

"I Dreamt I Was in Heaven - The Rampage of the Rufus Buck Gang"
- by Leonce Gaiter

Study Questions

1. Through his parents, who suffered forced relocation and slavery, Rufus Buck had felt the sting of violent injustices perpetrated on his people. He was personally witnessing another—the usurpation for promised Indian lands. How much of his crusade was based on a reaction to injustice?
2. How would you describe Judge Parker's attitude toward the Indians of Indian Territory?
3. What are the limits to fighting injustice against an infinitely more powerful force?
4. What are Judge Parker's goals in his manipulation of Theodosia's role in the Buck gang's trial, and why is it important to him to achieve those goals?
5. What would have prompted Rufus Buck to consider rape a legitimate weapon of war?
6. Why does Parker react so vehemently to the Darwinian text? How does he associate the texts with his life as de facto ruler of Indian Territory?
7. Name historical instances in which tactics we would today label as "terrorist" have and have not succeeded in achieving the aims of those who employ them.
8. Discuss the meaning of the following quote: *"Parker believed in retribution; he did not believe in unpunished lies or unrequited obfuscations. He believed that deception and injustice literally bred—that they spawned and reproduced themselves to even worse effect. And in egregious cases, God in his wisdom made their bitter fruits manifest in flesh, and sinners suffered at the hands of their own misdeeds. When he heard of Buck's first warning, and when he suffered the torturous details of the rape of Rosetta Hasson, he knew that Buck was such a plague, more conjured than born."*
9. Do you see any similarities between the moral universe of Judge Parker, Rufus Buck and Cherokee Bill and ours?
10. If you had been alive and Native American in 1895 and wanted the United States to honor its commitment that the Indian Territory would be just that--Indian--what would you have done?
11. Name the fiction you've read or films you've seen that discuss Africa-Americans fighting back against slavery and violent injustice with the same zeal and ruthlessness with which, for instance, white Southerners fought "northern aggression."