Chief Left Hand Discussion Questions

1. What are the central ideas presented in Chief Left Hand? Examples might be: Clash of cultures? Peace v. war? The doctrine of Manifest Destiny? The role played by racism, greed and ambition?

2. Discuss the character of Niwot. What kind of man does the book portray him to be? Linguist, personable, sociable, interested in different cultures?

3. Discuss the conflict between Niwot's role as a warrior and his role as a peace chief. In what ways did he deal with this conflict?

4. What were Niwot's motivations to find a peaceful settlement with the white newcomers?

5. Discuss the character of Governor John Evans. What type of man was he? What were his goals and how did he go about trying to achieve them? What was his role in the Sand Creek attack?

6. Discuss the character of Col. John Chivington. What type of man was he? What were the motivations that caused him to lead an attack on Sand Creek after the promises made to the chiefs at Camp Weld?

7. Do you believe Sand Creek was inevitable? Could it have been prevented and if so, how?

8. What made the peace chiefs trust Evans and Chivington? What other choices did they have? What about Hosa (Little Raven)? Did he trust the white leaders?

9. Discuss Silas Soule and Joseph Cramer. They could have been shot for disobedience of a commanding officer, and yet they held their troops back at Sand Creek. What motivated them?

10. Discuss the different ways in which Sand Creek was received in Boulder-Denver and in the rest of the country. What accounts for the public pressure that led to three government investigations?

11. Discuss the immediate results of Sand Creek. What did it lead to?
 Were the participants held accountable? How did it affect their lives?
 What might Sand Creek stand for today?

12. What type of evidence does the author present to substantiate the
story?

13. Any specific passages that struck you as memorable?

14. What did you learn from reading this book about our history and the
people who once lived here that you hadn't known before?