

A Study Guide
for viewing
Dances With Wolves
from the perspective of crossing cultures

1. Give two examples of ethnocentrism on the part of the White soldier John Dunbar.
2. Give two examples of ethnocentrism on the part of the Native Americans.
3. Explain how John Dunbar experiences each of the four stages of culture shock.
4. Property is a culturally-bound concept. How do the Anglo and Native American cultures view items such as John Dunbar's horse and hat?
5. The initial response of some Native Americans to John Dunbar's visit to their settlement is rejection. "Go away, you are not welcome here". How does this fit the stages of development of intercultural sensitivity? How might an exchange student experience rejection? Why?
6. Sharing strange customs. John shares coffee and sugar with mixed reactions. How might an exchange student prepare for experiencing strange customs?
7. Explain how exchanges of gifts and food are a part of the ceremony of crossing cultures in this film.
8. John Dunbar uses the technique of journaling to chronicle his experiences. How does this help him? How might this be useful to any cross-cultural traveler?
9. We assume that interpreters or translators are accurate. How well does "Stands with Fists" do in her initial interpretation?
10. After his first encounter, John is reluctant to tell "everything". Where might he be in the process of developing intercultural sensitivity?
11. After the buffalo hunt, John and the natives begin exchanging items of clothing. How does this signal a new stage of intercultural sensitivity?
12. Conflict and "irritability" first occur when John finds an Indian has "his" hat. How is this resolved? What cultural values apply?
13. After the buffalo hunt, John goes "home". In what ways does he experience reverse culture shock?
14. John commits a *faux pax* (minor cultural blunder) when he asks to go on the war party against the Pawnee. How is this explained to him? How might an exchange student commit a *faux pax*?
15. How does John's appearance change over time? What does this represent?
16. The film ends when John can't or won't go back to his own native culture. How might this be similar to or different from the experience of a youth exchange student?
17. In popular films, one culture is often portrayed as good and another bad. Comment on this from the perspective of ethnorelativism.