# The Red Convertible

## INTRODUCTION

### BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF LOUISE ERDRICH

Born Karen Louise Erdrich, she grew up in Wahpeton, North Dakota with six younger siblings. Her mother Rita was Chippewa and her father Ralph was German-American. She attended Dartmouth College and earned a Master of Arts at Johns Hopkins. Much of her early work was in collaboration with her former husband, Michael Dorris, including her first short story to win an award, "The World's Greatest Fisherman," published in 1979. That story eventually became the first chapter of her first novel *Love Medicine*, of which "The Red Convertible" is another. Much of her work is concerned with the lives of Native Americans in the United States, inspired by her own heritage. She has written novels, children's literature, poetry, nonfiction, and short stories, and has been the recipient of numerous literary prizes.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The Native American Renaissance as a literary movement began in the late 1960s. Due to the political upheaval of the 1960s in the United States, there was a new mass readership for the Native American authors that had been writing for years. There was also a new generation of Native American young adults who had had access to formal, English-language education and higher education in greater numbers than their predecessors. Authors often focused on the community's systemic and social issues like poverty, discrimination, and trauma, as well as a conscious reclamation of their heritage that underscored the importance of previous forms of storytelling, such as the oral tradition.

### RELATED LITERARY WORKS

N. Scott Momaday's Pulitzer-Prize-winning *House Made of Dawn*, published in 1968, is often credited as the first novel of the Native American Renaissance. James Welch's *Winter in the Blood* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* are also considered seminal texts on the Native American experience in the late twentieth century. More recently, Joy Harjo's poetry book *Conflict Resolution for Holy Beings* and Tommy Orange's novel *There There* have received widespread critical acclaim for covering American Indian subject matter.

### KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** The Red Convertible
- **When Written:** 1984
- **When Published:** 1984
- **Literary Period:** Native American Renaissance
- **Genre:** Short story, tragedy
- **Setting:** North Dakota
- **Climax:** Henry drowns in the river
- **Point of View:** First person (Lyman's perspective)

### EXTRA CREDIT

**Single Chapter.** "The Red Convertible" also serves as the tenth chapter in *Love Medicine* Erdrich's first novel which chronicles the lives of several members of a Chippewa tribe in North Dakota. The stories are intergenerational, so there are chapters that tell the story of Henry and Lyman's parents, cousins, and extended family over the course of sixty years.

## PLOT SUMMARY

Lyman Lamartine, a young American Indian man living in North Dakota, remembers his first car, a **red convertible** Oldsmobile which was unprecedented on his reservation. He used to share it with his brother Henry, but now, he claims, Henry owns the whole car, and Lyman has to walk everywhere he goes.

Lyman has always been lucky in that he is good at making money, and he has no problem buying the car when he first sees it with Henry in Winnipeg. The two of them travel all over the Great Plains, even up to Alaska in the car. They meet a girl named Susy with long, flowing hair that almost touches the ground and stay with her family for a season. As soon as they get back home, Henry has to go off to war in Vietnam. He writes occasionally, but Lyman writes many more letters, reassuring him that he is taking good care of the car. Henry is captured by the enemy, but manages to make it home all the same three years later.

However, he is vastly changed, affected presumably with PTSD. He is "jumpy and mean," hardly ever laughing, no longer making jokes, and unable to sit still even though he spends hours in front of their new **color TV** that often shows clips of the ongoing war. People generally leave him alone because he has become so strange, and, in one instance, he even bites through his lip, but lets the blood drip as if he doesn't even notice. Lyman and their mother consider taking him to a doctor, but the only doctor nearby used to court their mother, and they fear her rejection of the doctor would lead him to mistreat Henry. They refuse to take him to a hospital for fear that he will never return, or that he will be given drugs instead of proper treatment. Lyman resolves to find another way to help Henry, so he smashes up the convertible in the hopes that Henry will

take an interest in something again. For a while, it seems to work—Henry fixes the car successfully, and, for months, it gives him something to do. He seems somewhat calmer, though he is still quiet.

One day, after the car is fixed, Henry suggests they take it for a ride. Before they go, their eleven-year-old sister Bonita takes a **picture** of them with the car. Lyman will keep that photograph on the wall until it becomes too troubling and he hides it in a closet. That evening, they drive out to the Red River because Henry wants to see the high water. At the waterside, Henry reveals that he knew what Lyman was doing when he intentionally destroyed the car, and that he wants Lyman to have the car all to himself. Lyman refuses and they playfully argue, until it turns into roughhousing.

They drink several beers and talk about leaving, maybe picking up some girls. Henry is quiet and withdrawn again, and says that the girls they know are crazy. Lyman, trying to keep the mood light, tells him he is crazy. For a moment, it looks like this will upset Henry, but instead he jokes back, saying that Indians are all crazy. They rile each other up all over again, and suddenly Henry jumps in the river, saying, "Got to cool me off!" But he is taken under by the strong current—the last words he says are "My boots are filling." Lyman jumps in after him, but he cannot save him, and it is unclear what Henry's intentions were in going to the river and jumping in: if it was an accident, or suicide. Lyman emerges from the river and pushes the car into the river.

## CHARACTERS

### MAJOR CHARACTERS

**Lyman Lamartine** – Lyman Lamartine is a Chippewa Indian who lives on the reservation with his family, including his older brother Henry with whom he is close. He is a hard worker who is good with money, briefly owning a café while he is still in his teens. He thinks of himself as "lucky," especially when Henry is drafted into Vietnam and Lyman isn't. While in Winnipeg, Lyman and Henry buy the **red convertible** on a whim, and they travel all over the continent in it happily. However, when they get home, Henry is drafted, and Lyman loyally labors to keep the car in top shape while Henry is gone, thinking of it as Henry's car even though Henry gave it to Lyman before he left. After Henry comes back from war a changed man, Lyman is preoccupied with Henry's distress and feels powerless to help him until he has the idea to destroy the red convertible in the hopes that Henry will fix it, thereby giving him purpose. This seems to work at first, but when they drive together to the river, Henry reveals that he knew of Lyman's plan all along and it seems not to have worked—Henry's mood is still dark. When Henry hops into the river to cool off and drowns, Lyman pushes the convertible in after him in a seeming refusal to have the car if his brother can't have it. Throughout the story, Lyman is relentlessly loyal and caring, but perhaps somewhat naïve in his inability to understand his brother's trauma and grief.

**Henry Lamartine** – Henry Lamartine, Jr. is Lyman's older brother, of a different father. He is carefree and easygoing at the beginning of the story, quick to make a joke and gentle despite his resemblance to Red Tomahawk, a famous Indian warrior. Of the two brothers, Henry is always the unlucky one—money never comes easy to him, and he is drafted into the Marines during the Vietnam War and then captured by the enemy. When he returns, he has completely changed, and "the change was no good." He has become "jumpy and mean," sitting in front of the **TV** for hours, never joking and hardly even laughing. He no longer takes an interest in the **red convertible**—the beloved car he and Lyman bought and traveled in together—or much else. Lyman "tricks" Henry into fixing the car, and for a while, he seems a renewed person, but he later reveals to Lyman that he saw through his trick all along. Shortly afterwards, he jumps into the river and drowns. It is not clear whether he meant to kill himself, or if it was an accident.

**Lulu Lamartine** – Lulu Lamartine is Henry and Lyman's mother. She is not mentioned by name in the story, but she features prominently in other chapters of *Love Medicine*. She previously was courted by Moses Pillager, the only nearby doctor, and because of his jealousy they do not trust him to treat Henry. Like Lyman, she is worried about Henry, but she does not know what to do for him. She expresses distaste for the ways in which conditions like Henry's (presumably PTSD) are suppressed with drugs instead of treated.

**Susy** – Susy is a young girl that Henry and Lyman pick up hitchhiking on their road trip. Her most distinctive feature is her hair, which is usually tied up in "buns around her ears," but which reaches the ground when she finally lets it down. Henry and Lyman stay with her family in Alaska happily for a season. The period the brothers spend with Susy is their most happy, youthful, and carefree; in a memorable scene that demonstrates this, she finally takes her hair down and sits on Henry's shoulders as he twirls her around.

### MINOR CHARACTERS

**Bonita Lamartine** – Henry and Lyman's eleven-year-old sister, who takes the **photograph** of them that haunts Lyman.

**Ray** – Lyman's friend, who helps Lyman hide the **photograph** of him and Henry.

## THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in

black and white.

## LOSS OF INNOCENCE

In "The Red Convertible," brothers Henry and Lyman both lose their childhood innocence as they face the realities of adulthood. Henry is thrust into a war full of unimaginable horrors that change the way he thinks and acts. Meanwhile, Lyman is forced to deal with losing his brother not once but twice—first when Henry returns from war a changed man, and then later when he drowns in the river. Throughout the story, Erdrich depicts loss of innocence as an inevitable part of growing up, and she shows that trying to deny or forestall loss of innocence is foolish and can even lead to catastrophe.

At the beginning of the story, Henry and Lyman travel all over North America seemingly without a care in the world. Their easy freedom and youthful innocence are symbolized by their **red convertible**, a beautiful and rare car which they amicably share, going on reckless adventures without much concern over spending all their money or putting themselves in danger. Particularly in the scene where they meet Susy, a girl with surrealistically long hair, they seem free, young, and happy—a condition that they seem to believe might last forever. However, their denial of the reality of aging is clear in the way they treat the car. They travel all over the continent "without putting up the car hood at all" (in other words, they do no maintenance, choosing to believe that the car will run perfectly in spite of their extensive travels). In fact, their youthful behavior *does* catch up to them and come to an end—when they return home, Henry is drafted into the Vietnam war and Lyman finds that the car is in poor condition because, of course, "the long trip did a hard job on it under the hood."

This moment marks the beginning of both brothers' loss of innocence, although Henry's is much quicker and more extreme, as he loses his youth through the violence and trauma of war. While going to war is supposedly a way of "becoming a man," Erdrich makes a distinction between loss of innocence and becoming a mature adult. Henry's traumatic experience of being captured and held by the enemy *does* erase his sense of freedom and childhood innocence, but it does not glorify him or make him a more capable adult. Instead, Henry returns home without any of his old charm, without ambition or passion, and with his mental health in shambles. Instead of traveling or working, he spends his time nervously watching **television**, which is hardly the behavior of a well-adjusted adult. Notably, when Henry returns, he has no interest in his once-beloved convertible—the innocence and freedom it represents have no meaning to Henry anymore. Tragically, though, this lost innocence hasn't been replaced by maturity. Instead of moving on to the next stage of his life, he simply seems broken.

While Henry has lost innocence without gaining maturity, Lyman is still in denial that his youth is fading at all. After his brother leaves for war and gifts him the convertible, Lyman still insists that the car belongs to Henry (even though, symbolically speaking, the car can no longer belong to Henry since its innocence has no place in Henry's wartime world). While Henry is gone, Lyman fixes up the car and obsessively maintains it, as though he is fighting his own aging process, trying to return himself, his brother, and their car to their childhood innocence. However, when Henry returns home and shows no interest in the car, Lyman loses a little of his innocence, too—he and his mother become responsible for looking after Henry, strategizing together about how to get him medical care despite the limited resources on the reservation.

Lyman's loss of innocence is most apparent when he takes a hammer to the car in order to trick Henry into fixing it up, thereby giving his older brother a purpose. While destroying a symbol of innocence (particularly in an attempt to surreptitiously help his older brother) seems like an acknowledgement of growing older, Lyman actually thinks he can return them both to their carefree childhood if he can only reignite Henry's passion for the car. While this seems initially to work, of course it fails—their ride in the car and their raucous interactions at the river seem like they might portend a return to innocence, but they actually set the stage for Henry's subsequent drowning, which is perhaps even a suicide. Lyman's inability to acknowledge the reality of growing up leaves him unable to accept Henry on his own terms until the final scene, where Lyman pushes the car into the river after Henry has drowned, seemingly acknowledging that his childhood is irrevocably over. Though loss of innocence is natural, the way it occurs for Henry and, by extension, for his family, is brutal, harsh, and unnecessary. Erdrich doesn't provide a model for what healthy loss of innocence would look like, but presumably its primary fuel wouldn't be trauma.

## THE TRAUMA OF WAR

In "The Red Convertible," Erdrich associates war exclusively with trauma. There is no glorification or nationalistic sentiment—Henry goes to fight in Vietnam a carefree, gentle young man, and he comes back a shell-shocked veteran who eventually dies as a direct result of his untreated mental disorder. Furthermore, while Erdrich depicts Henry's mental problems at length, the characters remain muddy on the actual purpose of war. They never discuss supporting or opposing Vietnam, they never mention the war's purpose—Lyman even notes that he "could never keep it straight, which direction those good Vietnam soldiers were from," which indicates his loose grasp on even the basic facts of the war. In this way, Erdrich depicts war as a terrible and pointless experience whose primary significance is not moral or geopolitical, but rather in the way it ruins lives.

Before experiencing the trauma of war, Henry is generous,

easygoing, and jocular. This is clear in his close and carefree relationship with his brother Lyman, and also in his interactions with the young girl Susy, a hitchhiker he agrees to drive all the way to Alaska. After he and Lyman stay with her family for a season, she shows them her spectacularly long hair, and he puts her on his shoulders, pretending her hair is his and expressing his admiration for it. Henry's kind, agreeable, and adventurous spirit makes it all the more traumatic for Lyman and the rest of their family when Henry comes back from the war hostile, aggressive, taciturn, and depressed. His condition is no doubt related to his experience being a prisoner of war, which is mentioned once but never discussed again, presumably because it is too distressing to talk about. His complete about-face in personality demonstrates how damaging the effects of war can be.

It is important that Erdrich never names Henry's condition, though it is clearly Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder by today's definition, which is common among veterans. It's likely that Erdrich doesn't name PTSD as the source of Henry's problems because the family themselves don't know what is wrong. The name "PTSD" did not become widely used until after the Vietnam War, and the family has no clear idea of what has overtaken Henry, only an acute awareness that the condition is dangerous and needs medical treatment. Furthermore, Henry himself does not speak about what happened to him in war, or about what afflicts him now that he is home, perhaps because there is a stigma to discussing mental health (particularly for men and for soldiers), and perhaps because he himself does not understand what is wrong. The effect of not knowing exactly what is wrong with Henry means that Henry's condition seems scarier and more hopeless, a mystery condition for the characters, if not the reader as well.

It's also important to note that Henry's access to the healthcare that could have saved his life is compromised by the fact that he is a Chippewa Indian living on a reservation. Erdrich is somewhat subtle about the systemic prejudice against Native Americans living on reservations, but she is clear that the family does not have access to good healthcare because of their identity. Lyman and his mother do not trust the local doctor who is non-Indian (they have personal history with him and fear he will be vindictive), nor do they trust hospitals to give Henry proper treatment, suspecting that the doctors will instead just get him addicted to psychiatric drugs. (American Indians have good reasons to be skeptical of "white" hospitals, as there's a long history of white doctors giving nonwhite people bad—and even unethical—care.) However, Henry's lack of treatment directly contributes to his death—either he commits suicide because he has no options, or his mental anguish leads him not to think clearly when he jumps into a river with a strong current.

Henry dies from his wartime trauma despite having a loving family that tries to support him. This is partially because he is discriminated against as a Chippewa, but also because his disorder was not being comprehensively treated during the 1970s when this story takes place. Furthermore, Erdrich doesn't suggest that his death was meaningful or worthwhile—Lyman can't even identify which side is which in the war that irreparably changed his brother, and nobody in the family seems concerned with patriotism or civic duty. Henry's death is simply a senseless tragedy, not a valorous sacrifice for worthwhile ideals.

## MASCULINITY AND SILENCE

In "The Red Convertible," the Vietnam War is a traumatic experience that young men are forced into because of the draft. The adverse effects that the war has on Henry and his family are exacerbated by the unwritten, unspoken rules of masculinity that discourage men from speaking about their trauma. For Erdrich, norms of masculinity (particularly silence) are restrictive and can be actively harmful—they force young men into wars, traumatize them, and offer them limited means of talking about their trauma afterwards, which isolates them and makes their suffering worse.

Before the war, Henry does not adhere to typical norms of masculinity. He is easygoing, comic, and gentle, most notably in the scene with Susy where he says, "I always wondered what it was like to have long pretty hair." Thus, his nature contrasts sharply with the way he looks—he is physically strong, and he resembles the Native American warrior Red Tomahawk whose image is on North Dakota highway billboards. Henry becomes a Marine, which is one of the more intense and dangerous positions in the military, and his brother Lyman suspects he is chosen for that role because of how physically intimidating he looks. Despite his naturally easygoing nature, the army uses him for his brute strength, and to be reduced to physicality in that way can itself can be traumatic.

After the war, Henry is so haunted by the horrors that he has seen that he finds it difficult to be a part of civilian life, ceasing to joke around or chat easily with others. He is no doubt traumatized, and since men are often discouraged from speaking about their trauma, his inability to ask for help or even express what he is going through makes him much more vulnerable and isolated. His silence is also perhaps related to social alienation. Erdrich never depicts him interacting with other veterans who might understand his experiences, and his mother and brother—who love and care about him—seem only interested in getting him to return to who he was before the war, rather than getting to know him on his own terms.

Lyman and their mother also appear to feel the pressure to be silent about Henry's illness. They never speak to him directly about it, but instead speak quietly to each other about options for helping him recover whenever he isn't around. This seems to suggest that they fear angering Henry by bringing up his

suffering, and Lyman even says at one point that it would be difficult to even get Henry to the hospital, which suggests that Henry might be too ashamed or prideful to get treatment for a "mental disorder." Instead, his treatment is almost nonexistent: it consists of silently watching television, never seeing a doctor, and working on the **car** that Lyman intentionally destroyed to give Henry a hobby. This non-treatment culminates in Henry throwing himself in the river.

"The Red Convertible" thereby subtly criticizes the culture of silence around mental illness, and particularly the ways in which men are discouraged from speaking about their trauma. Had Henry and his family been able to speak openly about his condition and seek treatment, perhaps he could have been saved.

### AMERICAN AND AMERICAN INDIAN IDENTITY

In "The Red Convertible," Henry and Lyman are both American and American Indian, and their identities and experiences are always shaped by a combination of those two factors. The general circumstances of the boys' lives are shared by many Americans of all races: getting a car as a teenager, for instance, or being drafted into Vietnam. However, Erdrich also emphasizes that these typically-American experiences are always tempered by the boys' American Indian identity. While their lives and their identities are by no means defined by their race, they are always affected by the undeniable realities of discrimination and the experience of living on a reservation.

Henry and Lyman are fortunate in their youth because of how free and happy they are. They have a close relationship with one another, a loving mother, and their own **car**, which they paid for with their own money. They travel all over the continent with a lighthearted attitude, not considering any risks or responsibilities—all of which suggests that the boys have had a nice, easy childhood and are sailing seamlessly into young adulthood, too.

Importantly, Henry and Lyman's coming of age comes in tandem with a sports car, which is an American icon—boys in towns, suburbs, and cities all over the country were also coming of age in cars in the 1970s, and most were not fortunate enough to have a gorgeous convertible. This clearly situates Henry and Lyman as *American* boys—and reasonably lucky American boys at that—although their specific American Indian identity is never overlooked. Lyman says at the beginning of the story, for example, that he has always had "one talent," making money, but he specifically claims that this is "unusual for a Chippewa." Thus, his luck and his skill with money (which earn them the car in the first place) are explained in comparison to his impoverished Indian community, rather than to the country at large. In the scheme of all Americans, Lyman would simply be considered among the lucky boys to have a nice childhood and a great car, but he is the first and only person to drive a convertible on the reservation.

Another way in which Erdrich puts American and American Indian identity in tension is through war. As an adult male American citizen, Henry is eligible for the draft—like thousands of other young men across the country, he goes to war involuntarily and comes back profoundly damaged. This was a widespread experience for American men in the 1970s, which situates Henry within a broader national context. However, like with the car, Erdrich is also clear about how his race complicates his situation. While many American veterans of all races received inadequate physical and mental healthcare, Henry's care is nonexistent because of his identity. He and his family have a reasonable mistrust of most hospitals because of generations of mistreatment, there are no American Indian doctors on the reservation, and the only nearby doctor has a conflict of interest with their mother. Henry's lack of treatment is certainly one of the factors that exacerbates his condition, and is surely part of the reason he dies.

Erdrich does not adhere to stereotypes of impoverished or downtrodden American Indians. The boys come from a loving home, they have enough money, and they initially feel free and happy, despite coming from a community that has been systematically oppressed. It's not their race that brings calamity to their lives, it's the war—but the effects of the war would likely have been less severe if Henry had better access to healthcare (a lack of access related to his race). Furthermore, the psychological effects of stereotyping and discrimination are implicit in the story. Lyman notes Henry's resemblance to Red Tomahawk (an American Indian found on highway billboards), for example, and he suggests that this resemblance might have earned Henry a more difficult military assignment. Henry also howls "Crazy Indians!" as a joke (referencing how non-Native people see them) before he jumps into the river. Their perception of themselves as Indians through white eyes is always present, though Erdrich is careful not to let it subsume the story. "The Red Convertible" thereby shows the complex intersection between national identity and the specific realities of American Indian life.

## SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

### THE RED CONVERTIBLE

The red convertible symbolizes Henry and Lyman's youthful innocence and the freedom that comes with it. When they first see the convertible for sale, they are electrified by it—like their youth, it seems to them "alive" and

alluring. They buy it almost without thinking, recklessly spending all their money and leaving barely enough to buy gas to get home. Then, they ride all over North America in it, still carefree and paying little attention to maintaining the car. When they return home, however, the car isn't in great shape and Henry gets drafted into war—their carefree, youthful behavior, it seems, is catching up to them and coming to an end. While Henry is gone, Lyman fixes the car up and maintains it perfectly (showing his denial about the changes occurring in their lives), but Henry comes back from the war a changed man. He is now uninterested in the car, which shows his distance from the freedom, youth, and innocence it symbolizes. Lyman damages the car in an attempt to get Henry to fix it, thereby giving him a hobby and a purpose. For a while, this seems to work—Henry fixates on repairing the car and he seems in better spirits, and he even invites Lyman on a joy ride to the river once the car is fixed, which hearkens back to their carefree traveling days. However, the innocence and freedom of youth can't be regained once lost—on that trip, Henry drowns and when Lyman cannot save him, Lyman pushes the car into the river, destroying it in the same way that his own freedom and innocence have been destroyed by his brother's death.

## THE COLOR TV

The color TV that Lyman buys for his family symbolizes Henry's inability to move on from his wartime trauma. Lyman returns home from war changed—he is "jumpy and mean" and he spends most of his time alone with the television. Because of this, Lyman regrets buying the television, or at least wishes that he had bought a black-and-white set, because the images would then seem farther away, older, and more distant. This indicates that Henry is watching something current, disturbing, and all too familiar: probably the ongoing war coverage. Henry seems simultaneously addicted to and disturbed by the television. On the one hand, the TV is the only thing that makes him physically calm—that is, he is finally able to sit still, perhaps because there is an aspect of familiarity to the images—and on the other hand, he still grips onto the chair as if for dear life. It is also while he is watching TV that he bites through his lip, seemingly without realizing, and shoves Lyman out of the way when he tries to turn the set off. This suggests that something about the TV's images themselves are re-traumatizing. By contrast, when he seems to be getting better, working on the car, he hardly ever watches television. The fact that Henry's illness is characterized by his inability to look away from the television, but also the fact that TV is clearly traumatic for him, shows that—at least mentally speaking—he is still unable to escape the war, even as it torments him. Though the television is meant to be a source of entertainment and even companionship, it ends up exacerbating his trauma and inactivity because it forces him to relive wartime in graphic detail.

## THE PHOTOGRAPH

The photograph that Bonita takes of Henry and Lyman symbolizes the unknowable nature of reality. While photographs often appear to represent the past exactly as it was, the significance of this photograph shifts over the course of the story as Lyman realizes that he can never know what was going on with Henry in that moment, even though he himself was right there with his brother when it was taken. At first, Lyman cherishes this photograph and hangs it on his wall, thinking that it reminds him of "good" times with Henry when they were close—after all, the picture was taken just before they took a joyride in the newly-repaired car, which, at the time, Lyman hoped marked Henry's return to their youthful innocence. However, just after the photograph was taken, Henry drowned in ambiguous circumstances—it is never clear whether it was an accident or he had planned to kill himself all along. The photograph mirrors this ambiguity, as Lyman's good feelings about the image erode one night and he sees it anew. Instead of seeing good times reflected in the picture, Lyman suddenly sees anguish in Henry's face, almost as if Henry's physical features in the photograph have changed. They haven't changed, of course—Lyman is just seeing for the first time the parts of the photograph that reflect his brother's torment, an aspect of the image he had never seen before, perhaps because he hadn't wanted to. The "truth" of the photograph—whatever it reflects about Henry's emotional state—is unstable and unknowable to Lyman, just as the reality of Henry's death is unknowable, and just as Henry himself was unknowable to Lyman after returning from the war and retreating into silence. Lyman is unable to truly understand Henry because they have had such different experiences, and it is only through the photograph that he realizes this, which is why the photograph itself becomes disturbing to him.

# QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Harper Perennial edition of *Love Medicine* published in 1984.

## The Red Convertible Quotes

❝ I was the first one to drive a convertible on my reservation. And of course it was red, a red Olds. I owned that car along with my brother Henry Junior. We owned it together until his boots filled with water on a windy night and he bought out my share. Now Henry owns the whole car, and his younger brother Lyman (that's myself), Lyman walks everywhere he goes.

**Related Characters:** Henry Lamartine, Lyman Lamartine

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 177

**Explanation and Analysis**

These are the first lines of the story, in which Lyman establishes himself as the narrator, Henry as his older brother, and the convertible as a turning point in their lives. The red—"of course it was red"—suggests youth, vitality, and charm, and, indeed, they are young men when they have the car, probably in their late teens. Lyman is also subtly implying some aspects of his identity here—he lives on a reservation (and, it's later revealed, he is a member of the Chippewa tribe), and he somehow has a rarefied car that nobody else in his community has. His character will emerge as being unusually lucky and good with money, which is what allowed him to buy this extraordinary car.

Lastly, he sets up the mystery of what happens between Henry and himself that makes them part ways. Henry's boots filling with water sounds ominous, but if Henry was killed, surely he would not have bought out Lyman's share of the car. However, it is clear that they have somehow been separated. The line "Lyman walks everywhere he goes" suggests that something has gone wrong for Lyman—his life has taken a downward turn since he owned that red Oldsmobile.

❝ We went places in that car, me and Henry. We took off driving all one whole summer… We got up there [to Alaska] and never wanted to leave. The sun doesn't truly set there in summer, and the night is more a soft dusk. You might doze off, sometimes, but before you know it you're up again, like an animal in nature. You never feel like you have to sleep hard or put away the world. And things would grow up there.

**Related Characters:** Henry Lamartine, Lyman Lamartine

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 179

**Explanation and Analysis**

Henry and Lyman fall in love with the car—it is as youthful and alive as they are. They drive all over the continent without a care, not "bothering" themselves about details; this is the peak of their carefree innocence and freedom. Notably, once Henry comes back from war changed and traumatized, this is the state to which Lyman wants his brother to return, and he tries to use the car (breaking it so Henry will fix it) to get Henry back into his youthful mindset—of course this doesn't work, because once lost, innocence cannot be regained. Throughout the story, the brothers seem happiest while living in this surrealistic, permanently-light summer in Alaska, which seems a perfect state of youthful innocence—but it's also notably ephemeral, since, in Alaska, the summer sunlight shifts quickly into winter darkness.

❝ She was standing on a chair, but still, when she unclipped her buns the hair reached all the way to the ground. Our eyes opened. You couldn't tell how much hair she had when it was rolled up so neatly. Then my brother Henry did something funny. He went up to the chair and said, "Jump on my shoulders." So she did that, and her hair reached down past his waist, and he started twirling, this way and that, so her hair was flung out from side to side.

"I always wondered what it was like to have long pretty hair," Henry says. Well we laughed. It was a funny sight, the way he did it.

**Related Characters:** Henry Lamartine, Susy (speaker)

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 180

**Explanation and Analysis**

This is another scene that demonstrates the brothers' youthful innocence that summer. Susy's hair is so long that it is surreal—much like herself as a character. When they meet her, she is described as "so short her long lumber shirt looked comical on her, like a nightgown." In her own way, Susy represents a type of innocence. When she takes her hair down after all this time of knowing them, it suggests a kind of intimacy and comfort with them.

When Henry picks her up and puts her on his shoulders, twirling her around as if her hair was his hair, it's a striking moment. Not only is her hair itself striking in its outrageous length, but Henry's assertion that he wondered what it was like to have long pretty hair is unusual for a young man to say, because it falls outside of the realms of typical

masculinity. It shows he is comfortable with his own masculinity, and that will contrast sharply with the way Lyman imagines his brother is seen as a soldier. Henry is also gentle, funny, and kind, in a way that soldiers are not often thought to be.

> I don't wonder that the army was so glad to get my brother that they turned him into a Marine. He was built like a brick outhouse anyway. We liked to tease him that they really wanted him for his Indian nose. He had a nose big and sharp as a hatchet, like the nose on Red Tomahawk, the Indian who killed Sitting Bull, whose profile is on signs all along the North Dakota highways.

**Related Characters:** Henry Lamartine

**Related Themes:** 

**Page Number:** 181

**Explanation and Analysis**

Henry's physical appearance contrasts sharply with the way he has been described up to this point—this description classifies him as unequivocally Indian, but Erdrich has downplayed his Indian identity thus far. He and Lyman, it is made clear, look nothing alike. Lyman is the Chippewa that is good with money and almost unrealistically lucky, whereas Henry, to the US government and other non-Native American passersby, is the warrior. Perhaps because Lyman is aware of how stereotypes against Indians affect their daily lives, he suspects that the US military judged Henry by his outward appearance of being tough and warrior-like to assign him to the Marines, a notoriously tough branch of the military. Whether or not this is true (it is never confirmed), the fact that Lyman suggests it—and that he compares his brother to the stereotype of Red Tomahawk—gestures towards the way that others see Henry not through his actual personality, but through the stereotypes they associate with his appearance. In fact, Henry's nature is gentle and humorous, as evidenced in the scene with Susy in particular, but the military (at least in Lyman's imagination) uses him for his brute strength. That is a type of dehumanization that can in itself be traumatizing, and it reflects how stereotypes about American Indians affect their lives.

> I'd bought a color TV set for my mom and the rest of us while Henry was away. Money still came very easy. I was sorry I'd ever bought it though, because of Henry. I was also sorry I'd bought color, because with black-and-white the pictures seem older and farther away…
>
> Once I was in the room watching TV with Henry and I heard his teeth click at something. I looked over, and he'd bitten through his lip. Blood was going down his chin. I tell you right then I wanted to smash that tube to pieces. I went over to it but Henry must have known what I was up to. He rushed from his chair and shoved me out of the way, against the wall. I told myself he didn't know what he was doing.

**Related Characters:** Henry Lamartine, Lyman Lamartine

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 183

**Explanation and Analysis**

The color TV, which Henry spends long stretches of time in front of, is upsetting for Lyman because it demonstrates his brother's inability to cope with reality. Instead of living a functional adult life, Henry sits in front of a simulation, and sometimes he cannot even bear that—he holds on to the armrests "as if the chair itself was moving at a high speed," or as if the chair is his only connection to reality. It is notable that Lyman wishes he had bought a black-and-white TV because it makes the images "seem older and farther away." This suggests that Henry is watching something current, vivid, disturbing, and all too real: probably clips from the war on television. However, Henry can hardly stop his older brother, now a grown man, from watching television. His mental re-traumatization is symbolized by his physical harm—he bites through his lip, and does not tend to it, does not even seem to notice it, just lets it bleed while everyone is silent and ignores it, not because they don't care, but because they are scared and confused as to how to help.

> While Henry was not around we talked about what was going to happen to him. There were no Indian doctors on the reservation, and my mom couldn't come around to trusting the old man, Moses Pillager, because he courted her long ago and was jealous of her husbands. He might take revenge through her son. We were afraid that if we brought Henry to a regular hospital they would keep him. "They don't fix them in those places," Mom said; "they just give them drugs."
>
> "We wouldn't get him there in the first place," I agreed, "so let's just forget about it."

**Related Characters:** Lyman Lamartine , Lulu Lamartine (speaker), Henry Lamartine

**Related Themes:**   

**Page Number:** 183

**Explanation and Analysis**

Henry's disorder that his family cannot name causes problems for all of them. They want to help, but they don't know how to. There is no precedent for PTSD (which is never named, probably because the characters do not know what to call it) on the reservation, and there is little knowledge about it elsewhere. They'd be most likely to trust an Indian doctor, but there are none on the reservation, and the Anglo doctor, Moses Pillager, might become vindictive because their mother rejected him long ago. They trust hospitals even less (much like the government promises that are "full of holes," according to Lyman), and Lyman points out that Henry would be unlikely to want to go a hospital anyway. This do-it-yourself medical care is necessary for Lyman's family, because they do not trust the government to treat them fairly, with good reason. Furthermore, the fact that Henry doesn't want to go to the hospital despite how bad his disorder clearly is shows the stigma and silence around mental illness.

> It was so sunny that day Henry had to squint against the glare. Or maybe the camera Bonita held flashed like a mirror, blinding him, before she snapped the picture. My face is right out in the sun, big and round. But he might have drawn back, because the shadows on his face are deep as holes. There are two shadows curved like little hooks around the ends of his smile, as if to frame it and try to keep it there—that one, first smile that looked like it might have hurt his face.

**Related Characters:** Bonita Lamartine, Henry Lamartine, Lyman Lamartine

**Related Themes:**   

**Related Symbols:**  

**Page Number:** 186

**Explanation and Analysis**

This quote occurs when Henry and Lyman agree to take a ride in the convertible that Henry has just fixed up. Before they go, their eleven-year-old sister Bonita takes a picture of the two of them with the car. There is a stark difference between their two faces—Lyman looks round and youthful, his face in the sun, while Henry looks older, shadowed, haunted, with a forced smile. Of course, it ends up being the day Henry dies, so the picture takes on an ominous dimension. However, Lyman is happy to keep the picture for a long time, because it is the two of them with their great love, the red convertible, which reminds him of their innocence, youth, and the time they spent together. But it is this same photograph that, much later, he will look at again and see how troubled Henry is in it, how traumatized and damaged he is. This is disturbing for several reasons—Lyman, in the end, could not help him, as he was somewhat blind to the extent of Henry's suffering, and perhaps the photograph even plants a seed of doubt in his head as to why Henry died. Henry seems so troubled that it is possible he might have killed himself.

> The trip over there was beautiful. When everything starts changing, drying up, clearing off, you feel like your whole life is starting. Henry felt it, too. The top was down and the car hummed like a top. He'd really put it back in shape, even the tape on the seats was very carefully put down and glued back in layers. It's not that he smiled again or even joked, but his face looked to me as if it was clear, more peaceful. It looked as though he wasn't thinking of anything in particular except the bare fields and windbreaks and houses we were passing.

**Related Characters:** Henry Lamartine, Lyman Lamartine

**Related Themes:** 

**Related Symbols:** 

**Page Number:** 187

**Explanation and Analysis**

In this quote, Henry and Lyman are driving the red

convertible again, after Henry fixed it, going on a trip to the river. Lyman feels connected to Henry in this moment, because Henry appears as carefree as he himself feels. In certain ways, this moment is meant to hearken back to old times. But something is different—Henry is not his old self, not making jokes, and he never will be again. This loss of innocence that can never be returned will come up again when they are at the river. For Lyman and Henry both, the feeling is uncanny—familiar, but slightly different.

If Henry does jump in the river intending to kill himself, then this moment takes on a different, more ominous meaning: he is calm and peaceful because he has the serenity of knowing his pain will be over soon. Either way, this last moment of calm that recalls the tranquility and solitude they enjoyed years ago on their road trip is meaningful for both of them.

He says nothing. But I can tell his mood is turning again.

"They're all crazy, the girls up here, every damn one of them."

"You're crazy too," I say, to jolly him up. "Crazy Lamartine boys!"

He looks as though he will take this wrong at first. His face twists, then clears, and he jumps up on his feet. "That's right!" he says. "Crazier 'n hell. Crazy Indians!"

**Related Characters:** Henry Lamartine, Lyman Lamartine

**Related Themes:**

**Page Number:** 189

**Explanation and Analysis**

This moment comes after Henry and Lyman have been roughhousing, arguing over who should take the car. After they hit each other a little too hard and drink a few beers, Henry has another mood swing, and becomes rambunctious again. Lyman tries to defuse the situation with a joke about being crazy, but perhaps this is too close to what Henry actually worries is true about himself. It seems at first that this joke might backfire, but then Henry transforms the joke about his mental health into something else—a mockery of stereotypes about Indians, which is a safer topic.

Their interactions with each other are childlike and boyish, again recalling their more innocent days. But this time, they are hitting each other too hard. Lyman draws blood and tears from Henry, and Henry makes Lyman's face swell up. They are trying to recreate their innocent past, but they are too old to do so, and too much has changed. Henry becomes volatile at the suggestion of leaving, and unexpectedly jumps in the river, which of course leads to his drowning. It is unclear whether his drowning was an accident or intentional, but either way, it occurs after they attempt to go back to their old ways and cannot do so.

No sound comes from the river after the splash he makes, so I run right over. I look around. It's getting dark. I see he's halfway across the water already, and I know he didn't swim there but the current took him. It's far. I hear his voice, though, very clearly across it.

"My boots are filling," he says.

He says this in a normal voice, like he just noticed and he doesn't know what to think of it. Then he's gone. A branch comes by. Another branch. And I go in…

I walk back to the car, turn on the high beams, and drive it up the bank. I put it in first gear and then I take my foot off the clutch. I get out, close the door, and watch it plow softly into the water.

**Related Characters:** Henry Lamartine (speaker), Lyman Lamartine

**Related Themes:**

**Related Symbols:**

**Page Number:** 189

**Explanation and Analysis**

This quote is from the end of the story, after Henry jumps into the river, shouting "Got to cool me off!" Whether or not he intended to commit suicide, his matter-of-fact statement that his boots are filling is alarming because of its tone. Even if he simply misjudged the current of the river, he seems unsurprised, even resigned to the danger he is in. Because he does not have much to live for after the war, this becomes even more haunting.

Lyman risks his own life trying to get Henry out of the river, but he somehow survives. However, he cannot stand the car—a symbol of youthful innocence, freedom, even recklessness in which he spent so much time in with his beloved brother—surviving while Henry dies. He wanted to share the car with Henry in the first place: he never wanted it all to himself. As such, he pushes the car into the river, saying goodbye to it prematurely as he had to do to Henry.

## SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

### THE RED CONVERTIBLE

Lyman recalls that he was the first person to drive a **convertible** on his reservation, a red Oldsmobile. He and his brother Henry owned it together, until Henry's "boots filled with water on a windy night" and he "bought out" Lyman's share.

*Early on, Lyman establishes that he lives on a reservation, which implies that he is probably Native American. Like most reservations, it is not wealthy – note that Lyman is not just the first person to own a convertible, but the first person to ever* drive *one. He also leaves ambiguous what exactly happens to Henry. "Boots filled with water" is an ominous and mysterious phrase—If something bad happened to Henry, why would he continue to own the car, and why would Lyman give it up? This mystery is a hook into the story, but it also reflects the silence around Henry's struggle.*

Lyman has always had an easy time making money, which he claims is "unusual in a Chippewa." He shined shoes and sold bouquets as a kid. When he was fifteen, he got a job washing dishes at the Joliet Café, which he eventually came to own. The café was destroyed in a tornado, but before that happened, he bought the **convertible** with Henry.

*Here, Lyman makes it clear that he is Native American, and admits that his relative wealth is unusual. This characteristic is important, as it shapes Lyman's experience and the arc of the story. His ability to make money with ease allows him to buy the convertible and gives him and his brother their freedom for a long time.*

Henry and Lyman are in Winnipeg when they stumble upon the **convertible**, which seems almost larger than life, and they decide to buy it. One summer, they travel all over the Great Plains, into Canada, even up to Alaska in the car without a care in the world. According to Lyman, they don't "hang on to details" when they travel: those would just be bothersome. They pick up a young hitchhiker named Susy from Alaska, with whom they stay for a season, in a tent outside her family's house.

*In this part, Henry and Lyman are at their freest and most innocent. They are able to travel freely, and the red convertible is both a literal source of their freedom and a symbol of it, with its youth and energy. Their decision to take Susy all the way home, even though she lives all the way up in Alaska, and then stay there impulsively, epitomizes their freedom in terms of time and money.*

One night, Susy comes to see them. "You never seen my hair," she says, and she takes her hair down to reveal that it reaches all the way to the ground. Henry picks her up on his shoulders and twirls her around so her hair sways from side to side. "I always wondered what it was like to have long pretty hair," he says.

*This scene takes on greater meaning later, after Henry is traumatized from war. This scene reveals that his true nature is calm, jocular, and not overly concerned with norms of masculinity, but instead comfortable in himself. There is a stark difference between the carefree Henry in this scene and the traumatized Henry that appears later.*

Henry and Lyman head home, and before long Henry is drafted into the Vietnam War as a Marine. Lyman suspects that Henry's regiment wanted him because he looks so tough, like the Native American warrior Red Tomahawk. He doesn't write many letters home, and is for a period captured by the enemy. Meanwhile, Lyman writes him lots of letters and keeps the **convertible** in top shape for him. He considers himself lucky that he did not get drafted, and acknowledges that Henry was never lucky like he was.

*Henry's lack of letters home is not out of character and so it does not alarm Lyman, but it ends up being important—this is the beginning of his sudden silence. He never speaks about his capture, which would undoubtedly be a traumatic experience and would have contributed to his loss of innocence. By comparison, Lyman seems childishly innocent—writing countless letters without expecting a reply and keeping the car in perfect shape as if Henry will be back at any moment.*

When Henry comes home, he is very different. He can no longer sit still, he hardly ever laughs, and he never makes jokes like he did before. He even has no interest in the **convertible**. Because of this, others mostly leave Henry alone, and he spends long stretches of time watching the **color TV** that Lyman bought for the family, gripping the armrests of his chair tightly. One day, he bites through his lip while watching, and blood drips down his chin. Lyman tries to turn off the TV, but Henry stops him by shoving him out of the way. Eventually their mother comes in and turns off the TV. They sit down and eat dinner with Henry's blood still trickling down his chin, mixing with his food.

*Henry's loss of innocence manifests in what is now easily recognizable as PTSD, which was common during the Vietnam War (and is common today, as well). His silence, emphasized by his time spent in front of the television, contrasts sharply with the way he used to laugh and joke. His trauma also manifests physically when he bites through his lip and seems not to notice—blood running down his chin like something out of a horror film while he eats in front of his entire family.*

Lyman and his mother think about what to do for Henry. There is only one doctor nearby, a non-Indian doctor that used to court their mother, whom they fear might take revenge on Henry for Lulu's rejection of him. They also fear that if they take him to a "regular hospital" they may never see him again, or he might become a drugged-out zombie instead of receiving actual treatment, which puts them at an impasse. They also acknowledge it is unlikely that Henry would agree to go to a hospital.

*Henry's condition has become pressing and must be dealt with, but their access to medical care is questionable because of their status as Native Americans on a reservation. Their only options are to take Henry to non-Indians for treatment, and they fear (reasonably so) that they may discriminate against him. Lyman also suggests that Henry would object to going to a hospital, which may be because of the silencing and stigma around illness, mental illness in particular.*

Henry has shown no interest in the **convertible** since he got home from the war, but Lyman decides that the car might bring "the old Henry back." He waits till Henry is gone one night and takes a hammer to it, destroying the car as best he can. Over a month later, Henry confronts Lyman about the state of the car, and Lyman goads him into fixing the car himself. Henry spends weeks at it, day and night. He hardly ever watches **their TV**, and is somewhat better than he was before, not as jumpy. By the time he's done, the car is as good as new. One day, Henry suggests that they take the car for a ride. Encouraged by Henry's sudden interest in taking the car out like old times, Lyman agrees.

*Henry's lack of interest in the convertible has to do with his trauma. Lyman, in his youthful innocence, hopes that the car (a symbol of their freedom and innocence) can somehow bring back Henry's own lost youth. However, instead of talking to Henry about what happened to him or what he needs, Lyman takes action in silence by destroying the car. Again, the culture of silence around illness hinders Henry's recovery. Lyman's unusual tactic for Henry's recovery is well-meant, but it turns out to not be enough.*

Their sister Bonita makes them pose for a **photograph** with the **car** before they go. Lyman recalls the picture, which he kept on the wall for a long time until one night he realized how much it tormented him. Slightly drunk and high, he suddenly saw clearly in the photo how haunted Henry was, with his shadowed eyes and forced, painful smile. His friend Ray helped him bag the picture and hide it in a closet, but he still remembers the stark difference in their faces every time he passes the closet.

*It is only upon seeing the photograph in a particular light that Lyman realizes how much Henry was suffering, and how obvious that was in the physical features of his face. Perhaps it occurs to Lyman for the first time that Henry could easily have been miserable enough to kill himself. It also reveals the gap of knowledge between Henry and Lyman, exacerbated by their silence.*

After they take the picture, they take a full cooler and make the trip to the Red River, because Henry wants to see the high water. The trip is beautiful and relaxing, and Lyman thinks Henry seems unusually calm and happy. They build a fire and Henry falls asleep, but Lyman becomes anxious and wakes him up. They start talking and Henry reveals that he knew what Lyman was doing by intentionally damaging the **convertible**. He wants Lyman to have the car all to himself, but Lyman refuses, and they argue back and forth until they start roughhousing. They hit each other too hard, drawing blood, and finally they stop, agreeing that Lyman will have the car. Both still in pain, they open beers and drink them all, making each other laugh.

*Back in the car traveling together, it seems to Lyman that maybe things can go back to the way they used to be, before Henry went to war. Henry even seems calmer, and Lyman starts to think that maybe his unusual homemade plan for treating Henry has worked. Their roughhousing and joking with each other also hearkens back to their more innocent days, but something is off. They hit each other too hard—Henry has tears in his eyes and Lyman's face is swollen. Henry doesn't want the car anymore, and Lyman cannot understand that because it does not fit in with his idea that Henry is getting better, or, more accurately, going back to the way he was before (which is, of course, impossible). Their typically masculine behaviors and silence on the topic of what is actually happening with Henry are connected.*

Something has changed in the air, and Lyman suggests they go back, maybe try to pick up some girls. Henry, his mood shifted for the worse, complains that all the girls "up here" are crazy. Lyman jokes back that he, too, is crazy—that they all are crazy—trying to rile him up, hoping to keep having fun. Henry frowns at first, but plays along, shouting, "Crazy Indians!" and jumping around, drunk and rambunctious as before. Lyman cracks up, and suddenly Henry shouts, "Got to cool me off!" and jumps in the river.

*Again, Lyman and Henry do not know how to talk about the obvious changes in Henry's demeanor. Lyman's attempt to make a joke about "crazy" nearly backfires (perhaps because it cuts too close to what Henry worries is true about himself), but Henry decides to make it a joke about how others view them as crazy for being Indians, perhaps a joke they have long been making. But still, something is different, and even these jokes feel slightly dangerous. It is clear that, despite Lyman's attempts to take them back to the innocent days of their youth, even simple interactions between them will never be the same.*

The river is high and the current is strong. It's getting dark, and Lyman sees that the current has already carried Henry much too far. "My boots are filling," he says placidly, and then he's gone. Lyman goes in the river after him, but it is too late. Devastated, Lyman pushes the **red convertible** into the river to join him.

*This moment is Lyman's second loss of innocence—when he loses his brother for the last time. Henry's calm response is particularly haunting. Even if he wasn't intending to kill himself, his hopelessness in the face of extreme danger shows how little will he has to live. There is no sound after he jumps in, and he does not even scream. Lyman throws the car into the river because he cannot bear to hang on to this symbol of youth, freedom, and innocence when his brother lost all of those things as well as his life. Finally, the opening lines make sense—the car is Henry's again.*

## HOW TO CITE

To cite this LitChart:

### MLA

Feinman-Riordan, Grace. "*The Red Convertible*." *LitCharts*. LitCharts LLC, 31 Aug 2018. Web. 21 Apr 2020.

### CHICAGO MANUAL

Feinman-Riordan, Grace. "*The Red Convertible*." LitCharts LLC, August 31, 2018. Retrieved April 21, 2020. https://www.litcharts.com/lit/the-red-convertible.

To cite any of the quotes from *The Red Convertible* covered in the Quotes section of this LitChart:

### MLA

Erdrich, Louise. The Red Convertible. Harper Perennial. 1984.

### CHICAGO MANUAL

Erdrich, Louise. The Red Convertible. New York: Harper Perennial. 1984.