

## Themes - A Detailed Discussion

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Chief Seattle's speech of 1854 deals with various themes though it has a central concern - the concern of the Red Indians and their perception of nature as against the white man's perception and preoccupation with nature. For the sake of simplicity, we will be taking primarily the themes of major concern one by one, though they are overlapping.

### Red Indians' Attachment to their Land

Red Indians, as Chief Seattle mentions in his speech, consider the land to be holy as they think that it is the land which has nourished their tribe and made them what they are. Therefore, when Governor of Washington sends a proposal of land treaty under which the whites are trying to buy the Red Indians' land. Seattle mentions that they are ready to give their land provided that they are allowed to visit the tombstones of their forefathers as and when they wish. The Red Indians think that dead are not really dead as their spirits usually are there over the land and therefore they consider the land to be sacred. They think that if one respects one's land and nature, then it leads to their prosperity.

### White Man's Supremacy

It is evident from Chief Seattle's speech that white man is superior in terms of his martial strength and therefore, Chief Seattle and his men have no way to stop the white man from taking away their land; but that does not deter Chief Seattle to comment on the ways of the white man. Chief Seattle just puts forward some conditions which

the white man needs to accept before accepting the land from the Red Indians. Obviously these conditions are all about being human — about respecting others <sup>and</sup> nature, about not being cruel to nature. But all these together just goes on to prove that the superiority that the white man boasts about all the time is not about their being superior, but about their having power which they misuse. In other words, Chief Seattle's speech punctures the sense of superiority that the white man possess and exhibit. The speech also highlights how they have forgotten that one needs to respect the world which provides mankind with all the necessities to survive. One needs to realize how cruelty in any form, whether to nature or to animals or to fellow human beings doesn't in any way assert superiority.