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6270122, TAMILNADU

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Prepared by
Dr. P. Vedamuthan M.A., M.Phil., Ph.D.,
Assistant Professor
Department of English
M.S. University
Nagampatti

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CANADIAN LITERATURE

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The animals in that country

- Margaret Atwood

‘The animals in that country’ by Margaret Atwood is the title piece of Atwood’s 1986 collection The Animals In That Country. It was her fifth collection to date but has now become one of fourteen she’s published since 1961. This collection is noted for its exploration of human behaviour and celebration of the natural world, two themes ever-present in Atwood’s prose and verse.

The poem is divided into uneven stanzas ranging in length from two to five lines. A reader should also take note of the set of indented lines with which Atwood concludes the poem. These lines have been separated from the preceding section as they mark a return to the real world. They lay out the reality of modern life, providing an impactful contrast to Atwood’s hopeful vision of the future.

The animals in that country by Margaret Atwood

Summary

‘The animals in that country’ by Margaret Atwood details a world in which animals are judged to have the same worth as human beings.

The poem begins with the speaker stating that there is a place, a “country,” in which animals have human faces. This place is noted for its lack of distinction between human and non-human animals. Here, the foxes are not hunted, the cats are “ceremonial” and the bulls are allowed to die valiant deaths. All creatures can flourish and reach their highest potential.

Analysis of The animals in that country

Lines 1-8

In the opening couplet of this piece the speaker begins with a striking line. She jumps straight into the description of the country mentioned in the title and what sets its apart from other places on earth. She states that it is a place in which the, animals have the faces of people.

This crafted, surrealistic line should immediately stimulate one's imagination. It is clear from the start that the place being described is fictional. Atwood has created a new world in which animals are considered as multifaceted and important as humans are. It is interesting to note that this has been done by making them more human. The entire concept is a statement on ingrained ideologies of value and worth.

In the next couplet the speaker brings up "ceremonial / cats." She takes what is a normal sight, cats on the street, and elevates it to a new level. It is an event to see them move by one another. They are regal, self-possessed, and existing in happy disregard of humanity. There is also the use of alteration in these lines. The "s" sound appears in "cats," "ceremonial," "streets" and "possessing." It is as if these words are sliding by one another, as the cats might.

The next three lines speak on the relationship between frequently hunted animals, like foxes, and the hunters themselves. Rather than killing these creatures, the hunters have developed a "tapestry of manners." They are as dimensional in their respect as a tapestry is in thread types and colors. The fox is able to go about its life, "politely," doing harm to no one, and the hunters stand "fixed."

Lines 9-17

In the next stanza, which contains five lines, the speaker moves on to describe the valiant death of a bull. Rather than the pitiful defeats seen within bullfighting rings, they are, Embroidered With blood and given

An elegant death

The speaker sees this as being the ideal end for an animal as powerful and magnificent as a bull. There should be “trumpets” sounding the bull’s name. His memory should become a “heraldic brand” that no one forgets. This is a reference to a type of crest displayed by powerful families.

The following lines give extra detail to the bull’s demise. It is not a pretty one, but it is poignant in its imagery. The speaker describes how the animal rolls in the “sand, a sword in his heart.” It is interesting to note the role that humanity is still playing here. This world is not void of human presence, everything is just being seen differently.

The sword suddenly feels heroic and the “blue mouth” human. The teeth belong to “a man.” This small addition to the text is unnerving. Like the animals with human faces, it takes recognizable characteristics to make one care about another living creature.

Lines 18-20

Within the next four lines the speaker moves on to discuss the “wolves.” They are deep within the wooded forests, keeping to themselves. The animals have no interest in the affairs of humans and now, humans do not hunt them down. These wolves “hold” conversation with one another. This speaks to their intelligence, a feature that is clear in our own modern world. It is something that increases the general fear of wolves.

These lands are said to be “thick…with legend.” The animals have a deep history here they can now take part in. Packs can roam as they always should have. Here is yet again another reference to history and ancestry. This, in combination with the “heraldic brand” and the use of words such as “tapestry” and “embroidered” give this piece a sense of the historical. Atwood wanted the text to tap into the long and complicated history of non-human animals and bring it to the forefront of the reader’s mind.

Lines 21-28

Here, the speaker is going back through the various elements she touched on and reiterating them in a different way. These lines stand as an important contrast to the ones which came before it. Rather than speaking further on the imagined world, Atwood’s speaker returns the reader to the world known today. She is making her points as clear as possible to those entrenched in the ideological practices of contemporary life. The country of the reader contains “animals” with the “faces of animals.” Here, the clearest “flash” a human being gets of another living creature is through the headlights of a car. The animal is either fleeing successfully or unsuccessfully across the road. The latter is the most likely. Here, animal deaths are not “elegant” like the bull’s was.

Atwood concludes with the impactful statement: They have the faces of no-one.

In the modern world, animals are passed over. They mean nothing at all. This is all due to humankind’s inability to see worth in that which does not resemble itself

Inukshuk

- Daniel David Moses

Delware/Tuscarora writer Daniel David Moses' poem "Inukshuk" reflects on the "colonist problem" and "progress" seen in northern expansion.

In this poem, the ecological imagery of snow, wind, and lichens carries multiple levels of meaning through the language of dreams "from the south." The idea of dreams from the south having an impact on the north implies the expansion of colonialism northwards. Settler culture developed from the dream of "progress" across the presumably wild and empty spaces of North America. This progress dream spread from Europe to North America, and then from the east to the western and northern "frontiers."

The image of northernness is reinforced through the Inukshuk, a rock structure used by the Inuit peoples who live there, and who stand in opposition to colonial understandings of the empty and formidable North. As Sherill Grace notes,

Real Inuksuit … "act in the capacity of a human" by encoding many forms of information vital to the physical and spiritual survival of those Inuit with the wisdom to read them; they can be as simple as two coloured rocks laid side by side or as complex as an extensive field of cairn-like and single boulders reaching up to the sky. (Grace 145)

The dreams from the south bring songs of scientific discovery and nightmares of war, transforming the imagery of the solitary observing Inukshuk at the beginning of the poem. Thus,

the wind that once brought ecologically natural things like snow and lichen, now troubles the Inukshuk with foreign dreams of death.

This poem captures a sense of the transformations wrought on Inuit peoples and their territories through colonization, using the trans-generational image of the Inukshuk to trace these changes.

The Bear on the Delhi Road

- Alfred Earle Birney

The Poet: Alfred Earle Birney (May 13, 1904 - September 3, 1995) In 1974, Al Purdy called Earle Birney as "one of the two best poets in Canada". The other was Irvine Layton. (Al Purdy, "The Man Who Killed David") Born in Alberta , and brought up in the rural British Columbia Alfred Earle Birney is a famous Canadian author who is better known as a poet and novelist . For his poetry, he twice won The Governor General's Award which is considered as the top literary award in Canada .Neil Besner writes in Canadian Encyclopedia that , "Beginning with David, and other poems (1942), Birney's poetry consistently explored the resources of language with passionate and playful curiosity.... Throughout his career, Birney was an experimental poet, publishing over 20 books of verse that vary as widely in form and voice as they do in subject. His poems reveal his constant concern to render his encyclopedic experience - be it of Canada's geographical or cultural reaches, of nature, of travels or of the trials of love by time - into a language marvellously dexterous and supple, always seriously at play."(Neil Besner). Birney's typography became increasingly more experimental during the 1960s, and in his 1966 Selected Poems he revised many of his older poems, dropping punctuation and sentence structure. He explained his reasoning in the preface to Selected Poems : Our intricate system of speckles

between words evolved comparatively recently and merely to ensure that prose became beautifully unambiguous -- Instant Communication. For a while the poets went along with this, even though what they were shooting at was the art of indefinitely delayed communication -- Indefinite Ambiguity. Belatedly but willingly influenced by contemporary trends, I've come to surround my pauses with space rather than with typographical spatter, and to take advantage of the new printing 6 processes to free my work occasionally from the tyranny of one-direction linotype.(Earle, Birney 'Preface')

'The Bear on the Delhi Road' : Central points:

' 1. There is the image of a bear that has been taken by two men to the city for helping them in making livelihood.

2. The men teach the bear to dance so that they can earn their livelihood from the bear's performances.

3. The bear is shown to move away from his natural behaviours .

4. It shows human like instincts .

5. The bear taming men are not there to torture the bear .They train the bear to act more like human being .

6. The lines " wear/from his shaggy body the tranced/ wish forever to stay/ only an ambling bear/ four-footed in berries."(lines 21-25, Birney) suggest that the men who are taming the bear want it to shed out his bear-like habits and instincts .

7. The men instruct the bear as how to dance. It shows they want the bear to forget the natural ways of life.

8. The men are poor, and they have to earn their livelihood out of the dance of the bear.

9. Here the bear is the source of income for the men.

10. The concluding lines of the poem show the men to be sad. As now they have trained the bear to dance , they must feel happy , but they are unhappy .Here is the twist !

11. It is something very difficult for the men to differentiate reality and fantasy, and, therefore, they are unhappy.

12. It had a happy appeal and ‘dream come true’ like feeling for the men to see the bear dancing like men. But they feel sad to realize that the bear was, essentially, made to be there in the lap of nature.

13. The “praying claws/sharpened to paw for ants" (lines 28-29, Birney) of the bear are meant for nature, not for the act of dancing.

14. Now, the tamed bear is neither a human being nor a natural animal.

15. They cannot make the bear completely human and this makes them disappointed. They are distressed about the fact that they cannot accept the truth- the wildlife in nature cannot be transformed into human beings.

16. The bear is shown as a myth. The dislocation is painful. The ‘de –doxifying’ tendencies are visible.

Main Themes 1. Man ,animal and society 2. Nature 3. Environment 4. Society and social stratifications 5. Colonization 6. Postcolonial 7. Bear as Animal Samson 8. Pity and Pride 9. Cruelty 10. Animal rights 11. Poverty 12. Survival 13. Intelligence vs. Instinct 14. Man vs.

nature. The text in new literatures in English are generally open ended, you are advised to find many other themes based on your reading.

Features of Style: 1. Descriptive language 2. Imagery 3. Symbols 4. No use of punctuation in the poem 5. The words at the beginning of sentences are written in capital letters (it marks emphasis and shows that it is the beginning a new sentence). 6. Repetition of words in some stanzas.(for emphasis).11 7. Spaces at some places (in this case, space works like comma.) 8. Written in free-verse. 9. The lines of the poem appear in irregular length. 10. It shows a categorical description 11. Self explanatory title, suggesting the plight of a creature stuck in unfavorable situations

The Bull Calf

- Irving Layton

The Bull Calf is a poem that seeks to tackle and also explore a very controversial matter. The writer also shows the innocence of animals which are under human care. The author of this poem explores the death of these animals by bringing in a speaker who is continually haunted by his conscience due to the end of an innocent animal. The poet uses plenty of literary devices to dramatize the poem and also ensure that the theme of the poem and its content is communicated. In simple terms, the poem is about an innocent calf which dies because it cannot produce milk.

Irving Layton uses the imagery in this poem to enable the reader to understand in the right way the desperation of the situation. For instance, line twenty-two of the poem uses a description where the author says, 'growing smaller and smaller/till we were only the ponderous mallet/that flicked this bleeding ear.' The poem is organized in a way that every stanza shows and represents a deterioration of the conditions at hand. The author brings the situation to the climax in the

calf's demise. Irving Layton can make the reader's emotions to follow the chronological order of the events as they occur in the poem. That is the poem begins by showing little emotions, but the feelings keep on building up, later on, expressing the author's humane side. In the end, the speaker turns around and excruciatingly sheds tears as it is recorded in the last stanza of the poem. The weeping of the speaker at the end indicates that the author had come into terms with the future, which is full of possibilities that are cut short.

The author uses symbols in the poem; these symbols are meant to strengthen the speaker's notion, which shows that the calf is just an innocent animal. In this poem, the bull calf signifies the sheer innocence present in any young soul.

Death is also used in the poem to symbolize the abrupt loss of integrity ferociously. The writer also uses illusion which signifies any disaster that would be faced by the calf.

The author blocks the reader's emotions by referring to the calf as a thing rather than referring to it as an animal or a creature. This happens in the first line of the first stanza of the poem where the author says that 'this thing could barely stand.' This line contradicts itself from the entire verse since the rest of the lines in the first stanza have a very positive attitude. The first line signifies that the calf is weak. In contrary, the third and the fourth line of the first stanza shows the glory of the calf, and this hints to royalty. The last line of the first stanza in the poem backs up this information by pointing to Richard the second. The author uses the word us in the fifth line of the first stanza; this creates a good connection between the author and the event.

There is the use of imagery in the sixth line of the poem, whereby the author says, 'the fierce sunlight tugging the maize from the ground.' In this case, the sunlight represents hope and promise. Taking Richard the second as the reference in the last line makes the poem to flow

better into the next stanza. The reason as to why Richard second is used as a reference in this poem is because Richard was lowered from his position, and this is the same thing that will happen to the calf.

Line ten of the poem states that “no money in bulls calves,” Freeman had said.” This line starts the stanza in a very negative way which contradicts the first stanza of the poem. It is the line that introduces the issue of man and money. This indicates that all human beings run the world of nature simply because of their outlook and money concentration. This signifies the effects of capitalism which is very bad.

Line fourteen and sixteen put the event into perspective, though it appears to be a small event, it is related and compared to the entire world to portray its importance. The first line of the third stanza it is made up of one word ‘struck.’ This word is beneficial, and it also drives the point across. The author puts three periods in a row. This signifies that there is something that will happen, and it will be necessary, but the reader does not have a slight clue whether the thing will be good or bad.

‘Darkening of eyes.’ These are imagery, and it makes the reader understand the effect of the line, idea, or stanza in the poem. The narrator uses symbolism to emphasize the horrible death of the calf. The author also applies the use of simile in line twenty-six of the poem ‘like a block of wood.’ This simile is used by the author to show the harsh treatment that the calf is undergoing by relating it to something else.

The narrator uses the word ‘asleep’ which indicates that the calf is at peace and in a comfortable position. Line thirty-four of the poem shows the inner beauty of the calf as it is dead. These take the reader to the begging of the poem, and this indicates that there is no pride anymore. Line

thirty-six, the narrator turns away and weeps (line thirty-six). This line shows narrators emotions; it is a crucial aspect since it refers to the author himself and shows that he is upset by the situation at hand. This line brings about the justification of the entire poem with harsh comparison and also great imagery.

In conclusion, when reading any poem, one must try to find the deep meaning of each line in the poem. It is evident that in this poem, all these events are happening while the author is watching them happen.

A PLACE TO STAND ON

- MARGARET LAURENCE

The creative writer brought an understanding of the world within which she lived. It began from childhood, adolescent and career wise in the quest to illustrate private world within the public world that we all share. Under the subject 'a place to stand on', it is pragmatic to state that individuals from childhood to adolescent are still subjected to changes; on the contrary, the author underlines the necessity for change. In exploring the inherent in writing, the writer reiterate that it is important for individuals to discover oneself; especially regarding changes from childhood, adolescent and adulthood respectively. This is explored at somewhat all points by the writer in attempts to derive an understanding of one's past, background and more instant past which has not been personally experienced (Atwood 09).

According to the writer, the contemporary exploration could be visualized in the works of African writers; many of whom are characterized by re-creativity of the people's past within plays and novels (Laurence (a) 39). This is effective in discovering much about themselves, a feeling of value and identity following separation from two or three eras of missionizing and

colonialism. This has been deemed necessary for them to come into terms with their gods and ancestors so that they would understand the past. This as well creates better understanding and agreement with the dead. Nonetheless, it eradicates aspects of threats and stifles by the past (MacLennan 5; Laurence (c) 7).

The author reiterates that it is not wrong to have an autobiographical novel, in personal view; this was not the right thing to do. In the writer's view, prairie town where the writer came from was until then distorted and prejudiced by closeness. This implies that the writer had to get further away from it before seeing it (Atwood 19). In comparison of the topic, the writer reiterated that it was in her mind that one day she would stop writing about Africa and get back to her own people; this shows *a place of belonging* (Laurence (b) 18). However, by the time it was necessary to do the same, she got really nervous on the perceived outcome; this was based on the fact that there was no distinct time frame within which the process would have began. In addition, according to the writer, the character of Hagar in *The Stone Angel* almost resembled her state (MacLennan 18).

Considering the writers' background and past through grandparents, it is obvious from the essay that in some way, not all consciously understood by her beyond reproach (Atwood 14). This was especially during the generation of pioneers of Scots-Presbyterian origins who were the first group to people the town referred to as Manawaka; a place where her own roots begun.

In another paragraph, the writer stated that Manawaka is not her hometown of Neepawa, although it has some elements of Neepawa as far as description of places like cemetery on the hill, or the Wachakwa valley through which ran the small brown river; the river of my childhood. In somewhat, Manawaka could be stated as a town of the mind; an individual's own private world that ultimately relates to the outside world that is shared by everybody (Laurence (c) 22).

In reminiscence, the writer articulates that there are things that would not be erased from her skull as long as she lives; with the vividness of recall only in their first home. She takes solace in the fact that the people are important than place (Laurence (a) 31). In the process, she remembers that Hagar in *The Stone Angel* was never drawn from life; instead she incorporated qualities of her grandparents' generation (Atwood 17). In the mix, the writer affirms that her own feelings were towards the generation of pioneers, the way it was difficult to live with them, very authoritative, and unbending making her afraid to show love since they were more willing to show anger, yet they inhibited and made the wilderness beautiful. Margaret loved and valued them due to the fact that they were great survivors (MacLennan 23).

In conclusion, considering the influence of place on writing, there are two main aspects that come into one's mind, the physical aspect of place '*geographical appearance*' and the *people*. However, based on Canada, where, or not actually set in Manitoba, it is a reminiscence of the physical appearance of Prairies. The writer further asserts the feeling of loneliness and isolation of the land itself. In furtherance, she considers South Manitoba to be very beautiful, but doubts if would ever live there again. The understanding of both inner and outer world clearly defines the place; the pioneers indeed had their being once and left *A Place To Stand On* to date, for the better of the worse.

The Sasquatch at Home

- Eden Robinson

Canadian writer Eden Robinson is a storyteller who bears witness and educates as she entertains. Like her award-winning fiction, the stories in *The Sasquatch at Home: Traditional Protocols &*

Modern Storytelling sparkle with Robinson's self-deprecating humour as she tells of who she is as an individual and of how she is connected.

Robinson exemplifies the melding of tradition and today. She comes from a mixed marriage, of Heiltsuk mother and Haisla father, two matrilineal cultures. Status is bestowed as a birthright; names and positions are passed down in the presence of witnesses at community feasts, potlatches. Her unconventional family broke with tradition and named their daughters "across clans" (from the father's side rather than the mother's side) (4). Generations before, her great-grandfather, an English-born missionary, had married a Native woman. The British Columbia in which Robinson grew up is infused with the pop culture of America and Europe.

The Sasquatch at Home Part 1 is introduced with citations from two anthropologists from the 1930s. An American, Ronald Olson, reports: "They say the Haihais and Heiltsuk (Bella Bella) 'don't know how to marry' because they originated from a girl who 'married' a dog" (1). A Russian, Ivan Lopatin, comments upon how surprised he was to learn that the Haisla do so much business with Eastern Canadian department stores through the mail (3). Myth and reality. In this section Robinson tells how she spent award money by flying with her mother to Graceland.

You should not go to Graceland without an Elvis fan. It's like Christmas without kids—you lose that sense of wonder. . . . [A]s we walked slowly through the house and she touched the walls, everything had a story, a history. In each story was everything she valued and loved and wanted me to remember and carry with me.
This is nusa. (12)

Applying the traditional concept to a contemporary adventure shows that both culture and cultural transmission are alive and well. This is a model for both curriculum development and

cross-cultural communication. Identify the underlying values. Figure out not the "what" but the "why" and the "how" of teaching and learning. Help us see how everything is connected.

Part 2 cites Haisla elders speaking of "nuyem," protocol. They caution both that some things cannot be shared (as history shows whatever is shared is suppressed by the missionaries) (13) and also that what is not recorded will be lost (15). Unhappy past experience and unfortunate future prediction. How can the two be combined? Does the conundrum give each storyteller permission to make his or her own decision? Robinson's story in this section speaks of oolichan fishing, processing the grease, trading the precious commodity. In the past, no one would miss the oolichan run, even if the fish arrived during a wedding. "As soon as [the chief] said it was okay, the bride hiked up her wedding gown and waded into the river" (19). She points out that the cost of fishing now makes shopping at the mall more economical, and that pollution has almost destroyed the fishery. But, "If the oolichans don't return to our rivers, we lose more than a species. We lose a connection with our history, a thread of tradition that ties us to this particular piece of the Earth, that ties our ancestors to our children" (23). The what, the where, the how, and the why.

Part 3 cites botanical references to traditional medicinal plants and again early ethnographic references to the Haisla people's "Wild Man of the Woods," Bekwis (29), or b'gwus, known as Sasquatch farther south (from the Halkomelem language) and Bigfoot across the line. Robinson's stories here reveal her challenges when writing her Giller Prize and Governor-General's Award–nominated first novel, Monkey Beach – how "Haisla copyright" and storytelling protocol dictated what she could include. Certain clan stories "are owned by either individuals or families and require permission and a feast in order to be published" (31), and how feasts are very expensive to present. She was not permitted to write about the rituals and dances

that happen at the potlatch, although someone told her that writing about the audience, what the crowd was doing, would be permitted. She asks her father to take her to Monkey Beach for research and on the journey he recounts stories he eavesdropped upon years before. “I could point to any mountain, any river or any rocky shoreline and he knew the history” (40). He also explains his understanding of Sasquatch to her, that they are people banished from the villages, living in exile, self-sufficient, seeking companionship, and that the reason they see no Sasquatch on their visit to the beach is probably because: “They must be at home,” Dad says with a smile, “writing” (41, my italics).

Robinson sees and shows how culture is not something frozen in the past, that it embraces shopping and mail order and outboard motors and McDonald’s as much as it does medicinal plants, poles, and potlatches. That the processing is the same, whether the stories involve Elvis, his mother, and Graceland, or Sasquatch and oolichan.

The Snob

- Morley Callaghan

1 IT WAS at the book counter in the department store that John Harcourt, the student, caught a glimpse of his father. At first he could not be sure in the crowd that pushed along the aisle, but there was something about the color of the back of the elderly man’s neck, something about the faded felt hat, that he knew very well. Harcourt was standing with the girl he loved, buying a book for her. All afternoon he had been talking to her, eagerly, but with an anxious diffidence, as if there still remained in him an innocent wonder that she should be delighted to be with him. From underneath her wide-brimmed straw hat, her face, so fair and beautifully strong with its expression of cool independence, kept turning up to him and sometimes smiled at what he said.

That was the way they always talked, never daring to show much full, strong feeling. Harcourt had just bought the book, and had reached into his pocket for the money with a free, ready gesture to make it appear that he was accustomed to buying books for young ladies, when the white-haired man in the faded felt hat, at the other end of the counter, turned half-toward him, and Harcourt knew he was standing only a few feet away from his father.

2 The young man's easy words trailed away and his voice became little more than a whisper, as if he were afraid that everyone in the store might recognize it. There was rising in him a dreadful uneasiness; something very precious that he wanted to hold seemed close to destruction. His father, standing at the end of the bargain counter, was planted squarely on his two feet, turning a book over thoughtfully in his hands. Then he took out his glasses from an old, worn leather case and adjusted them on the end of his nose, looking down over them at the book. His coat was thrown open, two buttons on his vest were undone, his hair was too long, and in his rather shabby clothes he looked very much like a workingman, a carpenter perhaps. Such a resentment rose in young Harcourt that he wanted to cry out bitterly, "Why does he dress as if he never owned a decent suit in his life? He doesn't care what the whole world thinks of him. He never did. I've told him a hundred times he ought to wear his good clothes when he goes out. Mother's told him the same thing. He just laughs. And now Grace may see him. Grace will meet him."

3 So young Harcourt stood still, with his head down, feeling that something very painful was impending. Once he looked anxiously at Grace, who had turned to the bargain counter. Among those people drifting aimlessly by with hot red faces, getting in each other's way, using their elbows but keeping their faces detached and wooden, she looked tall and splendidly alone. She was so sure of herself, her relation to the people in the aisles, the clerks behind the counters, the

books on the shelves, and everything around her. Still keeping his head down and moving close, he whispered uneasily, “Let’s go and have tea somewhere, Grace.”

4 “In a minute, dear,” she said.

5 “Let’s go now.”

6 “In just a minute, dear,” she repeated absently.

7 “There’s not a breath of air in here. Let’s go now.”

8 “What makes you so impatient?”

9 “There’s nothing but old books on that counter.”

10 “There may be something here I’ve wanted all my life,” she said, smiling at him brightly and not noticing the uneasiness in his face.

11 So Harcourt had to move slowly behind her, getting closer to his father all the time. He could feel the space that separated them narrowing. Once he looked up with a vague, sidelong glance. But his father, red-faced and happy, was still reading the book, only now there was a meditative expression on his face, as if something in the book had stirred him and he intended to stay there reading for some time.

12 Old Harcourt had lots of time to amuse himself, because he was on a pension after working hard all his life. He had sent John to the university and he was eager to have him distinguish himself. Every night when John came home, whether it was early or late, he used to go into his father and mother’s bedroom and turn on the light and talk to them about the interesting things that had happened to him during the day. They listened and shared this new world with him. They both sat up in their night clothes and, while his mother asked all the questions, his father

listened attentively with his head cocked on one side and a smile or a frown on his face. The memory of all this was in John now, and there was also a desperate longing and a pain within him growing harder to bear as he glanced fearfully at his father, but he thought stubbornly, “I can’t introduce him. It’ll be easier for everybody if he doesn’t see us. I’m not ashamed. But it will be easier. It’ll be more sensible. It’ll only embarrass him to see Grace.” By this time he knew he was ashamed, but he felt that his shamewas justified, for Grace’s father had the smooth, confident manner of a man who had lived all his life among people who were rich and sure of themselves. Often when he had been in Grace’s home talking politely to her mother, John had kept on thinking of the plainness of his own home and of his parents’ laughing, good-natured untidiness, and he resolved desperately that he must make Grace’s people admire him.

13 He looked up cautiously, for they were about eight feet away from his father, but at that moment his father, too, looked up and John’s glance shifted swiftly far over the aisle, over the counters, seeing nothing. As his father’s blue, calm eyes stared steadily over the glasses, there was an instant when their glances might have met. Neither one could have been certain, yet John, as he turned away and began to talk hurriedly to Grace, knew surely that his father had seen him. He knew it by the steady calmness in his father’s blue eyes. John’s shame grew, and then humiliation sickened him as he waited and did nothing.

14 His father turned away, going down the aisle, walking erectly in his shabby clothes, his shoulders very straight, never once looking back. His father would walk slowly down the street, he knew, with that meditative expression deepening and becoming grave.

15 Young Harcourt stood beside Grace, brushing against her soft shoulder, and made faintly aware again of the delicate scent she used. There, so close beside him, she was holding within

her everything he wanted to reach out for, only now he felt a sharp hostility that made him sullen and silent.

16 “You were right, John,” she was drawling in her soft voice. “It does get unbearable in here on a hot day. Do let’s go now. Have you ever noticed that department stores after a time can make you really hate people?” But she smiled when she spoke, so he might see that she really hated no one.

17 “You don’t like people, do you?” he said sharply.

18 “People? What people? What do you mean?”

19 “I mean,” he went on irritably, “you don’t like the kind of people you bump into here, for example.”

20 “Not especially. Who does? What are you talking about?”

21 “Anybody could see you don’t,” he said recklessly, full of a savage eagerness to hurt her. “I say you don’t like simple, honest people, the kind of people you meet all over the city.” He blurted the words out as if he wanted to shake her, but he was longing to say, “You wouldn’t like my family. Why couldn’t I take you home to have dinner with them? You’d turn up your nose at them, because they’ve no pretensions. As soon as my father saw you, he knew you wouldn’t want to meet him. I could tell by the way he turned.”

22 His father was on his way home now, he knew, and that evening at dinner they would meet. His mother and sister would talk rapidly, but his father would say nothing to him, or to anyone. There would only be Harcourt’s memory of the level look in the blue eyes, and the knowledge of his father’s pain as he walked away.

23 Grace watched John's gloomy face as they walked through the store, and she knew he was nursing some private rage, and so her own resentment and exasperation kept growing, and she said crisply, "You're entitled to your moods on a hot afternoon, I suppose, but if I feel I don't like it here, then I don't like it. You wanted to go yourself. Who likes to spend very much time in a department store on a hot afternoon? I begin to hate every stupid person that bangs into me, everybody near me. What does that make me?"

24 "It makes you a snob."

25 "So I'm a snob now?" she asked angrily.

26 "Certainly you're a snob," he said. They were at the door and going out to the street. As they walked in the sunlight, in the crowd moving slowly down the street, he was groping for words to describe the secret thoughts he had always had about her. "I've always known how you'd feel about people I like who didn't fit into your private world," he said.

27 "You're a very stupid person," she said. Her face was flushed now, and it was hard for her to express her indignation, so she stared straight ahead as she walked along.

28 They had never talked in this way, and now they were both quickly eager to hurt each other. With a flow of words, she started to argue with him, then she checked herself and said calmly, "Listen, John, I imagine you're tired of my company. There's no sense in having tea together. I think I'd better leave you right here."

29 "That's fine," he said. "Good afternoon."

30 "Good-by."

31 "Good-by."

32 She started to go, she had gone two paces, but he reached out desperately and held her arm, and he was frightened, and pleading, “Please don’t go, Grace.”

33 All the anger and irritation had left him; there was just a desperate anxiety in his voice as he pleaded, “Please forgive me. I’ve no right to talk to you like that. I don’t know why I’m so rude or what’s the matter. I’m ridiculous. I’m very, very ridiculous. Please, you must forgive me. Don’t leave me.”

34 He had never talked to her so brokenly, and his sincerity, the depth of his feeling, began to stir her. While she listened, feeling all the yearning in him, they seemed to have been brought closer together, by opposing each other, than ever before, and she began to feel almost shy. “I don’t know what’s the matter. I suppose we’re both irritable. It must be the weather,” she said. “But I’m not angry, John.”

35 He nodded his head miserably. He longed to tell her that he was sure she would have been charming to his father, but he had never felt so wretched in his life. He held her arm tight, as if he must hold it or what he wanted most in the world would slip away from him, yet he kept thinking, as he would ever think, of his father walking away quietly with his head never turning.

The Boat

- Dismond Pacey

The narrator recalls how he sometimes wakes up at 4 a.m., afraid that he has overslept and that someone is waiting for him: either his father in another room or men standing outside, stomping around in the cold and throwing small rocks against his window. When this happens, the narrator is already getting out of bed and looking for his clothes before he realizes that he’s alone, that his father and the men aren’t there, and that there isn’t any boat docked at the pier.

The opening paragraph of the story blurs the lines between past and present: the narrator gets confused and thinks he is an adolescent again. This blurring communicates that even though he is now a middle-aged college professor as he tells this story, he continues to be haunted by his memories of when he was a boy living in Cape Breton, Nova Scotia. The time 4 a.m. is significant because it's when the men of his village used to go out to the boats to prepare to fish—this time will recur throughout the story. These patterns of when to wake up have endured in the narrator, even though he is a long time gone from his former home.

ACTIVE THEMES

RELATED QUOTES WITH EXPLANATIONS

When the narrator wakes up like this, next to his overflowing ashtray, he thinks of death and is afraid, so he splashes his face with water, then walks a mile to a local restaurant that's open all night. In the winter, this walk is so cold that by the time the narrator gets to the restaurant, he has tears in his eyes. The waitress usually comments on the tears, saying it must be extremely cold, and the narrator agrees. The ashtray is a clear metaphor for death, since it is a graveyard for the "corpses" of old cigarettes. The ashtray also connects the narrator to his father, who also used to smoke, showing a bad habit that was inherited between generations. The bleakness of the scene, including the cold and the tears in the narrator's eyes, foreshadow that the memories he has about his father and his old life will not end happily. The narrator may be depressed—later in the story, the narrator's father will himself have what seems to be a prolonged episode of depression.

The narrator makes small talk with the handful of people who are always in the restaurant until the sun comes up. He drinks bitter coffee, then leaves before the morning crowds get there because he teaches at a university in the Midwest and doesn't want to be late. He knows then that

his day will pass as usual and that the memories of the boat that wake him up at night are “only shadows and echoes,” something from a time long passed.

MacLeod continues to paint a bleak scene, with “bitter” coffee and memories that appear as “shadows and echoes.” One of the reasons why the narrator is so disturbed by his memories is that they remind him of his own mortality. The presence of other patrons in the restaurant suggests that the dark feelings the narrator feels are universal, but notably the patrons don’t discuss these feelings—they make small talk instead. The story itself seems to be a way to communicate deep feelings that people themselves do not casually share between each other.

The narrator jumps back in time to his very first memories of the boat. His first memory as a child is of his father in big rubber boots, with a face full of stubble, smelling and tasting of salt, with wild, white hair. On his first short ride in the boat, at a very young age, the narrator rides on his father’s shoulders. After docking, the narrator and his father return home and everyone makes a big deal about the narrator’s first trip. They ask lots of questions that end with the words “the boat,” so the narrator learns it must be something that’s important to all of them

“The Boat” is a frame story, and this is the point where the story transitions from the outside frame which takes places in the Midwest in the present when the narrator is middle-aged, to the middle part of the story, which takes place many years earlier in the Nova Scotia fishing village where the narrator grew up. This scene introduces the most important character in the narrator’s recollections—the father—showing him when he was relatively young and in his prime. It also introduces the titular boat, which is central to the narrator’s family’s way of life.

The narrator jumps to his first memory of his mother. He remembers her as also being obsessed with “the boat,” doing the tasks necessary to support the narrator’s father’s work as a fisherman, like making food and fixing clothes. She often asked her husband “Well, how did things go in the boat today?” which is also the first question the narrator himself remembers asking.

The narrator’s mother has a strong connection to the boat, which in turn demonstrates her strong commitment to the family’s traditional way of life. Her devotion to helping with the boat and the father’s work as a fisherman shows her capability and strength of character, but it also hints at her singular focus and stubbornness—she is only in the boat and this fishing life.

The narrator describes the boat: it is a “Cape Island boat” (as Nova Scotians call it) and it’s made for catching lobsters, mackerel, cod, haddock, and hake, depending on the season. It’s named Jenny Lynn, after the narrator’s mother’s maiden name, following a local tradition where boats are named after a female member of the owner’s family. The narrator admits that, as a child, he didn’t know all the details about the boat, such as its specific dimensions in feet, or the fact that it had an engine from a Chevrolet truck.

The name Jenny Lynn is significant for several reasons. First, it shows that the narrator’s family conforms to what everyone else in the community does, taking a name that follows a local tradition. In particular, the fact that the boat has the mother’s maiden name even more strongly ties both the boat and the mother to this way of life. The narrator’s mother comes from a long line of people who lived and worked by the sea, and the boat acts as a bridge between this long tradition and the present. The boat is both the source of the family’s livelihood and its link to the family’s traditions. Meanwhile, the narrator’s interposed comment about not knowing details about the boat is a reminder that the story is a frame story, and that the narrator is no longer a

part of the tradition that he describes in this scene. Even as it shows the family embedded in its traditions, it also shows that things are going to change.

The narrator lived in a house that was part of a small community of about 50 houses arranged in a horseshoe shape around the wharf from which the fishing boats set out. The inhabitants of the houses are a mix of Catholics and Protestants, whose ancestors were driven out of their previous homelands by turmoil, such as the religious conflicts in Ireland, the Highland Clearances in Scotland, and the Revolutionary War in the United States.

The fact that the houses are arranged in a horseshoe shape around the wharf emphasizes how central fishing is to the small community's way of life. The references to the ancestors of the wharf's inhabitants once again emphasizes the role of tradition in the community. In some ways, however, it also signifies a break with tradition. Groups from various backgrounds—including some that would have been hostile to each other, like Catholics and Protestants in Ireland—have been forced out of their old traditional homes and come together to form a new community that blends elements of their old communities and has developed its own traditions.

The most important room of the narrator's house is the kitchen, which has an old-fashioned stove that burned wood and coal. The kitchen has a big wooden extendable table that could be made larger or smaller depending on the situation, with five hand-crafted wooden chairs. Across from the stove is an old couch that dips in the middle. At the south end of the room is a window that looks out on the sea, and opposite that are clothes hooks for the family. Beneath the hooks is where the family leaves their shoes, mostly rubber boots. The wall also has a barometer. The

kitchen is used by the whole family and is less organized than the other ten rooms of the house but more organized than the narrator's father's room.

The contrast between the cleanliness of the rest of the house and the messiness of the father's room represents the conflict between the narrator's mother and father. The mother's sense of order signifies her devotion to the old traditions—she wants to keep things the same. While the father is also old fashioned in some ways (for example his big rubber boots), his disorder shows that he is not quite as devoted to or content with tradition as the mother. The kitchen window looking out to the sea emphasizes the whole family's connection to the sea, particularly since the kitchen is the one room the whole family shares.

The narrator reveals that it was his mother who kept the rest of the house so organized. The narrator describes her as being a tall woman, "dark and powerfully energetic," like one of the women from a novel by Thomas Hardy. She raised seven children, making all of the meals and most of the clothes, and in addition to that, even maintained elaborate gardens as well as hens and ducks. She is fourteen years younger than the narrator's father, and the narrator describes her as "of the sea, as were all of her people."

Alistair MacLeod, the author of this story, was himself a professor of literature and was very familiar with the writing of Thomas Hardy—he wrote his PhD dissertation on him. Hardy was a realist and naturalist writer, who portrayed characters caught up in forces of both tradition and change that were larger than themselves. Just as the characters in "The Boat" reckon with their traditions and ancestors, MacLeod is also reckoning with his own literary predecessors. Once again, the narrator highlights his mother's connection (as well as her whole family's connection) to the sea.

The narrator moves on to describing his father's bedroom. The door to it is in the kitchen, located between the clothes rack and the barometer. The room always looks like a strong gust of wind had just blown through it. The bed is never made because his father usually sleeps on top of the sheets. Cigarette debris is everywhere, and even the table is full of black cigarette marks, from cigarettes that fell off the ashtray when the narrator's father didn't notice. At the foot of the father's bed is one window that faces out to the sea.

The father's bedroom is one of the most important settings in the story and full of symbolism. The cigarette debris recalls the narrator's ashtray at the beginning of the story, and suggests that the narrator's smoking habits are inherited from his father. The fact that the father's room only has one window, at the foot of his bed, facing out toward the sea, suggests that his whole life is oriented toward the sea—perhaps whether he likes it or not. The room's small size and single window could be taken as suggesting a prison cell, an interpretation that will become more meaningful as the story progresses.

The father has a bureau and a closet in the bedroom. The closet holds a suit, a couple of formal shirts, and black shoes that don't fit him well. His "friendly clothes," some of which were knitted by the narrator's mother, are left sitting on the sole chair in the room. When people visited him, he told them to throw these clothes on the floor so they could use the chair.

The father's discomfort with formal shirts and suits suggests that he is firmly working class. His carelessness with his clothes (many of which were knitted by the narrator's mother) foreshadows some of the discord between the father and mother, by showing that he doesn't always value the same things she does.

Magazines and books are scattered all over the room. Most of the magazines are familiar popular ones, but there's a wider variety of books. Some are conventional but many are used paperbacks that used to be sold for ten cents each in special magazine advertisements. Originally, the father purchased these books from the ads himself (which the narrator's mother disapproved of, because of the cost), but eventually the narrator's sisters, who had moved away to cities, sent him paperbacks. Pulp writers like Mickey Spillane and Ernest Haycox are mixed in with literary writers like Dostoyevsky and Faulkner, and one noteworthy package contained both the poems of Gerard Manley Hopkins and a sexual self-help book called Getting the Most Out of Love.

The father's large collection of books shows that he is well-read. The fact that the books are ten-cent paperbacks suggests that that father can't afford to buy expensive hard covers, but that he is dedicated enough to read whatever it is that he can afford. The books in the father's collection are eclectic—Spillane and Haycox were popular in the early 20th century but mostly forgotten today. Dostoyevsky, Faulkner, and Hopkins, meanwhile, are considered classic writers. The father's mix of low-brow and high-brow suggests that he's at once unpretentious and cerebral—a trait that indicates the father is self-taught and directed in his reading rather than educated. The eclectic book collection might also be seen as MacLeod suggesting that the divide between high- and low-brow is not as wide as it might seem if you approach books with an open mind.

When the narrator's father wasn't on the boat, he would lie in bed to read and smoke while the radio played. The narrator often heard his father awake as late as four a.m., and it seemed to him that his father seemed to never fall completely asleep.

The narrator's father is a creature of habit. The hour of four a.m. appears again, once more creating a link between the narrator and his father. The father seems to never fall fully asleep, suggesting one the one hand that his work is never done and on the other that he so values his free time that he is unwilling to use it to sleep.

The narrator's mother hated the mess in his father's room, and she stopped sleeping in the room shortly after the narrator's birth. In addition to mess, she also disliked reading, having last read Ivanhoe in high school and finding it extremely boring. But in spite of the mother's disapproval, the room stayed as it was, with the door open so that everyone in the house could see.

The narrator's mother's hatred of reading sets up yet another contrast between her and the father. That the narrator's mother finds the book boring suggests she sees no value in things that do not pertain to her everyday life, which in turn makes clear her devotion to the everyday traditions of their fishing livelihood. This, in contrast, makes clear that the father has broader interests beyond just being a fisherman. That the mother disapproves of the state of the fathers room but cannot change it makes clear the intractable and enduring nature of the conflict between them.

Sunday Afternoon

- Alice Munro

In Sunday Afternoon by Alice Munro we have the theme of innocence, acceptance, appearance, desire, class and hope. Taken from her Dance of the Happy Shades collection the story is narrated in the third person by an unnamed narrator and after reading the story the reader realises that Munro may be exploring the theme of class. Throughout the story there is a sense that Alva is very different from any of the other characters. Her place is in the kitchen to help Mrs Gannett, while the other characters, all friends or family of the Gannett's are there to enjoy themselves. It

is only on the promise of being allowed go to the Island does the reader get a sense that Alva may be allowed to live her life outside her duties as a maid. The island itself may also be symbolically important, at least for Alva, as it symbolises hope. She has heard about how much fun those who go to the island have and in many ways she has the same aspirations (or desires) herself. She too wants to go to the island to relax.

Munro also appears to be exploring the theme of appearance. By choosing to read King Lear Alva may be displaying her desire to impress not only other people but men in particular. She is after all seventeen and would have an interest in men (or boys) and by reading King Lear she may be hoping that educationally some of her suitors will be impressed. Though it's not directly stated in the story Alva through her living arrangements also appears to be living her life less opulently (or least extravagantly) than those around her. All the furniture in her room is a mismatch of items that are no longer of any use in any of the other rooms in the Gannett's house. This may be important as it suggests that Alva as the maid in the house is on the outside or is isolated from others. Though she might live in the same house as the Gannetts she is not really a part of their every day life. She has a duty to perform or a role to play. That being as the maid to the Garnetts. Which would also directly play on the theme of class. Alva is answerable to the Gannetts though there is a sense that she longs to live her life as they do. To have the same luxuries.

There is also a sense of innocence in the story. Not so much from Alva but from her mother. Something that is noticeable when Alva is writing her mother a letter. It is as if Alva is explaining the rules of her employment to her mother or at least Alva appears to be accepting of her place in the Gannett's home and is making sure that her mother follows the same rules too. Likewise Mrs Gannett's daughter Margaret is unsure if she should 'start to neck' and it is

through Alva's advice that she decides she will. Another interesting thing about Alva's engagement with Margaret is the noticeable difference in the amount of clothes both girls have and in the quality of the clothes. Which in many ways not only further plays on the theme of class but also on the theme of appearance.

There is also some symbolism in the story, apart from the island, which may be important. As mentioned Munro may be introducing all of Margaret's dresses to highlight at least symbolically the differences in class between both Alva and Margaret. Munro's description of the streets (crescent) outside of Alva's window may also be symbolically important as it is perfect in Alva's eyes. It is the type of environment that Alva herself strives to live in (upper class area). The introduction of Mrs Gannett's cousin may also be important as it is by having him kiss Alva (unexpectedly) that Alva begins to feel part of something. Munro telling the reader 'this stranger's touch had eased her; her body was simply grateful and expectant, and she felt a lightness and confidence she had not known in this house.' For the first time in the story Alva feels connected in some way. The title of the story may also have some symbolic significance as throughout the day (Sunday) Alva is expected to work. Which suggests that Alva may never have any free time for herself. She is a full time maid to the Gannetts.

The end of the story is also interesting as despite a renewed excitement about going to the island. Alva is still holding back a little. Though she welcomed the kiss from Mrs Gannett's cousin she is not necessarily prepared to commit herself fully to him. She knows she can't due to her social status. If anything Mrs Gannett's cousin (an older man) has seduced Alva and for her to pursue him in any way will only lead to her being humiliated. Even at the end of the story Alva knows her place. She is a working class maid who is answerable to her upper class employer. However there is one advantage for Alva at the end of the story. Mrs Gannett's cousin by kissing Lava has

restored her self-confidence. She believes in herself again and is no longer as isolated or as lonely as she has previously been in the story.

Jacob's Wake

-Michael Cook

Michael Cook (1933-1994) was a Canadian dramatist, director, critic, actor, and professor of English at Memorial University. Born to an Anglo-Irish family in London, England, he emigrated to Canada in 1966 and rapidly built a reputation in the 1970s as a playwright of Newfoundland life, history and culture – the most notable of which are **Jacob's Wake** and the one-act dramas collected in **Tiln & Other Plays**. He was the outstanding Canadian radio dramatist of his generation writing over fifty plays for CBC Radio and Television, and a theatre reviewer writing columns for the St. John's *Evening Telegram*.

Jacob's Wake is a full-length drama by Michael Cook. Painful memories are unleashed at a family gathering in a desolate Newfoundland coastal community. The Skipper, a former schooner captain is now bed-ridden and guilty. His greed led to the death of his crew along with his favourite son Jacob, during a seal hunt one winter day more than 30 years ago. Fading in and out of memory and reality, he hears his remaining children and grandchildren battle for a shred of dignity in a world that has taught them only bitter lessons of survival.

Jacob's Wake explores the lives of three generations of Newfoundlanders living in a tiny outport, who are caught between the old ways of the sealers and the fishermen and the new realities of unemployment, poverty, and hopelessness. The storm brewing outside mirrors the stormy relationships inside the Blackburn home. The aged patriarch, called only The Skipper,

lies dying in an upstairs bedroom. Along with him is dying the great seafaring tradition of his people. His already aging son, Winston Blackburn, is a sharp-tongued welfare case who drowns his sorrows in beer and heaps psychological abuse on his wife and sister. He knows that he is nothing and nowhere, the lost generation. And Winston's three sons are the new world to come: Wayne, a corrupt politician, Alonzo, a cynical business man, and Brad, a failed priest. It quickly moves from an apparently realistic family drama as the storm begins to dominate the stage. The whole play, not merely the last few moments, is a wake, specifically for Jacob, the lost son of the title, but more generally for Newfoundland.

Jacob's Wake premiered in 1974 at the Arts and Culture Centre in St. John's, Newfoundland. This Canadian classic has been produced across Canada, at the Swedish National Theatre in Stockholm, and has been performed in college theatre productions as a showcase of student talent.

kipper Blackburn is lying upstairs in bed, as he has done for the last 30 years since his elder son Jacob died. He is waited on by his long-suffering daughter-in-law Rosie. His surviving children are Mary, a prim teacher, and Winston, Rosie's husband, a good-for-nothing who lives off his illegal still and welfare payments. Rosie and Winston's three sons come home for Easter: Alonzo, Brad with his wife Mary, and Wayne, all of them with guilty secrets, although Wayne is a member of the provincial legislature. In less than 24 hours, the action unfolds and the past is revealed. Alonzo forges his father's signature, so that Skipper will be removed to an institution, but his fraud is exposed. Brad, facing his guilt over the death of a girl he made pregnant, leaves the house to die in a storm. It transpires that Jacob lost his life when his father ordered him out on to the ice to hunt seals, just as a storm was brewing. Skipper now imagines that Winston is Jacob. As another storm gathers momentum, Skipper is dying. His ghost appears in full Master's

uniform as the storm reaches its height. Ordering the women below decks, he assumes command of his ship during a seal hunt. Suddenly, the whole house is engulfed by a huge wave which drowns everyone.

With echoes of Ibsen and O'Neill, Michael Cook's bleak image of a family living in Jacob's ‘wake’ (both the trail he has left behind, and the celebration of his death) has been staged internationally. The Blackburns represent the decline in the traditional values of their Newfoundland fishing community: although Skipper is a crazy old man, he stands for something more solid than the mendacity and callousness of the younger generation.

The Valley

-Joan MacLeod

Eighteen-year-old Connor, an aspiring author whose fantastical stories foretell his growing struggle with depression, can’t wait to be free of his adverb-wielding, solve-it-all mother, Sharon. But six weeks after leaving for university, he drops out and returns home.

Dan Mulano is an infatuated new dad and well-meaning police officer whose selfishness is veiled by the lofty aspirations he holds for his family. His wife, Janie, a former addict and exhausted new mom, struggles to cope with the challenges of recovery in the midst of her battle with postpartum depression, which Dan dismisses as just hormones.”

A precipitous incident brings the two families together. When Connor’s erratic behaviour at an underground train station requires police intervention, Dan responds to the call and makes the arrest, but the teen’s jaw is broken during the incident. Is it police brutality or self-harm? For

Sharon, there is no question; she portrays Dan as a reckless cop in the media, while he remains silent, refusing to break protocol and

tell his story.

Inspired by an event in British Columbia that shattered the public's confidence in the police the 2007 Tasering death of Robert Dziekanski during his arrest at the Vancouver airport The Valley dramatizes the volatile relationship between law enforcement and people in the grip of mental illness. In addressing this fraught relationship, award-winning playwright Joan MacLeod empathizes with both parties, each of whom is guided by good intentions but equally challenged by their own cultural biases and flawed humanity.

The Stone Angel

- Margaret Laurence

The Stone Angel Summary

The Stone Angel is a first-person narrative that at times almost breaks into stream-of-consciousness writing as Hagar, the main character, gradually loses lucidity due to old age and illness. The narrative is divided into ten chapters, each of which shifts back and forth between the present time (the 1960s) and an earlier point in Hagar's life.

The novel is set in the fictional town of Manawaka (inspired by Neepawa), a rural part of Canada where conservative values reign and where archaic notions of gender and social class are taken seriously even in the modern era. The central character, Hagar, is a protagonist only by convention. Given her antagonistic behavior toward everyone else around her, which is rooted in her overwhelming pride, the reader would not be wrong to consider her an anti-heroine.

The book consists of two narrative arcs. The present-day story shows us the life of Hagar as an elderly woman of at least 90. Hagar lives in an upstairs bedroom in what used to be her house but which now belongs to her son Marvin. When she discovers that Marvin and his wife Doris are planning to put her into a nursing home, Hagar runs away to a rural spot called Shadow Point. She stays overnight in an abandoned house and is eventually found by her son and daughter-in-law, who immediately take her to the hospital where she is literally belted to the bed at night so that she cannot wander. From time to time, she lapses into the memories that define the second narrative arc. These memories are related to the reader in the present tense, as though they were actually happening simultaneously with the present-day narrative.

Hagar spends most of her life being defined by the men to whom she is connected. She is the third child of Jason Currie, a successful self-made businessman who has built a thriving shop up from nothing. Her mother died in Hagar's birth, and thus Hagar is raised by a housekeeper whom she calls "Auntie Doll." From an early age, it is clear Hagar takes after her stern, calculating, emotionless father; this is evidenced in the way Hagar does not even cry when her father gives her a beating. Hagar's two older brothers, on the other hand, show less aptitude for business, although their father takes pains to teach each of them the basics of the trade. Although Hagar superficially takes after her father, she is also aware of how his loveless nature has shaped her own icy demeanor.

Hagar is neither particularly maternal nor nurturing. When one of her brothers is injured by falling into a frozen pond, she refuses to nurse him through his subsequent illness on his deathbed. Later, Hagar is also a distant mother toward her two sons, unable to show emotion when Marvin, for instance, goes off to fight in World War I.

The reader can infer that Jason Currie is grooming Hagar to run and possibly inherit his family business. She—not her surviving elder brother—is sent to a finishing school in the East. Upon her return, her father wants her to keep the account books in the store. This job is vital to the success of the company. But instead of interpreting the gesture as an expression of trust and respect, Hagar regards it as her father's effort to control her. Hagar exclaims that she wants to be a schoolteacher instead, displeasing her father. And then, in a fit of rebellion, Hagar chooses to marry the crude and lower-class Brampton "Bram" Shipley. Jason Currie retaliates by cutting Hagar out of his life. Hagar, who was previously positioned to run the store, ends up not receiving any inheritance from him whatsoever.

Hagar's marriage with Bram turns out to be very unhappy. Bram speaks poorly, blows his nose with his fingers, and has the tendency to go out drinking with his lower-class friends. He is not particularly hardworking, doing only enough work to survive. Whether Hagar or their two sons are well provided for is not a factor in his decision-making. However, Hagar is physically attracted to Bram, at least initially, because of his handsome appearance, his skill as a dancer, and the fact he seems somewhat forbidden from Jason Currie's perspective. Bram also occasionally shows himself to have a warmth of character, demonstrated when he is heartbroken after his horse disappears. Bram's character creates a difficult predicament for Hagar, who feels it nearly impossible to relate to someone so unrefined. She often feels embarrassed by Bram and realizes her marriage has made it so she is no longer regarded as the highly-esteemed "Jason Currie's daughter." The couple mostly spends their time apart, except at night when Bram frequently comes to Hagar for somewhat forceful sexual encounters. The two eventually separate, and Hagar leaves town to live on the coast as a housekeeper, taking her younger son, John, with her.

As John grows to adulthood, Hagar starts to turn into her father. She resents that she cannot control her son, who eventually abandons her and returns to Manawaka, where he pairs up with a woman named Arlene, who is the daughter of Hagar's childhood friend, Lottie Dreiser. Hagar visits her hometown after hearing news of Bram's poor health. After Hagar has stayed with him for a few weeks, Bram passes away; Hagar decides to stay a few weeks more to provide company for John. But the tragedies continue as John and Arlene are killed in a car accident. Upon hearing news of her son's death, Hagar is unable to show any emotion. Later, when she is alone, she cannot weep at all. She believes she has turned to stone metaphorically, like the large, blind stone angel in the church cemetery.

In the present day, Hagar runs away when she overhears Marvin discussing the possibility of placing her in a nursing home. She associates the nursing home not only with death but also with being controlled. Having spent a lifetime controlling others and getting her own way, Hagar does not wish to become a patient. But Marvin and Doris are no longer capable of caring for her in their home.

Hagar wanders around for a while at Shadow Point, reminiscing, and she meets a stranger named Murray Lees who also spends the night in the abandoned cannery. They speak for a while, and Hagar shares some of her experiences. Later in the morning, the stranger sneaks away to bring help. After a night outdoors, Hagar is sick and suffering from the cold and damp. Marvin and Doris immediately bring Hagar to the hospital—a worse destination than even the dreaded nursing home.

Marvin, Hagar's surviving son, visits her in the hospital. Aware that she is dying, she finally apologizes to him and starts to express her feelings, even forming relationships with the other

patients in the hospital. She drinks a glass of water and her train of thought cuts out, leaving the reader to imagine what is next.

The Stone Angel Themes

The Dangers of Pride

As Hagar comes to realize towards the end of the book, most of the problems in her life stem from her excessive pride. Her sense of superiority is behind her ill-treatment of others, her refusal to acknowledge when she is wrong, and her inability to compromise with others or to see their point of view. Her behavior throughout the story leads to the destruction of several long-term relationships that might otherwise have sustained her and enriched her life.

Ultimately, her illusory superiority only leads to her own suffering. This point is emphasized in the scene where she is in the hospital and is visited by Mr. Troy, who sings a hymn about rejoicing for God. Previously, Hagar has been reluctant to pray, as belief in a higher power requires the relinquishing of pride and embrace of humility. Yet at this moment, Hagar is finally moved to tears, made to viscerally realize that it is her pride that has imprisoned her throughout whole life, blocking her from the true purposes of life: love and happiness.

Control

One of the things Hagar resists more than anything else is other people's attempts to control her. This is a vestige of her reaction to her excessively controlling father. Hagar began to rebel at an early age, but one of the defining points in her life comes when she decides to marry Bram

Shipley, thereby destroying her relationships with most of her family. Her efforts to improve her new husband and to keep him from drinking fail—and she is unable to retain control over her favorite son, whom she loses tragically. But the most prominent example of Hagar's resistance to (what she perceives to be) other people's control comes when she runs away into the woods after discovering that her son and daughter-in-law plan to put her in a nursing home. It is only when Marvin and Doris place her in the hospital—where she is physically restrained at night—that she realizes that control is no longer possible and she begins to come to terms with her own fragility.

Growing Old

The aging process is a central element of The Stone Angel. Few books are told in the point of view of an elderly person, from the perspective of reflecting on one's life as the body weakens. Despite Hagar being a difficult woman most of the time, the reader is still made to sympathize with her predicament and glean insight into how older people become practically invisible. In a society that is very tailored to meet the needs of the young and fit, the elderly are often placed in nursing homes and other institutions, causing them to feel cut-off from their families and normal lives. Since Hagar has felt lonely throughout her life, her age has only exacerbated her circumstance. Yet it also brings a blessing in the sense that, as she degrades physically, she is finally allowed to let go of control and open herself up to others once more.

The Suppression of Emotions

Throughout her life, Hagar constantly suppresses her emotions as an extension of her obsessive need to control herself and others. As a child, she is not moved by seeing a grotesque scene of dying baby chicks. She does not shed a tear when her son John tragically dies in a car accident, having become as emotionally rigid and feelingless as the stone angel of the title. It is not until the end of the book, when she receives kindness from others, that Hagar is finally able to feel and express her emotions, illustrated by the moment when she cries during the minister's hymn.

Resentment

Hagar resents what she perceives to be interference from other people and deliberate attempts by them to control her or to thwart her will. As a young and unmarried woman, she wishes to become a schoolteacher, but her father vetoes the idea, trying to push her into managing the accounts for the store he owns. Whereas her father sees an opportunity for Hagar, she sees only a short-sighted attempt by him to ruin her career plans for his own personal gain. She marries Bram Shipley partly out of resentment, as she knows her father believes Bram to be an unsuitable and unworthy husband. When Hagar insists on marrying him, her father cuts her off without a cent and changes his will so that she will inherit nothing. Jason Currie thus develops his own resentment towards his daughter, whom he refuses to see for the rest of his life. The resentment of these characters stems from their pride and need to be right, which end up isolating them from their family.

Womanhood

What it truly means to be a woman is something that often eludes Hagar in the novel. This is partly due to Hagar coming of age at a time when traditional gender roles are still very much in place, especially in the small-town life of Manawaka. A woman's options in life are often restricted to marriage, childbearing, and the other sorts of "feminine" skills that Hagar learns at finishing school. For her whole life, Hagar is dependent on a man, whether it is her father, her husband, or, later, Mr. Oatley, for whom she works as a housekeeper.

The roles of wife, mother, and daughter do not satisfy Hagar. She refuses to be the heiress to her father's business. She views sexual intimacy with her husband as a chore and burden to bear. Hagar is alienated from her own mothering qualities, having lost her own mother as a newborn. Her emotional rigidity makes it impossible for her to nurture others, at times even becoming apathetic towards her own children. This all contributes to Hagar's sense of always waiting for something more in life and not knowing who she is.

Duty

Throughout the novel, Hagar and characters struggle to understand their duty to their fellow human beings, at times upholding it and at times avoiding it. Early in her life, Hagar neglects the duty to her father and instead chooses to marry Bram Shipley. Once married, Hagar sees a mirror of her own lack of responsibility in Bram, who has difficulty completing the most basic of household chores. This causes Hagar to move away with John, hoping that a new setting will provide John with the clean slate to follow in the footsteps of Jason Currie and perform the duty that Hagar failed to accomplish.

Yet when Bram falls ill, Hagar is motivated by a strong sense of duty, traveling back to Manawaka to visit him and take care of her son. And when Bram dies, Hagar is moved to bury her former husband in the Currie family plot. Although Hagar struggled in her relationships with both her father and her husband, by uniting the families in the graveyard, Hagar is able to somewhat reconcile the past and come to terms with the duty that has often evaded her.

Symbol: The Stone Angel

At the beginning of the novel, the narrator introduces a stone statue of an angel, ancient and battered by the ravages of time and the elements. Hagar, the narrator, identifies strongly with the statue. Hagar is rigid and unbending in her attitudes, abrasive and hard to many of the other people around her, and disinclined to express her feelings or to consider the well-being of others. Yet she is not completely without emotion: she feels the negative emotions of guilt, sorrow, and regret; she is simply unwilling or unable to express them, even when she is alone.

That Hagar should choose a stone angel as a symbol for herself is also a reference to her excessive pride. An angel is a more exalted and holy creature than a human being, and as a literal angel, so too does Hagar believe herself to be superior to the people around her.

Symbol: Water

The tears Hagar is unable to shed, even in private, are a symbol of emotion, as well as life and nourishment—things Hagar regards as dangerous. Although Hagar's father is shown teaching her the various liquid measurements in order to train her to work in the store, she rejects her father and is written out of his will. One of Hagar's older brothers dies after falling into icy water and she is unable to comfort him. It is not until she sets aside her pride on her deathbed that Hagar can finally open up emotionally and cry, releasing decades of stagnant and suppressed emotion. In the last scene of the novel, Hagar's son Marvin gives her a glass of water, which she insists on

drinking herself without assistance. Water, which is used in the rite of baptism, is also symbolic for rebirth and new life. Thus this final action shows a renewed Hagar who is now willing to be revitalized by a connection to her own feelings.

Symbol: Eggs

Eggs appear frequently throughout the novel. As a child, Hagar watches dying chicks who have barely made it out of their eggs, and she is unable to bring them out of their suffering. Here, the egg can represent the sense of nurturance and compassion for others that Hagar has difficulty in feeling. The egg is also a representation for fertility and abundance, as Hagar later sells eggs to support herself independently of her husband.

Motif: Poems

At different moments in the novel, Hagar recites poems, such as the verse about "Old Meg" which she says to bring her courage while in the abandoned house. In the hospital, some of the elderly women in the public ward cry out poems or songs. It is Mr. Troy's hymn, requested by Hagar, that moves her to tears and brings a wave of realizations. In all instances, the hymns and poems are a source of strength and inspiration for characters going through tough circumstances.

Symbol: Physical Restraints

Hagar is physically strapped into a hospital bed to keep her from wandering, particularly because she has the tendency to sleepwalk and a history of running away from home. The physical restraints are a symbolic manifestation of how Hagar has felt manipulated by others her whole life. In reality, Hagar has not so much been controlled by others as she has by her own poor decisions that have curtailed her freedom.

The Stone Angel Metaphors and Similes

Simile: Hagar's voice

Hagar's abrupt speech is described as erupting "like a burst boil," illustrating how what she is trying to say has been contained within her for so long.

Metaphor: The belongings of Hagar's mother

Hagar uses the extended metaphor of a dusty pile of her mother's belongings tucked away in her closet: her "white buttoned shoes and a chipped chamber pot nested in by small and frantic spiders." This description is meant to stand in for the way Hagar knows something is wrong with her health but would rather push it away to the dark corners of her mind.

Metaphor: Marvin's predicament

Marvin and Doris are trying to reason with Hagar about going to the nursing home, and she adamantly refuses. She wins Marvin over, who agrees that if Hagar does not want to go, she does not have to. This angers Doris, who feels she can no longer take care of Hagar. Marvin says he feels he is "caught between two fires," to signify how either side he takes will burn him.

Metaphor: The Fragile ice

The thin and fragile ice in Manawaka is described as "rubber ice," which expresses how it often bends before it gives way. This is the type of ice that Hagar's brother Dan fell through.

Similie: Hagar's glance

Hagar, annoyed by the words of another character, responds with "a glance glassy and hard as cat's eye marbles." This is an extension of the stone imagery with which Hagar defines herself, showing the way Hagar tries to control and intimidate others with her coldness.

The Stone Angel Irony

Dramatic Irony: Hagar's "Independence"

Hagar intends to display her independence and self-reliance by running away; however, everybody else regards her escapade as evidence of her incompetence. It is also this act of escaping that is what lands Hagar in the most restrictive setting yet: the hospital.

Dramatic Irony: Undermining Oneself Through Marriage

When Hagar got married, she believed she would become someone important and well-respected. This did not happen. Hagar's husband Bram Shipley was not highly regarded and as a married woman, her identity was subsumed by that of her husband. She ends up having to sell eggs and work as a housekeeper—a lower-class type of job—in order to achieve independence from Bram.

Dramatic Irony: Hagar Endangering Herself by Trying to Avoid Death

Hagar fears death. Avoiding the nursing home and all its implications of dying is the main reason why she runs away from Marvin and Doris and holes up in the abandoned cannery. Yet by escaping from her family and the care of doctors, Hagar exposes herself to the elements and puts herself at risk of serious illness or death.

Dramatic Irony: The Less Favored Son Being More Favorable

Hagar has two sons and has always preferred the younger one, John, while her relationship with Marvin is more distant. When she separates from her husband, she brings John with her and hopes he will take after her father rather than Bram. But John eventually returns to Bram and goes against Hagar's advice in every way. It ends up being her less favored son, Marvin, who is more successful and shows her the greatest love and loyalty.

The Stone Angel Essay Questions

1. **Compare and contrast the characters of Hagar's two major antagonists: Jason Currie and Bram Shipley.**

   Jason and Bram are both men who have grown up in Manawaka. They are each stubborn in their own ways, and neither of them can be easily pressured into changing his mind. Both love Hagar a great deal, yet they have trouble showing it. Hagar is estranged from both of them: disowned by her father and separated from Bram after moving to the coast. Both men have dealt with the loss of a wife and are somewhat estranged from their own nurturing qualities, finding it difficult to show affection.

   The differences between the two men are more prominent. Jason Currie is a successful, self-made merchant with a strong work ethic. He is critical of his children and insists on the best for them, especially for Hagar. He has high standards and can often be punitive when they are not met. Bram, on the other hand, is rather apathetic towards his children, having very low standards for himself, others, and even the way his house is kept. He does not educate himself or attempt to speak well or indulge in social niceties. He works only enough to take care of his own needs and, unlike Jason, does not much consider the future of his family.

   Although Hagar chose her husband as a rebellion against her father's controlling ways, she discovers that life with the coarse Bram is far from ideal either. Both men end up showing Hagar how lasting families cannot be formed if there is not some sort of genuine connection where people can hold the other in respect and love.

2.

Is Hagar a reliable narrator? Use examples from the book to support your argument.

Hagar is a rather unreliable narrator. She jumps to conclusions about other people's reasoning and motives that are skewed by her own victim mentality, such as when she misconstrues her father's desire to groom her as his successor as a desire to manipulate and control her. Her thoughts and opinions of others, such as Doris, are uniformly negative instead of presenting a rounded version of the facts that takes into account Doris's ongoing commitment to taking care of her.

Hagar makes decisions that the reader knows objectively are wrong and short-sighted. She marries Bram Shipley—a man who has many good qualities, yet whose flaws Hagar cannot tolerate and does not have the wherewithal to change. She fails to see that her attempts to control her younger son, John, drive him away from her. She also fails to understand that the way other people treat her is in part a consequence of her constant verbal undermining and arrogant attitude. Even the way she does not recognize her own face in the mirror is demonstrative of how out-of-touch she is with reality.

The narrative style—in which Hagar alternates between the present and the past in a spontaneous fashion—also can suggest a certain confusion in distinguishing the past from present. In her weaker moments, she even believes certain deceased relatives to be alive, such as when she thinks Murray is her son John.

3.

What literary technique does Margaret Laurence use to flesh out Hagar's character? Why does it work?

Margaret Laurance uses an episodic structure featuring frequent flashbacks into Hagar's memory. Instead of using the past tense to describe Hagar's childhood, she uses the present tense for scenes like the one in which Jason teaches Hagar her liquid measures. This gives an immediacy to the scene and allows extremely vivid, multi-sensory descriptions.

The entire novel is written in the first-person singular point of view. For this reason, all that can be presented is what Hagar knows or experiences. Allowing Hagar to relive past life experiences in the present tense lets the author contrast the woman Hagar is now with the woman she was early in her marriage or in middle age. This provides the objectivity and necessary perspective to allow the reader to understand and deduce things without relying solely on the explanation offered by Hagar's narrative voice.

4.

Explain the narrative significance of eyes and vision in this novel.

The stone angel introduced at the beginning of the book is a large but crude carving with which Hagar identifies. The statue does not have eyes, and their absence is a metaphor for Hagar's lack of self-knowledge or clear perception. Near the end of the novel, Hagar's literal eyesight is fading, but as she loses her ability to see things physically, she becomes, like the Gloucester character in Shakespeare's *King Lear*, more aware of the truth.

Hagar is also very concerned with appearances. Even as a young child, she recalls walking about dressed expensively and cleanly. She fancies herself better than other girls in the town because her father's wealth allows her to dress better. As an elderly woman, she still wears corsets and garments to present herself in the best possible way. She resents the fact that the medical personnel examining her can see her aged, vein-lined body and her pubic hair. Yet she seldom looks at herself in the mirror. After Lottie's daughter refers to her as "the egg-

woman," Hagar is moved to look at her own reflection and is shocked by what she perceives as ugliness.

Hagar's pride is what gives her such a strong self-image and belief in her own superiority. But it is this same pride makes her look at herself objectively.

5. **5**

Does Hagar change at all throughout the novel? If so, how? If not, why might that be the case?

Hagar's consistent and tragic pride is the centerpiece of the novel, imparting the lesson of how life becomes stagnant when one refuses to change their negative behaviors. We see how Hagar's condescending attitude throughout her life has only brought her loneliness. In the present day of the novel, Hagar's belittling behavior towards her daughter-in-law, Doris, as well as the medical staff demonstrates that she has not entirely relinquished her sense of superiority in her old age.

Yet in the last couple of chapters of the novel, the reader does begin to see a slight internal shift in this anti-heroine. After Hagar is found in the cannery and taken to the hospital, it is as if she has agreed to surrender the imaginary control she has exerted throughout her life. Realizing she is sick and close to death, there is no reason to wear the same old mask of pride. Finally, she acknowledges her own vulnerability, and in this humbled state, she is finally able to form a couple of genuine, albeit brief connections, with fellow patients in the hospital, such as Elva and Sandra. Through these relationships, Hagar is able to see how harshly judging others only makes one more alone.

The Apprenticeship of Duddy

- Mordecai Richler

The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz Summary

Duddy Kravitz is a youth growing up in Montreal, Quebec, and is a member of the Jewish religion. Before his grandfather passed away, he told Duddy that land was important, and "a man without land is nobody". Therefore, Duddy grows up respecting this belief, and makes it his primary goal in life to acquire land and money, despite the negative consequences that this may have on his relationship with his family.

Duddy's Uncle Benjy never really cared for Duddy, and preferred his brother because he wanted to become a doctor. Because Duddy is so greedy when it comes to money, he fires Duddy from a job at his clothing factory.

While out on a date with a girlfriend named Yvette, Duddy discovers a beautiful pond that he thinks would make a great resort place for tourists. Yvette thinks that this behavior is rather rude, as she prefers the land stay as it is.

Meanwhile, Duddy starts a film company to further his entrepreneurial ambitions. He meets a blacklisted man (who happens to be a communist), and hires him on the spot. He wants to produce a film about Jerry Dingleman, who had a miraculous childhood, but fails to capture Jerry's attention.

By buying up land in urban areas, Duddy starts to become richer, but at the expense of his emotional health. Now, most of what he is spending is from loans from the bank or friends, and he has no money in hand. Duddy buys the lake that he once wanted, and moves into his now-deceased uncle's mansion.

Pressing everyone he knows for money, Duddy loses Yvette as a friend. Despite this, Duddy still thinks he is "manly" because of all of the things he owns.

Duddy Kravitz

Duddy's entire narrative revolves around a piece of advice he got from his grandfather when he was a kid and that by adulthood has transformed into an obsession: "A man without land is nobody." His story is a trek from teenage bad boy to entrepreneurial invention and the pursuit, by any means necessary, of enough money to buy a lake not yet spoiled by development.

Simcha Kravitz

The grandfather. Duddy's plan for the land purchase—aside from becoming somebody—is the best retirement plan possible. But the grandfather's advice did not extend to the morality of avoiding being a nobody.

Yvette Durelle

Duddy's girlfriend whom he meets while working as a waiter at summer resort. It is while at that resort that Duddy is led to discover the lake secreted away from the madding resort crowd. Duddy brings Yvette on board as a personal assistant, but their romance becomes tainted due to Yvette's increasing disapproval of Duddy's swindles.

Irwin Shubert

Shubert is a teenager who first crosses path with Duddy while working together at the resort. Shubert's disapproval exceeds Yvette's as he makes accusations that it is precisely Jewish businessmen like Duddy who keep anti-Semitism thriving. A rigged game of chance depletes Duddy of the money he made during the summer.

Jerry Dingleman

Known as the Boy Wonder for a shadowy past selling street car transfers that made good money fast. Montreal's Jewish community looks down on him for betting at the track with money that he could instead be donating to Jewish charities. Although he grew rich, he also developed polio.

Virgil Roseboro

American epileptic whom Duddy meets on a trip to New York. Duddy becomes embroiled in Virgil's pinball smuggling business. While the educated and erudite Virgil shows genuine loyalty and friendship to Duddy, Duddy eventually cheats Virgil out of money after he is seriously injured in an accident resulting from having a seizure while working for Duddy as a driver.

The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz Analysis

Duddy Kravitz is a young Jewish boy obsessed with success. The boy's grandfather, Simcha, convinces him that family and society respect a man if he owns the land. Since then, Duddy is obsessed with owning a piece of land. As a young boy, he starts working for his uncle, Benjy. However, Benjy dislikes Duddy because he believes that he is driven by greediness. When the two fall out, Duddy starts working as a waiter in a nearby hotel. His colleagues in the hotel mock him. As a result, one of the colleagues tricks him into playing a rigged roulette game where Duddy loses all his money.

One day, Duddy goes to the nearby lake with Yvette, his girlfriend. The two make love, but Duddy is preoccupied with the land around the lake. Obsessed with owning a piece of land, Duddy envisions it as a tremendous site for a community resort during summer. When he gets back to his homeland, he sets up several businesses to earn a profit. While here, his interest in

owning the land around the lake grows vividly. Soon after, his uncle, Benjy, passes on, and Duddy inherits his mansion.

Duddy is informed that the last piece of land around the lake is being sold. By the near guess of his memory, Duddy discovers that he cannot raise enough money to purchase the land at the moment. Therefore, he resorts to using unscrupulous means of possessing the land. Duddy forges the cheque and obtains the land illegally. The people around him alienate from him due to this offense. The book warns people against avaricious means to acquire wealth and power.

Lake St. Pierre Property

The most over symbol within the novel is the land around Lac St. Pierre. This pristine and picturesque bit of real estate immediately captures the heart and imagination of the titular anti-hero as he immediately makes an association with the place and his grandfather's fabled "land" that will supposedly make him a "somebody." The property symbolizes all of Duddy's hopes and aspirations, such as his ardent desire to be recognized and treated as someone of value. It is also one of the few altruistic acts he does in the novel as one of his motivations for purchasing the plot of land is to give his grandfather "the best retirement plan" so it is also symbolic of his love for his grandfather.

Roulette Wheel

A young Duddy, after having saved up what he felt to be a significant amount of cash decides unwisely to do a bit of gambling—betting on roulette—thinking he can grow his cash in this way. What he doesn't know however is that the game is rigged and he looses all of his hard-earned cash. The roulette wheel is symbolic of a couple of things as this bitter lesson becomes a pivotal learning for him. It symbolizes Duddy's ambitions and desire for wealth, and how these things can often hamper his sound judgement. The game of roulette was rigged by Irwin Shubert,

who is completely inimical to Duddy's goals of becoming wealthy; as such this crushing loss becomes his first run-in with Anti-Semite sentiments of the world at large, and the game becomes a symbol of that unreasoning racist hate the Jewish community is faced with.

Uncle Benjy

Uncle Benjy is Duddy's wealthy relative that funds his older brother, Lennie's eduction through med school. He is far from genial towards Duddy however, as he sees him as a crass swindler that only wants wealth for selfish means. He does however take kindly to Lennie, seeing his desire to pursue medicine as both a manifestation of a sharp intellect as well as evidence of magnanimity of character as a career in medicine as seen as a noble, selfless profession. These leanings and cultural biases effectively turn Uncle Benjy into the symbol for traditional Jewish notions of family and propriety. He also symbolize the socio-economic divide within the Jewish community because of his nasty tendency to look down on Duddy's entrepreneurial tendencies.

A Career in Law/Medicine

A Career in Law/Medicine is the highest aspiration of every Jewish parent in St. Urbain Street community for their children. This is because many of them view being a doctor or a lawyer as a genteel profession, more noble than say owning a business or being employed by a company, because as a doctor one saves lives and as a lawyer one is able to defend the interests of their "innocent" clients. There is also the tendency to think that making money as a doctor or a lawyer is easier than say running a business or waiting for a paycheck because the money/clients literally come walking right through their doors without any prompting. This idea, in addition to the perceived magnanimity of the profession, turns it into the very symbol of success for both Jewish parents and their children.

Jerry Dingleman

Known in the Jewish community as “The Boy Wonder” he is elevated to mythical status within the St. Urbain Street community for his street smarts and financial savvy. His rags to riches story is recounted with great fondness and begrudging respect. Despite his great wealth however he is also regarded poorly by a number of members in their community as he is seen as a greedy, selfish person who makes money through dishonest, often criminal, means. He is symbolic to the Jewish community as a cautionary tale, a warning to young, impressionable Jews not to sacrifice their souls and their dignity in the pursuit of wealth and recognition.

The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz Metaphors and Similes

A Comic Novel

This work is often described as a comic novel. Much of the humor is situated in the era in which it was written; humor that may not inspire as much laugher as it once did. For instance, this description of a temple sounds like something straight out of a routine by a 1950's standup comic:

"The few times I stepped inside there," Dingleman once said, "I felt like a Jesuit in a whorehouse."

The Age of Irony Commences

The era also saw the first flickering of what would become almost the norm in novels written by new young authors in the 1960’s: the ironic inversion of the conventional. This style of writing was perfected and reached its zenith with Joseph Heller’s Catch-22 where every page features a joke like the one displayed here. Such irony is so pervasive in the fiction since then that it is entirely possible to read the line without even realizing there is a joke:

“the wind began to cut quicker across the fields, ***suddenly the sun went out like a light****”*

Lazy Writing

One craves for irony in this example; it would explain the shockingly uninspired use of metaphorical imagery. Even in the 1950’s, however, this would be on exhibit as an example of distinctly uncreative engagement metaphor and simile.

“The silence that fell was so thick you could cut it with a knife, but Mr. Dermott didn't notice that Rocky turned pale as a sheet.”

Ironic or Not?

The author returns to the subject of sunlight disappearing with a simile that works as ironic zinger, but may actually lack irony. A traffic light can change quickly, of course; usually to red when you are trying to catch green. But as you sit there waiting for the green to come back around, the momentum with which those lights change seems anything but quick.

“The sun went, ***darkness came quick as a traffic light change****, and the snow began to gleam purple.”*

Situating the Theme

The overarching theme of the novel is placed within context by the aforementioned Mr. Dingleman, with his aversion to being inside that temple. When Duddy mindlessly repeats a platitude about a man without land being a nobody, Dingleman forces the issue:

"There's something wrong. A mistake somewhere when a boy your age is already ***pursuing money like he had a hot poker up his ass****.”*

Irony of Wealth

Duddy's entire narrative is marked by his mania for pursuing wealth so that he can become the mythical "somebody" that his grandfather speaks so highly of. Unfortunately however his pursuit of wealth is also marked by a great recklessness; as if to say that the acquisition of wealth must be attained by any and all means possible. In the end, though Duddy learns, much to his chagrin that money doesn't, or rather cannot, buy contentment, respect, or peace of mind that he wants.

Irony of Duddy's Wealth

Duddy is a schemer through and through and this knack for swindling brings him a consider amount of wealth over time. It is tragic and ironic that his wealth almost always comes from dishonest means. Moreover, his money also often comes at the cost of human suffering as it is always some poor fool that has trusted Duddy that comes away with the proverbial short end of the stick.

Irony of Duddy's Drive for Success

His pursuit of money originally stems from his desire to give his grandfather a nice place to retire and as a means of validating his worth. Eventually however it takes a life of its own and consumes him to the point that he is willing to cheat and burn bridges to achieve his goals. He becomes driven by the pursuit of money for the sake of acquiring it rather than for what can be purchased by it.

Irony of Uncle Benjy's Support

Uncle Benjy is more than willing to support Lennie through med school because it is a credit to him to be helping a young man achieve such a noble profession. It is ironic that he didn't see the potential in Duddy's entrepreneurial streak, looking down on him instead labelling him as a

duplicitous schemer. He may have turned out very differently had Uncle Benjy mentored him on how to conduct business with integrity.

Irony of Yvette Durelle's relationship with Duddy Kravitz

Yvette is Duddy's love interest and she is his complete polar opposite. She is honest and more than willing to roll up her sleeves to do an honest day's work. In addition to being his long-suffering girlfriend she also functions as a highly efficient secretary and personal assistant to him as she has considerable administrative and organizational skills. Given her character and considerable talents it is terribly ironic that she has ended up with a character like Duddy for a boyfriend. His constant fraudulent transactions and all-consuming drive for wealth causes her considerable grief. Add to this grab bag of worries the non-committal nature of his relationship to her despite her actual love for him and how reliant he is on her organizational talents.

Jewish Culture

The entire novel's narrative is colored primarily by the Jewish culture because it is told through a Jewish character and his interactions with his community.This is the most pervasive image in the novel and in many cases it serves not just as the backdrop in which the narrative unfolds but also as a plot device and as a thought framework by which many of the primary characters operate in.

Strained Family Ties/Relationships

Nearly as ubiquitous as images of Jewish culture are the images of strained relationships. This is another major plot driver in Duddy's narrative as he struggles to achieve his goals of financial stability. In his mania for wealth he sacrifices everything, his humanity, dignity, and tragically his relationships. His relationship with his brother, Lennie, is worn when he asks him to do an abortion that could have caused his brother to lose his medical license.His relationship with his

Uncle Benjy, Yvette, and later on even his revered grandfather would be taxed to the point of breaking, because of all the swindling and greed that marks his dealings.

Shady Business Dealings/Betrayals

All of Duddy's so-called "business dealings" are swindles, each one of them intended to enrich him by having someone else get the short end of the stick. His narrative is rife with all sorts of underhanded deals, bait-and-switch routines, and contractual violations that would sicken most any honest entrepreneur; sadly however, this is necessary as these images of cheating and betrayals are very tightly woven into the narrative of his pursuit of money—the seeming core impetus of his existence.

Class Divides

The novel is full of descriptions of the class divide, the proverbial distance between the haves and the have-nots. The titular character hails from the poor Jewish ghetto of St. Urbain where the rags-to-riches tale of the ne'er-do-well Jerry Dingleman are told almost as inspirational stories rather than cautionary tales. Even the sage advise that Simcha Kravitz gives Duddy is the result of the pervasive reality that money—to a certain extent at least—buys respect and even a modicum of loyalty. Uncle Benjy, is the wealthy Kravitz and rather than help the poorer Kravitz kids by regarding them equally takes a shine only to Lennie because of his medical aspirations but looks down on Duddy because he regards him as a lowlife swindler who thinks of little else other than making a buck—a matter that one can hardly blame on him given that he doesn't have much to his name.

1. **What is being alluded to in the novel's title?**

   The titular Duddy Kravitz receives business advice from his grandfather that makes an immense impact upon him; so much so that all of his future business decisions are shaped by

it. This bit of advice prompts him to take on four jobs as soon as he is able to apply for legal employment and becomes the embodiment of the penny-pinching Jew in his single-minded pursuit of amassing enough money to purchase a parcel of land. The advice he receives and how it shapes his future is what is being alluded to as his "apprenticeship" in the novel.

2.

What does "land" symbolize in the novel?

Although Duddy's grandfather was talking specifically about actual, physical real estate, "land" also came to mean the financial capital and the ability to actually purchase, maintain, and develop the parcel of land once it was owned. In short, to Duddy, land was more than just a plot of earth, it meant the financial capacity that will enable him to buy both his needs and his wants—and by extension—to buy the respect and admiration of peers and rivals.

3.

How is the theme of racism—more specifically, antisemitic sentiments—tackled in the novel?

The theme of antisemitism is discussed through Duddy and his interactions with the other characters in the novel, most especially Irwin Shubert. Irwin is particularly vocal about his objections of Duddy's questionable business practices and general avarice, going as far as to say that Duddy's practices are actually helping to perpetuate antisemitic sentiments by living up to negative stereotypes of the Jewish business owner. In short, even if Duddy would have been an excellent role model for would-be entrepreneurs everywhere because of his tenacity and willingness to work long and hard, these characteristics actually work against him—and by extension the race he unwittingly represents—because of his tendency to make use of ethically questionable practices in order to achieve his financial objectives.