

# Medicine River

## By Thomas King



### Character Traits

**Directions:** Using the worksheets provided, identify at least FOUR adjectives that describe each character. You'll find far more for Will than the other characters, as such his table is bigger than the others. Find quotes from the book to support your adjective choices. For instance, in the beginning Will is "passive" (adjective), find a quote that supports this claim.

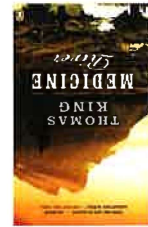
WILL	
ADJECTIVE	QUOTE & PAGE NUMBER
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	
5.	
6.	

LOUISE	
ADJECTIVE	QUOTE & PAGE NUMBER
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

HARLEN	
ADJECTIVE	QUOTE & PAGE NUMBER
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

CLYDE	
ADJECTIVE	QUOTE & PAGE NUMBER
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	

BERTHA	
ADJECTIVE	QUOTE & PAGE NUMBER
1.	
2.	
3.	
4.	



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## Not Your Average Book Report

Why do we write book reports? Aside from the obvious answer, which is to demonstrate that you read the novel and understood it, teachers normally assign book reports to give their students an opportunity to practice their reading comprehension, critical thinking, and written communication skills. Although most book reports tend to be entertaining to read, this teacher has read enough book reports to know that students in general, do not really enjoy this task, so in lieu of a book report, you will create a "Book Marketing Project."

### The Scenario

Imagine for a moment that you are a marketing and promotions executive and Thomas King's agent just called you to request your services. The agent would like you to develop and implement a marketing strategy for the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary edition of Mr. King's highly acclaimed first novel, *Medicine River*. Your goal is to create a promotional campaign that will entice as many readers as possible to purchase and read *Medicine River*.

### What Should I Include In My Marketing Campaign?

Traditional book reports begin with an introduction to the book itself, followed by a more in-depth discussion of the plot, characters, setting, major themes, climax, conflicts, revelations, etc. and finally a conclusion. Granted, you will still cover all of the basics required of a thorough book report because there is 100% chance that you will eventually be faced with writing a traditional book report or book review when you move on the post-secondary school. The difference in this case is your delivery of the information. A creative way to envision this project is to think of it as a promotional portfolio, or in film terminology, a limited edition boxed-set. Below you will find a checklist of the items that you must complete in order to receive full marks for your project portfolio.

## 1. Design Your Own Book Jacket

Now that you have read *Medicine River* and are well versed in the storyline, you will create a new book jacket based on your knowledge. Your book jacket should be error free and ready to show on presentation day. Although this is a relatively straightforward task, you should take the time to thoroughly flesh out your approach and be prepared to answer questions about your design choices on presentation day. Your book jacket will double as your project title page and should be completed according to the following specifications:

- Using a sheet of 11X17 tabloid sized paper, design a new front cover that you believe would entice prospective readers to purchase the book.
- The cover should be illustrated appropriately for the target audience of the book and should provide a hint to the setting (time and place) of the novel.
- The book's title and author should be clearly visible.
- You may create hand drawn or computer generated illustrations bearing in mind that your final product should be clear and visually pleasing. You are of course, trying to catch the eye of prospective readers, many of whom will "judge the book by its' cover" the first time they see it on a shelf.
- The back cover should contain:
  - A synopsis (a preview of the book). You can also use the synopsis to present further details about the setting.
  - At least three brief critic's reviews of the book (you should make these up yourself based on your own critique of the novel).
  - The name and date of any awards the novel was either nominated for, or won (this information can be found on the original book or online).
  - The ISBN number (the barcode printed on the back cover of the original book).

## 2. Collectible Character Trading Cards

Characterization is a key element of every story and *Medicine River* offers a number of very quirky, yet relatable characters. As you will recall from Chapter 13, Bertha Morley hires Will to snap some headshots that she can use for her "Calgary Center for the Advancement of Human Potential" profile, which we learn is just a fancy name for a dating service. Using the information you have gathered while reading the novel and your Character trait work sheets, you will create "dating profiles" for each of the following characters:

- Will, Harlen, Louise, Bertha, Susan, and Clyde
  - Helpful hint: use cardstock/index cards/recipe cards for your profile cards and record the vital information on the front of each card and use the back of the cards to record your character descriptions. You can also create your profiles on a computer and print full sheet profiles if you prefer.
- Each profile should contain a photo (hand drawn or computer generated) and as much of the following information as you can find or deduce based on your own knowledge (ex. Louise frequents yard sales therefore she is frugal):

- Vital information (gender, age, nationality, location, marital status, family, occupation, etc).
- Likes and dislikes (ex. Will would never date a smoker).
- Description of character (ex. Harlen is a meddler but what we call meddling, he would call helping).
- What the character is looking for in a partner.
- Your favorite character quote from your character webs.

## 3. Timeline of Significant Events

Will is the protagonist of the story, as such your timeline should plot his important life events beginning with his birth, followed by his childhood in Calgary, his move to Toronto, and his eventual return to Medicine River (fill in the holes between these following specifications: Your timeline should be as thorough as possible for full marks and fulfill the following specifications:

- Create an accordion fold timeline by pasting pages together lengthwise as you run out of room. If done correctly, you should be able to fold your completed timeline and store it neatly in your marketing portfolio.
- Highlight Will's important life events in chronological order, NOT in the order presented in the novel.
- Identify significant people Will encountered throughout his life with a point form explanation of the nature of their relationship (ex. Susan and Louise = Girlfriends, Rose = Mother, South Wing = Stepdaughter).
- Identify any points of growth Will's character experiences as a result of his significant life events (ex. Will finally experiences a sense of belonging and finds a place to call home when he is invited to take part in Joyce's big family photo down by the lake in Chapter 15).

#### 4. Postcards From The Plot

The main element of every story is the plot or sequence of events that make up the story. In this particular story, our protagonist happens to be a photographer whom, throughout this story, receives numerous postcards from his estranged globetrotting younger brother, James. For this activity, you will create a set of postcards that identify the major plot elements of this story according to the following specifications:

- Using 4X6 cardstock paper create one postcard for each of the major plot elements that you identified in the story.
- The front of your postcard should contain an illustration that relates to your chosen plot element. It should be as clear as possible.
- The back of your post card should contain a brief message written by Will explaining the identified plot element to James in a way that a random person with no prior knowledge of the novel could understand. (e.g. Compare the two family photographs side by side on the front of the postcard. Write a message to James that explains how you have finally experienced a true sense of belonging through your acceptance into the *Medicine River* family/community).

## 5. *Medicine River* Mayhem Movie Posters

The most enticing and complete stories contain a number of conflicts followed by solutions. *Medicine River* is chockfull of conflict experienced by the protagonist Will, but also by a number of supporting characters. As stated earlier, one of your tasks as a marketing and promotion expert is the "selling" of the product, which in this case is a book. However, as we all know, the best books are quite often successfully or unsuccessfully adapted for the big screen. With this in mind, you will concentrate your efforts on the "sale" of a film rendition of the novel by creating three separate promotional movie posters according to the following specifications:

- You must choose at least three major conflicts found within the novel and create a full-color promotional movie poster for each of your three identified conflicts. (e.g. Man vs. Man = Big John vs. Eddie)
- Your posters should be visually pleasing, clear, error free, and concise. (e.g. Side profile of the two men facing-off playing "lahal" dressed in their stereotypical clothing).
- Your posters must have a title, a tagline that highlights your conflict. (e.g. "Two worlds collide on the same side of the tracks" OR "Apple vs. Pretend Indian") of course you will be much more creative, but you get the idea.
- The small type of your poster should identify the usual print information: release date, starring actors, production company, director, etc.).
- Conflict trailer/preview note cards (the information "the man with the movie voice" would say while your trailer is playing on T.V. or during the 15 minutes of previews you have to sit through when you see a movie at the cinema) to accompany each poster.

## Optional Bonus Activity

### 6. *Medicine River*, the Alternate Ending

If you are especially motivated or if you want to ensure that you receive the highest possible grade, you may choose to complete the bonus activity that follows. If you were not satisfied with the conclusion of the novel, here's your chance to say so. In this activity, as with most books adapted for the big screen, the scriptwriter possesses the ability to re-write the ending of the story. For this activity, you will