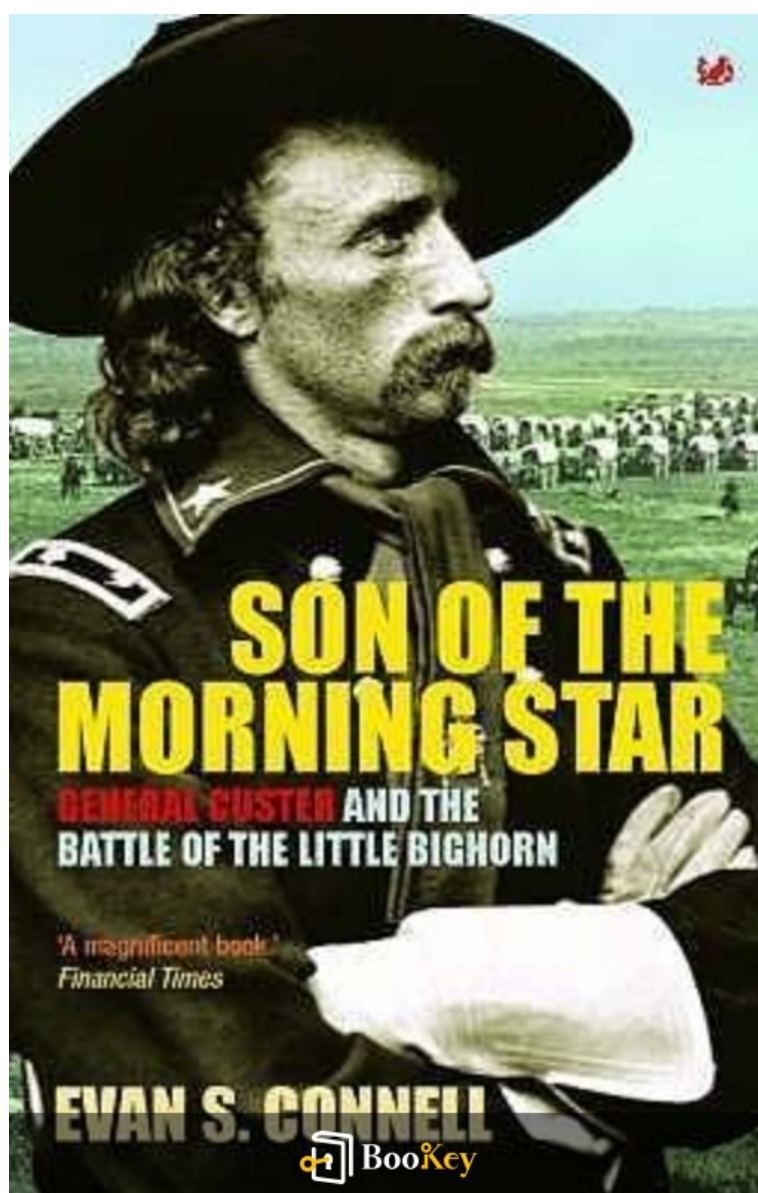


Son Of The Morning Star PDF

Evan S. Connell



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About the book

Exploring "Son of the Morning Star"

Step into the captivating narrative of Evan S. Connell's "Son of the Morning Star," a profound exploration of General George Armstrong Custer and the legendary Battle of the Little Bighorn. Connell weaves a rich historical narrative, blending detailed research with compelling character studies, to debunk the myths surrounding this pivotal moment in American history.

An Immersive Historical Experience

In this detailed account, Connell invites readers to traverse the battle from multiple viewpoints, immersing them in the perspectives of both the brave Native American warriors fighting to protect their land and the intrepid cavalymen on a quest for glory. This eloquent storytelling not only illuminates their motivations but also brings to life the intricate human emotions and conflicts at play.

For the Avid History Buff

"Son of the Morning Star" is not just a retelling of historical events; it's a vivid journey into the heart of a tale filled with complexity and controversy. Ideal for history buffs and lovers of epic narratives, Connell's work promises a deeper understanding of one of history's most perplexing figures, offering insights that resonate long after the book is closed.

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About the author

Profile: Evan S. Connell

- Name: Evan S. Connell
- Born: August 17, 1924, Kansas City, Missouri
- Occupation: American Author

Overview:

Evan S. Connell is celebrated for his remarkable versatility as a writer, with an extensive portfolio that spans novels, short stories, essays, and historical texts. His literature is characterized by meticulous attention to detail and profound character exploration, earning him widespread acclaim.

Notable Works:

- Fiction:
 - "Mr. Bridge"
 - "Mrs. Bridge"

Both novels showcase Connell's unique ability to probe the intricacies of human behavior and societal expectations.

- Historical Writing:
 - "Son of the Morning Star"

This critically recognized work offers an in-depth and well-researched

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narrative on General George Armstrong Custer and the Battle of the Little Bighorn, reflecting Connell's passion for history and his storytelling prowess.

Legacy:

Connell passed away in 2013, but his literary contributions continue to influence readers and academics alike, solidifying his status as a significant figure in American literature. His work remains relevant, resonating with those who appreciate insightful narrative and character development.

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Son Of The Morning Star Summary

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Son Of The Morning Star Summary Chapter List

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1. Introduction: An Overview of the American West and Its Legends

The American West is a vast expanse of land shrouded in myth and legend, embodying stories of exploration, conflict, and a tantalizing promise of adventure and opportunity. Its rugged terrain, characterized by towering mountains, expansive plains, and desert canyons, has been the backdrop for countless tales of both heroic triumphs and tragic failures. This region, often romanticized in literature and film, has shaped not only the historical narrative of the United States but has also influenced the very identity of the American people.

As European settlers pushed westward in pursuit of land, resources, and wealth, they encountered a multitude of Indigenous tribes, each with their own rich histories and cultures. This clash of civilizations would become a defining aspect of the American West, with figures like General George Armstrong Custer emerging as prominent symbols of both the romanticized heroism and the tragic consequences of westward expansion. Custer, with his flamboyant personality and well-documented military career, epitomized the quintessential image of the American military leader as he sought glory on the frontier.

The legends of the American West are laced with both real events and embellished tales that have morphed into folklore over the years. The story

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of Custer's Last Stand at the Battle of the Little Bighorn in 1876 serves as a striking example of this phenomenon. The battle, which involved Custer and his troops facing off against a coalition of Sioux warriors, has been mythologized as a heroic yet doomed confrontation, capturing the imagination of generations to come. This event not only signifies a key moment in American history, but it also illustrates the broader themes of conflict, bravery, and tragedy that permeate the legends of the West.

Moreover, the narrative surrounding the American West does not merely recount battles or territorial conquests; it also reflects the ideals of freedom, individualism, and the relentless pursuit of the American Dream. The frontier represented an opportunity, a chance to start anew amidst uncharted territories. Stories of cowboys, outlaws, and pioneers have fostered a unique cultural identity, one that celebrates the spirit of exploration while grappling with the moral complexities of colonialism and the ongoing struggles of Indigenous peoples.

In addition to Custer and his infamous battle, other legends of the West are similarly steeped in a blend of history and myth: the tales of Davy Crockett at the Alamo, the gunfights of the likes of Wild Bill Hickok and Jesse James, and the exploits of pioneers traveling along the Oregon Trail. Each narrative contributes to the broader schema of American folklore, filled with larger-than-life characters whose actions continue to resonate with modern

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audiences.

Understanding the legends of the American West requires a nuanced approach, as these stories often serve multiple purposes: they entertain, inform, and provoke thought about the identities, values, and struggles of a nation in formation. The terrain and backdrop of the West play an integral role in shaping these narratives, much like the unforgiving landscapes that test the resolve of those who venture into them. Hence, the stories of the West stand not only as a reflection of a bygone era but also as a commentary on the evolving identity of America itself.

In summary, as we move forward into the examination of Custer's encounter with the Sioux Nation and the consequential Battle of the Little Bighorn, it is essential to maintain an awareness of the broader tapestry of legends into which such events are interwoven. The tales of adventure, conflict, and resilience that unfold in this region continue to inspire and challenge our understanding of history and myth in the context of the American experience.

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2. Chapter 1: The Fateful Encounter of General Custer and the Sioux Nation

The American West during the late 19th century was a place of profound transformation, marked by the clash of cultures and the tumultuous encounter between Euro-American settlers and Native American tribes. Among these pivotal figures was Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer, whose interactions with the Sioux Nation would shape not only his own destiny but also the course of American history. This chapter delves into the fateful encounter between General Custer and the Sioux, setting the stage for one of the most infamous battles in American history—the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

In the context of the westward expansion of the United States, Custer emerged as a charismatic and ambitious military leader. Born in 1839 in New Rumley, Ohio, Custer quickly climbed the ranks of the United States Army due to his daring exploits during the Civil War. His highly publicized achievements earned him a reputation as a cavalry expert and a national hero. Custer's vanity and flamboyant personality often overshadowed the complexities of his character, making him a figure of both admiration and contempt. These traits, coupled with his innate ambition, would come to play a significant role in his decision-making when facing Native American tribes, particularly the Sioux.



The Sioux, who had long inhabited the Great Plains, were subjected to increasing encroachment on their homelands by settlers and the U.S. government. Treaties made in the past were often disregarded when they no longer served the interests of the settlers. By the mid-1870s, tensions escalated as the discovery of gold in the Black Hills—an area sacred to the Sioux—drew thousands of prospectors and miners into the territory, violating agreements made with the Sioux Nation. The resultant conflicts were not merely land grabs; they were clashes of identity, culture, and survival.

As the pressure mounted, the Sioux, led by influential leaders such as Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse, began to mobilize resistance against the expanding American presence. Custer viewed this resistance not only as a challenge to military authority but as an affront to the American way of life. This perception was rooted in the prevailing American sentiment of Manifest Destiny, which held that the expansion of the United States across the American continents was both justified and inevitable.

In 1876, the stage was set for confrontation when Custer was tasked with leading the 7th Cavalry Regiment into the Indian Territory. His mission aimed to neutralize any threats posed by the Sioux and their allies. Setting out with a sense of confidence, Custer was under the impression that the Native American forces would be easily subdued. This overreaching

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confidence was not without precedent; previous skirmishes had led many military leaders to underestimate the tactical skill and unity of the Sioux warriors.

The encounter at the Little Bighorn River was marked by a series of miscalculations. Custer, moving against a far larger coalition of Sioux and Cheyenne warriors, failed to gather adequate intelligence regarding the size of the opposing force. Believing that a swift surprise attack would lead to a decisive victory, Custer divided his troops—a decision that ultimately proved fatal. Encountering the overwhelming force of the combined tribal nation during the early hours of June 25, 1876, Custer's forces quickly became engulfed in chaos.

This chapter illustrates pivotal transformations within both Custer and Native American experience in this encounter. For Custer, it marked the culmination of his military career, underscoring the failures of arrogance and the consequences of underestimating an opponent. For the Sioux, the encounter became a moment of cultural and military significance, as they stood united against what they perceived as an existential threat to their way of life. The historical meeting of these two forces was not just a clash of arms but a collision of civilizations, ideologies, and destinies—a prelude to the brutal confrontation that would follow and set the tone for the legacies of both General Custer and the Sioux Nation.



3. Chapter 2: The Build-Up to the Battle of the Little Bighorn

The years leading to the Battle of the Little Bighorn were marked by a complex interplay of cultural tensions, political maneuvering, and tragic misunderstandings. As settlers relentlessly pushed westward, eager to stake their claim on the fertile lands promised by the government, they increasingly encroached upon the territories traditionally inhabited by Native American tribes, particularly the Sioux Nation. This period, characterized by a profound struggle over land and identity, set the stage for the inevitable clash between General George Armstrong Custer's Seventh Cavalry and the combined forces of the Sioux and Cheyenne.

By the mid-19th century, the U.S. government had attempted to negotiate numerous treaties with various Native American tribes, often under immense pressure and aggressive tactics. The Treaty of Fort Laramie in 1868, which guaranteed the Black Hills territory to the Sioux, represented a brief pause in the hostilities. However, after gold was discovered in the Black Hills in 1874, influxes of miners and settlers disregarded the treaty's stipulations, prompting outrage among Sioux leaders such as Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. This period of increased tensions was marked by a rapid deterioration of trust; Native American resistance against encroachment of settlers burgeoned, leading to a series of small-scale conflicts.



In the wake of these tensions, the U.S. military sought to assert its dominance in the region. The government's push to forcibly relocate Native tribes, as dictated by the policies of Manifest Destiny, further fueled resentment within the Native community. Custer, a flamboyant and ambitious officer known for his daring exploits, was called upon to lead the troops as part of a larger military strategy aimed at subjugating the Sioux. He was fixated on regaining glory from a recent defeat at the Rosebud River, and his eagerness to assert control over the Black Hills became evident.

Custer's reconnaissance mission in early June 1876, along the Little Bighorn River, unveiled the sheer scale and organization of the encamped Native forces. Reports indicated that thousands of warriors had gathered for the Sun Dance, a sacred ceremony of the Sioux that celebrated their unity and strength. This overwhelming display of Native resistance might have made a lesser commander reconsider their approach, but Custer was undeterred. Fueled by his previous successes—and a prevailing sense of racial superiority—he underestimated the resilience and tactical capabilities of his adversaries.

In preparing for the confrontation, logistical miscalculations also played a role. Custer divided his forces into three battalions, believing that a surprise attack could break the spirit of the Sioux and Cheyenne warriors. This decision was rooted in a strategic risk that would later prove disastrous.



Public sentiment back home was largely influenced by the narratives spun by the media, often portraying Custer as a heroic figure embarking on a righteous crusade against savagery. The government, bolstered by this public perception, supported military actions that were increasingly aggressive and unsympathetic toward Native American grievances. The promotion of a narrative that framed Custer as a hero reverberated through popular culture, creating a mythos that would dominate American storytelling.

As the final days leading up to the battle unfolded, a belief in the inevitability of victory permeated Custer's camp. However, the Sioux, under the leadership of Sitting Bull, prepared for the confrontation with equal resolve. They understood that this battle was not merely a skirmish but a defense of their homeland, culture, and way of life. With tensions at an all-time high, the stage was set for what would become one of the most infamous and fateful engagements in American history, forever altering the course of the West.

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4. Chapter 3: The Battle: A Detailed Account of the Conflict and Its Chaos

The Battle of the Little Bighorn, often referred to as Custer's Last Stand, serves as a crucial point of reference in the narrative of the American West, showcasing the tumult and complexity of its conflicts. In this chapter, we delve into the chaotic battlefield—the setting, the strategies employed, the intense confrontations, and the overwhelming disorder that marked this notorious clash between General George Armstrong Custer and the united forces of several Native American tribes, primarily the Lakota Sioux, Cheyenne, and Arapaho.

The stage was set on June 25, 1876, amidst the wide-open plains of eastern Montana Territory. Custer, at the head of the 7th Cavalry, embarked on a mission driven by a desire for glory and an overriding inclination to confront the Native American resistance that had formed in response to the U.S. government's encroachments on their lands. The landscape of Little Bighorn, characterized by rolling hills, riverbeds, and canyons, offered both natural beauty and tactical challenges. It did not take long for the serenity of the landscape to be shattered by the cacophony of combat.

As Custer approached the encampment of the Lakota and their allies, the air thrummed with tension. Reports paint a vivid picture of a bustling Native camp, filled with families and warriors who were acutely aware of the



impending confrontation. The Sioux had prepared for this moment, assembling an estimated 2,000 to 2,500 warriors armed with the knowledge of their terrain, traditional fighting techniques, and an unwavering determination to defend their land and way of life.

Custer, faced with overwhelming numbers, made fateful decisions that would seal his and his men's fate. Dividing his force into three battalions, he underestimated the coordinated response from the indigenous forces that had come together for a common cause. The breakdown of his command led to isolated encounters filled with confusion and disarray. As Custer led his battalion down the narrow ridge, he quickly realized that he was surrounded. The terrain, which he had thought advantageous, turned into a lethal trap as warriors poured in from multiple directions, utilizing their intimate knowledge of the land to leverage surprise and mobility against the cavalry's heavier formations.

Chaos erupted as the first shots rang out. The soldiers, accustomed to the spread of firearms and tactics of previous battles, found themselves overwhelmed in a situation that fluctuated between strategic engagement and frantic survival. The Native warriors employed guerrilla tactics, striking swiftly and retreating before the soldiers could effectively respond. This method showcased not only their superior knowledge of the environment but also an agility that the U.S. Army's tactics could not match. The warriors,

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riding atop fleet-footed horses, launched their assaults seemingly from every direction, manifesting the storm of resistance that Custer had underestimated.

As the battle unfolded, the visceral images of combat emerged starkly. The clattering of hooves, the crack of gunfire, the shouts of men caught between valor and a fight for survival define this historical moment. Custer's forces found their formations disintegrating under the relentless pressure. Panic set in as men remembered home, and the hope of glory faded into the desperate will to survive—violence surged amidst growing despair. It became a fight for life rather than an honorable tale of conquest as the battlefield transformed into a theatre of chaos, with defenders and assailants alike facing the harsh realities of confrontation.

Realizing they had made a grievous tactical error, Custer and his men fought to hold their ground against insurmountable odds. The disarray reached a fever pitch when Custer, witnessing the destruction of his battalion, conducted a desperate attempt to rally his remaining troops. However, without a unified command and with communication severed by the conflict's intensity, any semblance of order crumbled further, leading to catastrophic losses as Native forces continued to push forward relentlessly.

The decisive moments unfolded almost too quickly to comprehend. From

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the initial skirmishes of defense to the final standoff, lives were lost and legends were born—transforming the battlefield into a hallowed site of confrontation. As the dust settled, the immense loss was palpably felt, not only by Custer's men who fought bravely but also by the indigenous peoples who faced their own sacrifices in the fight to retain their sovereignty.

The battle ended in utter devastation. Custer and approximately 260 of his men died in that furious clash, marking a significant defeat for the U.S. Army and a powerful victory for the Native tribes. Yet the pyrrhic nature of this victory would soon become evident as the U.S. military escalated its campaigns against Native peoples following the bloodshed.

In recounting this battle, Connell brings forth the historical and human impacts of an event steeped in both glory and tragedy. It illustrates the untamed nature of the American West, a land of conflict defined by both the pursuit of progress and the defense of a way of life. The vigor of the battle serves as a microcosm of the larger narrative between the United States' expansion and the resilience of indigenous nations, a testament to the chaos that ensued on that fateful day in June 1876.

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5. Chapter 4: Aftermath and Legacy: The Enduring Impact of Custer's Last Stand

The aftermath of Custer's Last Stand at the Battle of the Little Bighorn was nothing short of monumental, rippling through the fabric of American history and culture. While the battle itself was a climactic conflict between the U.S. army and the Sioux Nation, its legacy extended far beyond that bloody encounter and profoundly influenced the subsequent trajectory of U.S. policies towards Native Americans, military tactics, and the crafting of national mythology.

In the immediate wake of the battle, the defeat of General Custer and his 7th Cavalry catalyzed a wave of outrage and retribution within the United States. The shocking news of the annihilation of Custer's forces ignited indignation across the country, and calls for vengeance rose to a fever pitch. Media sensationalism turned Custer into a martyr, his image romanticized as a courageous leader presiding over a valiant but doomed effort against a fierce adversary. This framing served to bolster public support for the ongoing military campaigns aimed at subduing Native American tribes.

As the U.S. government galvanized its military resources, the aftermath also marked the beginning of intensified warfare throughout the Great Plains. Following the battle in June 1876, an aggressive campaign led by General Philip Sheridan ensued, employing tactics of total warfare to decimate the



strength of the Sioux and other tribes. By the end of the 1870s, the U.S. military efforts, coupled with the encroachment of settlers, had drastically altered the demographics and power dynamics of the American West. The cultural and spiritual lives of Native peoples were profoundly disrupted as they were pushed onto reservations, stripped of their ancestral lands.

Custer's Last Stand would also come to symbolize the broader conflict between the ideals of Manifest Destiny and the realities of Native American resistance. This mythologizing process transformed Custer into a heroic figure for many Americans, creating a narrative that justified the expansionist policies of the United States. Over time, the 'victory' at Little Bighorn became an emblem of the audacious spirit of the American West, aligning with the country's self-image as a land of opportunity and ambition.

The legacy of Custer's Last Stand is also evident in its lasting impact on American popular culture. Countless books, films, and artworks have since sought to capture the drama of the battle and the larger themes it embodies, including heroism, tragedy, and the clash of civilizations. The image of Custer, particularly through artistic representations and reenactments, is often romanticized, reflecting an enduring fascination with the Wild West and the mythology surrounding its figures.

However, this legacy is not merely one of glorification; it has also inspired

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significant discussions about historical memory and reconsideration of Native American perspectives. In recent decades, historians and cultural commentators have emphasized the need to acknowledge the complexities of this conflict, offering a more nuanced view of the Sioux resistance. Authors and scholars have explored stories from the Native perspective, highlighting their agency, resilience, and the cultural ramifications of colonial violence. This reframing contributes to a broader understanding of the American narrative, inviting a dialogue on reconciliation, cultural preservation, and the ongoing impact of colonization that persists today.

The aftermath of Custer's Last Stand exemplifies the tensions between history and legend, prompting both reflection and critical reassessment of America's past. The battle remains a touchstone for discussions about national identity, particularly as the U.S. grapples with its colonial legacy and the treatment of Indigenous populations. In recent years, efforts to memorialize the site of the Battle of Little Bighorn and to remember the lives lost on both sides have similarly dovetailed with movements advocating for Native rights and recognition.

In summary, the enduring impact of Custer's Last Stand is a complex tapestry woven from threads of military defeat, cultural myth-making, and the intricate interplay of power and resistance in American history. The narrative of Custer resonates not only as a tragic tale of ambition and



inadequacy but also as a powerful reminder of the consequences of expansionist ideologies.

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6. Conclusion: Reflecting on History, Myth, and the American Identity

In concluding the exploration of "Son of the Morning Star," it is imperative to contemplate the intricate relationship between history, myth, and the evolving concept of American identity as depicted through the lens of General Custer, the Sioux Nation, and the events surrounding the Battle of the Little Bighorn.

Evan S. Connell's narrative goes beyond a mere retelling of historical events; it serves as a profound reflection on how these stories are woven into the very fabric of American identity. Custer is often romanticized as a quintessential American hero—indomitable, brave, and noble. Yet, Connell challenges this notion by juxtaposing Custer's perceived heroism with the grave realities faced by Indigenous peoples during this tumultuous period. The literary portrayal of Custer is not solely one of a man marking his place in history, but also of an archetype representing the complexities and contradictions inherent in American expansionism and the treatment of marginalized communities.

The Battle of the Little Bighorn is not just a historical event; it transforms into a mythologized moment emblematic of resistance and the tragic consequences of manifest destiny. The Sioux, often depicted solely as adversaries, are illustrated in Connell's work with richness and depth,



embodying what it meant to uphold cultural integrity in the face of overpowering forces. This duality—heroes versus villains, winners versus losers—blurs the lines of traditional historical narratives and invites readers to reflect on their own perceptions of right and wrong, victory and defeat.

Furthermore, the aftermath of the battle raised significant questions about the legacy of American nationalism, military valor, and the price of expansionism. Custer's demise is portrayed not merely as the failure of a military leader but rather as a turning point that underscored the fragility of American ideals when confronted with the profound complexities of reality. The myth of the invincible American soldier faltered as it came face-to-face with an unexpected and valiant Native resistance. Custer's Last Stand resonates beyond military history; it serves as a metaphor for the continual wrestling with identity in a nation that prides itself on freedom while historically subjugating others.

The narrative explores these themes through rich character studies and vivid retellings of the complexities of the various stakeholders present at the Battle of the Little Bighorn. It serves as a reminder that history is not a linear progression but rather a tapestry filled with divergent experiences and narratives. For instance, the contrasting perspectives of Custer's soldiers and Sioux warriors underline the vital role of storytelling in shaping collective memories and identities.

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The relevance of these reflections extends into today's discussions about American identity, indigenous rights, and historical memory. The encounter at Little Bighorn asks modern Americans to confront the painful legacies of colonialism, the narratives we inherit, and the historical inaccuracies that often underpin a simplified view of our past. It is a call to action, encouraging us to redefine our relationship with history—not as a series of glorified stories, but as a complex interplay of human experiences, many of which are fraught with injustice and inequality.

In essence, "Son of the Morning Star" serves both as a historical document and a powerful examination of myth-making in America. By portraying Custer not merely as a hero, but rather as a symbolic figure wrapped in layers of historical significance, Connell's work prompts a re-examination of how we view history and progress.

As we reflect on the narratives embedded within American identity, we are left with the challenge of acknowledging the full breadth of our history—its glories and its horrors—and how those narratives shape the ongoing discourse of culture, identity, and even reconciliation in contemporary America. Through such reflections, readers are encouraged to engage critically with history and mythology, fostering a deeper understanding of the complexity of the American experience.

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