think Western audiences would have responded to more complex representations of Indians than those that circulated in the popular media? Were these stereotyped images necessary to get outsiders' attention? Do these images perpetuate misunderstandings? How could Indians, journalists and other cultural mediators have worked to avoid misunderstandings?