

Poetry

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Diane Burns (1957-2006) published only one book of poetry, *Waving the One-Eyed Flag* (1983), but she was a vocal presence in the New York City poetry scene in the 1980s. Admitting critics have described her poetry as "bitter, witty, and sardonic."

Read the poem below and then complete the SOAPStone activity that follows.

Sure You Can Ask Me a Personal Question

Diane Burns
(Lac Courte Oreilles-Chemehuevi)

How do you do?

No, I am not Chinese.

No, not Spanish.

No, I am American Indi—uh, Native American.

5 No, not from India

No, not Apache

No, not Navajo.

No, not Sioux.

No, we are not extinct.

10 Yes, Indian.

My Notes

Oh?
So that's where you got those high cheekbones.
Your great grandmother, huh?
An Indian Princess, huh?
Hair down to there?
Let me guess. Cherokee?

15

Oh, so you've had an Indian friend?
That close?

Oh, so you've had an Indian servant?
That much?

20

Yeah, it was awful what you guys did to us.
It's real decent of you to apologize.
No, I don't know where you can get peyote.
No, I don't know where you can get Navajo rugs real cheap.
No, I didn't make this. I bought it at Bloomingdale's.

25

Thank you. I like your hair too.
I don't know if anyone knows whether or not Cher is really Indian.
No, I didn't make it rain tonight.

Yeah. Uh-huh. Spirituality.
Uh-huh. Yeah. Spirituality. Uh-huh. Mother
Earth. Yeah. Uh-huh. Uh-huh. Spirituality.

30

No, I didn't major in archery.
Yeah, a lot of us drink too much.
Some of us can't drink enough.

This ain't no stoic' look.
This is my face.

35

Unit 1 Voices of Modern Culture: SB pg. 44-45
Tone Analysis of "Sure You Can Ask Me a Personal Question"

After reading "Sure You Can Ask Me a Personal Question" by Diane Burns, make notes in the chart below as they will help you create a thesis statement and provide the necessary supporting evidence.

DICTION	IMAGERY	DETAILS

Diane Burns's **TONE** can best be described as: _____

Next, create a thesis statement that describes how Burns uses diction, imagery, and/or details to create a tone **for some purpose** (Think big pictures; what's her REASON/PURPOSE for writing this poem?).

Thesis Statement: Diane Burns's use of (diction, imagery, and/ or details) _____
create(s) a _____ tone in order to _____
_____ (main idea/theme of poem).

Provide 3 examples from the poem to support the above thesis: elements of diction, and then explain how each example proves the tone you selected.

1. Evidence:

Explanation:

2. Evidence:

Explanation:

3. Evidence:

Explanation: