



Pushing the Limits of Heritage Suggested Reading and Discussion Questions

Heritage...it's who and where we come from. And why it matters. Our personal past shapes our identity, grounding us in a culture and a place. But the speed of modern life dims that sense of belonging. It erodes old traditions and disrupts our ancestors' land. Each generation loses more of their origin story. And rebuilding those bonds can take years of effort.

Cave of Bones

Anne Hillerman, Fiction. When Tribal Police Officer Bernadette Manuelito arrives to speak at an outdoor character-building program for at-risk teens, she discovers chaos. Annie, a young participant on a solo experience due back hours before, has just returned and is traumatized. Gently questioning the girl, Bernie learns that Annie stumbled upon a human skeleton on her trek. While everyone is relieved that Annie is back, they're concerned about a beloved instructor who went out into the wilds of the rugged lava wilderness bordering Ramah Navajo Reservation to find the missing girl. The instructor vanished somewhere in the volcanic landscape known as El Malpais. In Navajo lore, the lava caves and tubes are believed to be the solidified blood of a terrible monster killed by superhuman twin warriors.

Solving the twin mysteries will expose Bernie to the chilling face of human evil. While Bernie searches for answers in her case, her husband, Sergeant Jim Chee juggles trouble closer to home. A vengeful man he sent to prison for domestic violence is back - and involved with Bernie's sister Darleen. Their relationship creates a dilemma that puts Chee in uncomfortable emotional territory that challenges him as family man, a police officer, and as a one-time medicine man in training. *goodreads.com*

- Anne Hillerman is the daughter of author Tony Hillerman, who wrote the original Chee novels. What do you think of a daughter picking up the heritage of her father's writing?
- How does *Cave of Bones* treat Navajo heritage?
- How is Navajo heritage related to the geography, weather or other natural elements in the region?
- How does Chee's relationship with his family evolve over the book? What are his internal struggles as he relates to his family? Did they resonate with any of your experiences?

