

1. In what ways does the opening of the film mirror themes found in *Gone with the Wind*?
2. How are the Federal government and its soldiers depicted as untrustworthy?
3. How does the film show Missouri civilians as catering to both sides? Why?
4. Why do the unlikely partners of Wales and Chief Lone Waite become a good team?
5. How does Wales the outlaw become Wales the Good Samaritan?
6. How does the constant spitting of tobacco juice serve as a thematic device?
7. How is Wales’s conversation with Ten Bears indirect commentary on the Vietnam War?
8. Think of this for 1970s context: Could Wales’s little Texas settlement be considered a counter-culture commune *or* a militia compound?
9. Why do you think the Western genre died with the Vietnam War? What made this film different from many previous Westerns?
10. This film was included on the Library of Congress’s National Film Registry in 1996 for fitting in the category of “culturally, historically, or aesthetically significant.” Explain why or why not it should have this recognition.


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Accompanying primary source:

***General Reynolds Describes Lawlessness in Texas, 1868***

*Note: Most histories of the Civil War claim that the war ended in the summer of 1865 when Confederate armies surrendered. However, violent resistance and terrorism continued in the South for over a decade. In this report, General J.J. Reynolds describes the lawlessness of Texas during Reconstruction.*

General: I have the honor to forward herewith annual tabular statement of expeditions and souts, and reports of movements of the various regiments serving in this district, for the year ending September 30, 1868.

Armed organizations, generally known as “Ku-Klux Klans,” exist, independently or in concert with other armed bands, in many parts of Texas, but are most numerous, bold, and aggressive east of Trinity River.

The precise objects of the organizations cannot be readily explained, but seems, in this state, to be to disarm, rob, and in many cases murder Union men and negroes, and as occasion may offer, murder United States officers and soldiers; also to intimidate every one who knows anything of the organization but who will not join it.

The civil law east of the Trinity River is almost a dead letter. In some counties the civil officers are all, or a portion of them, members of the Klan. In other counties where the civil officers will not join the Klan, or some other armed band, they have been compelled to leave their counties. Examples are Van Zandt, Smith, and Marion counties; (the county seat of the latter is Jefferson.)

In many counties where the county officers have not been driven off their influence is scarcely felt. What political end, if any, is aimed at by these bands I cannot say, but they attend in large bodies the political meetings (barbecues) which have been and are still being held in various parts of this State under the auspices of the democratic clubs of the different counties.

The speakers encourage their attendance, and in several counties men have been indicated by name from the speaker’s stand, as those selected for murder. The men thus pointed out have no course left them but to leave their homes or be murdered on the first convenient opportunity. The murder of negroes is so common as to render it impossible to keep an accurate account of them.

Many of the members of these bands of outlaws are transient persons in the State; the absence of railroads and telegraphs and great length of time required to communicate between remote points facilitating their devilish purposes.

These organizations are evidently countenanced, or at least not discouraged, by a majority of the white people in the counties where the bands are most numerous. They could not otherwise exist. I have given this matter close attention, and am satisfied that a remedy to be effective must be gradually applied and continued with the firm support of the army until these outlaws are punished or dispersed.

They cannot be punished by the civil courts until some examples by military commissions show that men can be punished in Texas for murder and kindred crimes. Perpetrators of such crimes have not heretofore, except in very rare instances, been punished in this state at all.

Free speech and a free press, as the terms are generally understood in other States, have never existed in Texas. In fact, the citizens of other states cannot appreciate the state of affairs in Texas without actually experiencing it. The official reports of lawlessness and crime, so far from being exaggerated, do not tell the whole truth.

Jefferson is the center from which most of the trade, travel, and lawlessness of eastern Texas radiate, and at this point or its vicinity there should be stationed about a regiment of troops. The recent murder at Jefferson of Hon. G. W. Smith, a delegate to the constitutional convention, has made it necessary to order more troops to that point. This movement weakens the frontier posts to such an extent as to impair their efficiency for protection against Indians, but the bold, wholesale murdering in the interior of the state seems at present to present a more urgent demand for the troops than Indian depredations. The frontier posts should, however, be reinforced if possible, as it is not improbably that the Indians from the northwest, after having suffered defeat there, will make heavy incursions into Texas.

To restore measurable peace and quiet to Texas will require, for a long time, that troops be stationed at many county seats, until, by their presence, and aid if necessary, the civil law can be placed in the hands of reliable officers, and executed. This will be the work of years, and will be fully accomplished only by an increase of population.

“Report of Brevet Major General J. J. Reynolds, Commanding Fifth Military District” in *Annual Report of the Secretary of War* (Washington: 1868), 704-705.