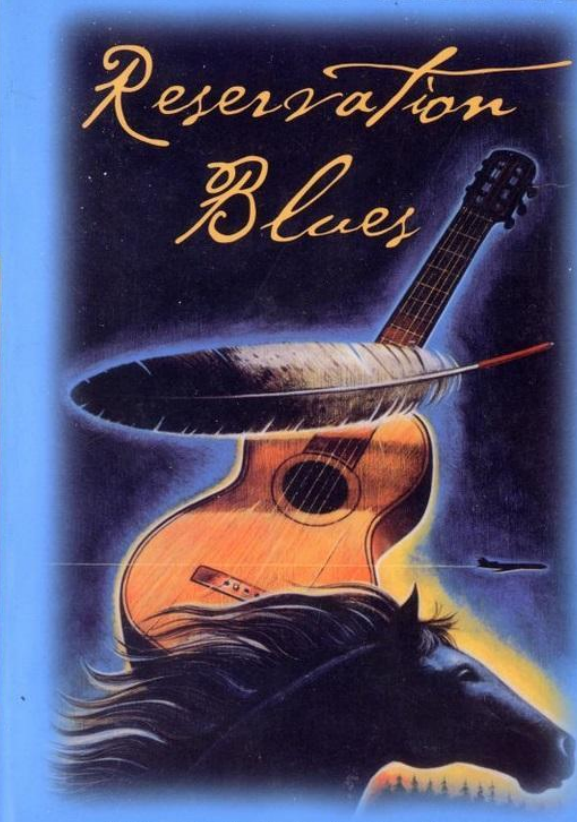


“Falling Down, Falling Apart, and Finding Home in *Reservation Blues*”

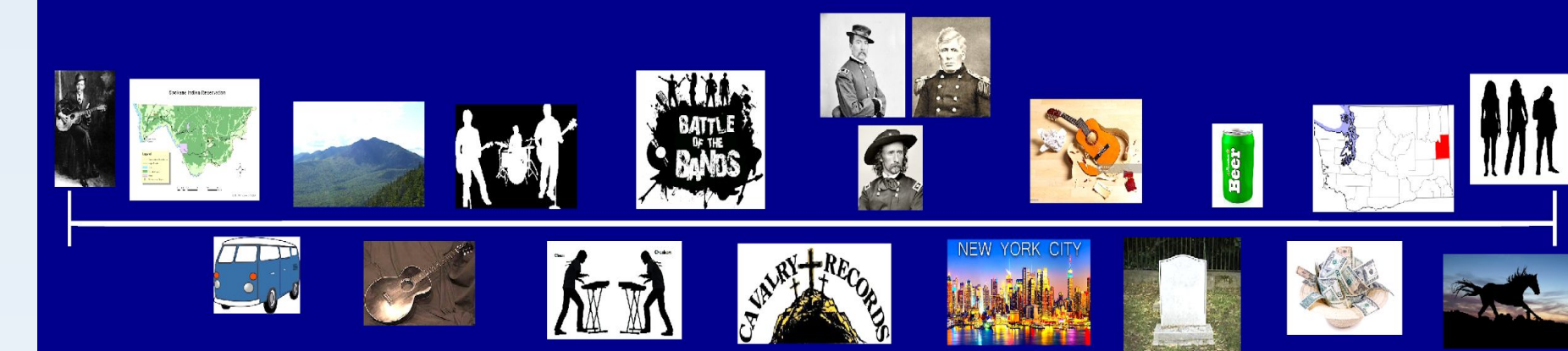
Castiel Dixon

UNG UNIVERSITY of NORTH GEORGIA™



Novel Summary

Reservation Blues Timeline



Objectives

- Examine characters' movement toward or away from home literally and figuratively
- Track movements along “home” and “unhomed” axes to excavate choices, decisions, and consequences within the colonized space of the blues-laden Spokane Reservation
- Determine if finding a figurative home contains attendant features such as contentment, mutability, and hope
- Determine if an inability to find a figurative home, signals despair, stasis, or death

Acknowledgements

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Applied Literature Theory

Janet Zandy:

“Home is literal: a place where you struggle together to survive; or a dream: ‘a real home,’ something just out of one’s grasp; or a nightmare: a place in order to survive as an individual. Home is an idea: an inner geography where the ache to belong finally quits, where there is no sense of ‘otherness,’ where there is, at last, a community.” (1)

Zandy’s conception of home illustrates multiple ways that characters experience literal and figurative components of home.

W.E.B DuBois:

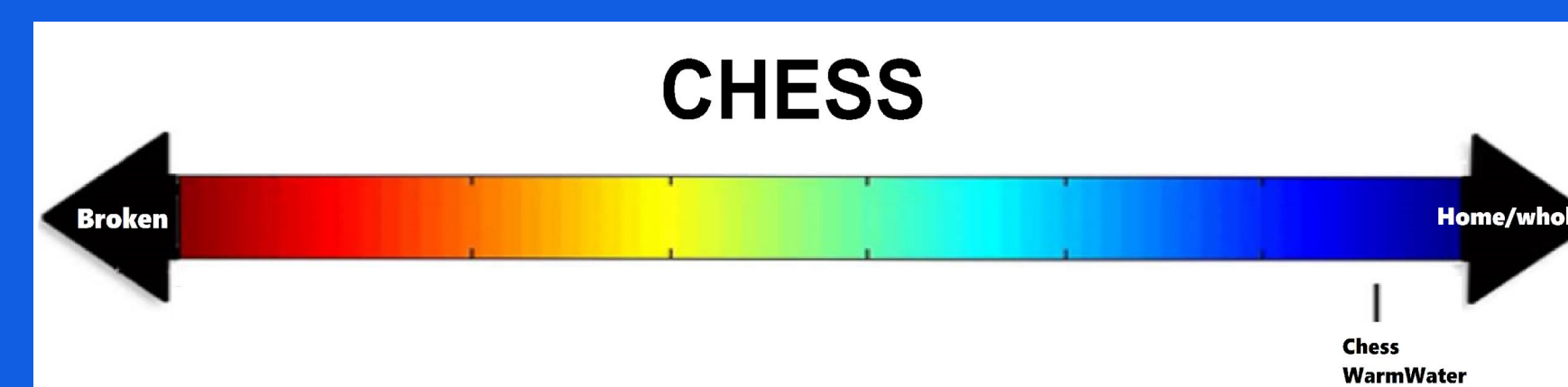
“[T]his double-consciousness, this sense of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity [is] [where] [o]ne ever feels his two-ness . . . two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings . . . two warring ideals in one dark body” (3).

DuBois’s notion of double-consciousness offers a way to understand characters’ psychological responses to discrimination.

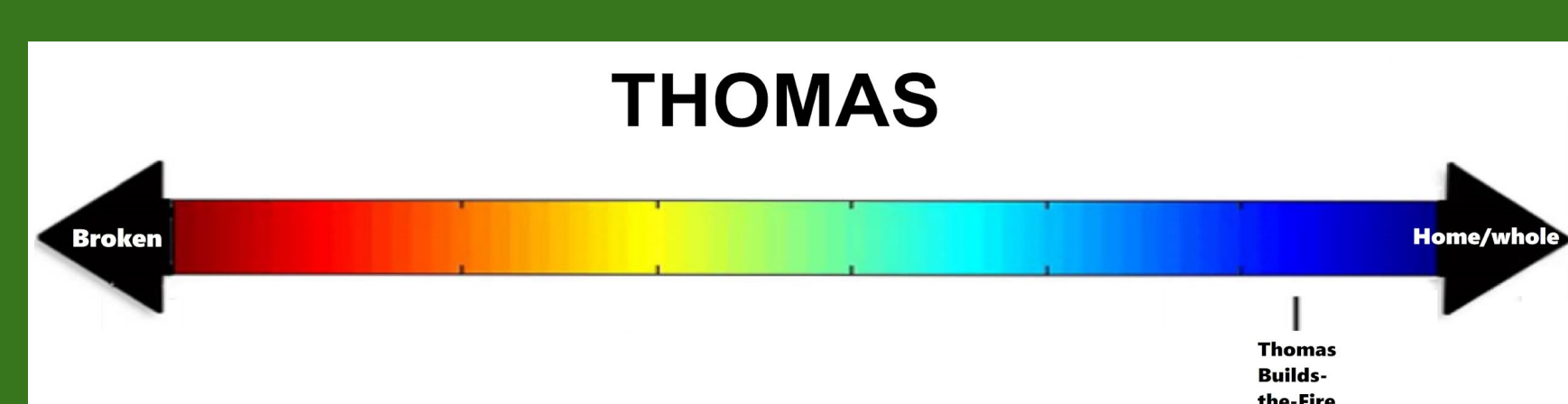
Homi Bhabha:

The figure of the “unhomed” within a colonial context offers insight as to why some characters do not feel at home even in their own home: they are not at home in themselves (Bhabha 13). However, some characters find comfort in hybridity where there is a productive crossroads of cultures (Bhabha 19).

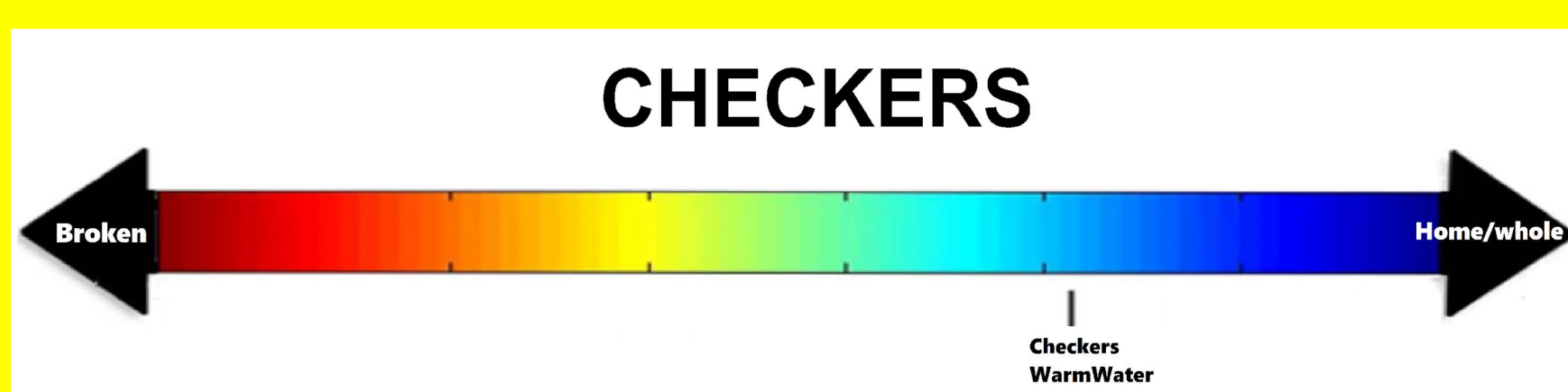
Characters’ Home Axes



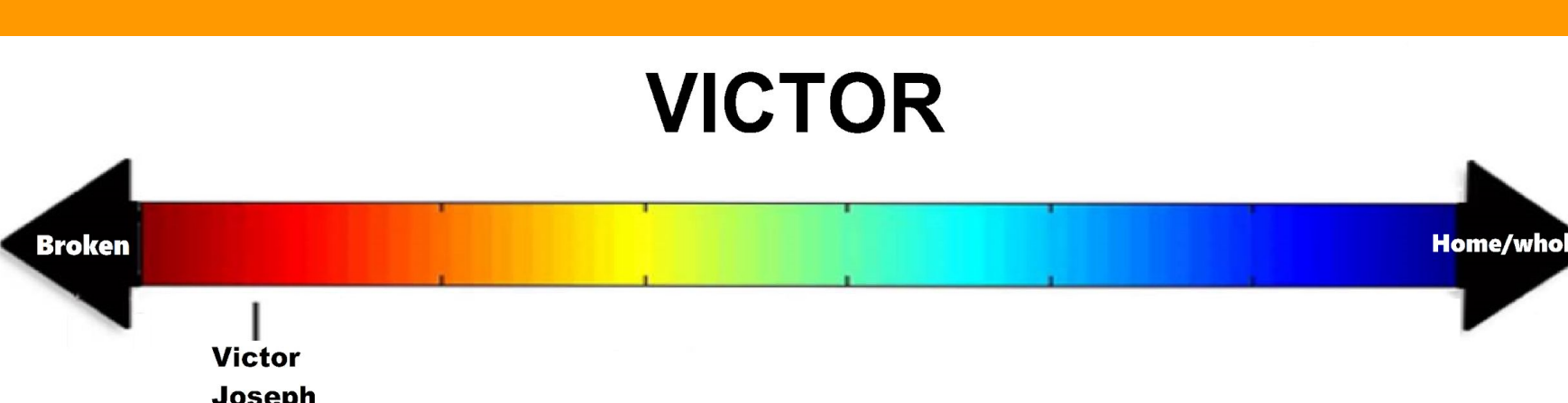
Chess: Becomes leader and leaves reservation



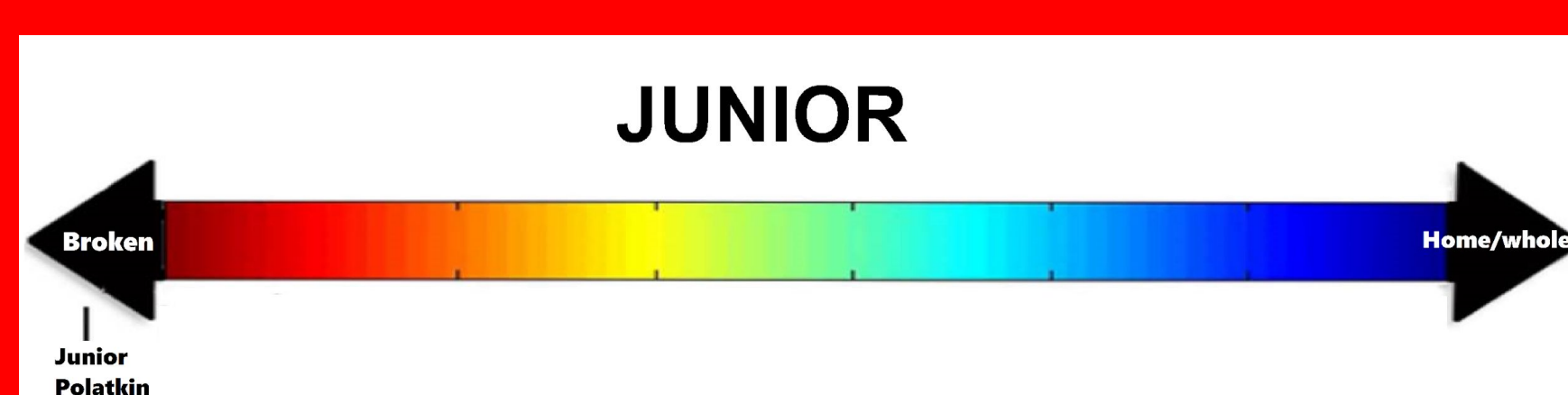
Thomas: Comfortable with hybridity



Checkers: Comes to terms with her father



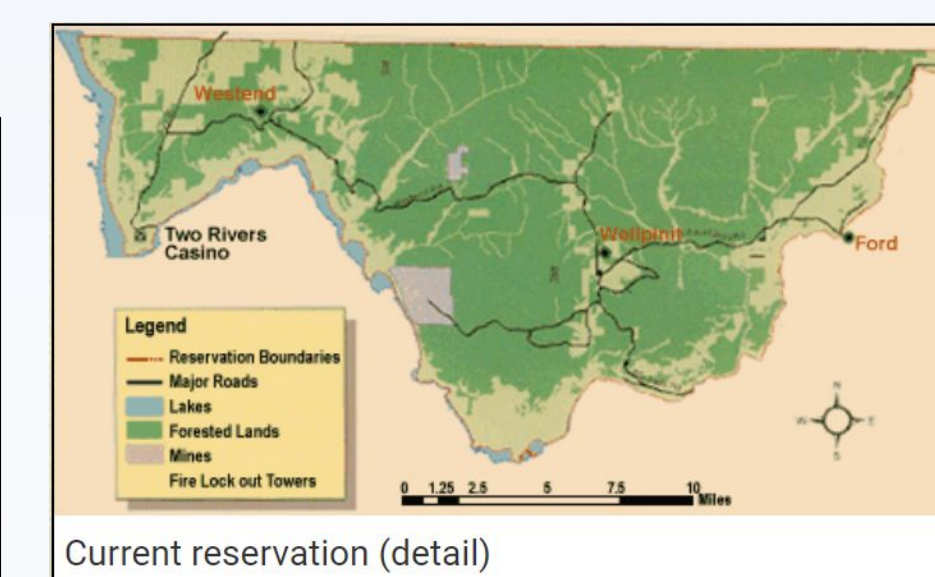
Victor: Remains angry/potentially drinks himself to death



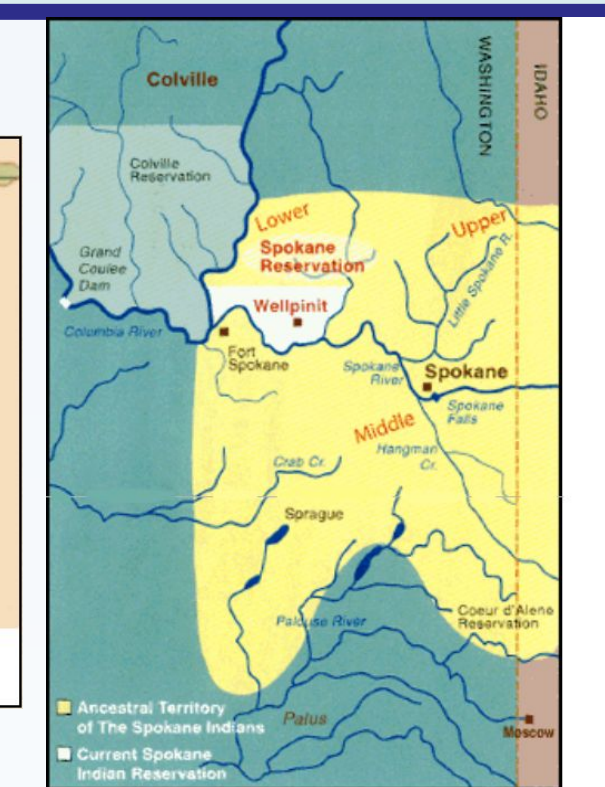
Junior: Falls apart and commits suicide

Results

- An exploration of the contours and textures of home enables us to chart characters’ movements along axes that map their journeys toward wholeness, desperation, or destruction
- Characters represent a range of choices, decisions, and consequences facing American Indians in colonized terrain in the contemporary United States
- Home can be found beyond reservation borders where one may more readily enact individual development while retaining shared ethno-cultural practices
- Leaving the reservation reveals agency in reclaiming traditional land beyond assigned borders



Current reservation (detail)



Ancestral territory (current reservation in white)

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