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SYLLABUS

Unit-1: Introduction

Harlem Renaissance, World War II and its aftermath, Post-modern impulse, Multiculturalism

Unit-2: Poetry

1. Richard Cory – Edward Arlington Robinson

2. The Road Not Taken – Robert Frost

3. In a Station of the Metro – Ezra Pound

4. The Snow Man – Wallace Stevens

5. A Dream Deferred – Langston Hughes

6. Mirror – Sylvia Plath

7. Mr. Edwards and the Spider – Robert Lowell

8. An Agony. As Now. – Amiri Baraka

Unit-3: Drama

The Crucible – Arthur Miller

Unit-4: Short Stories

1. This Is What It Means to Say Phoenix, Arizona – Sherman Alexie

2. Something to Remember Me By – Saul Bellow

3. Separating – John Updike

4. The Snows of Kilimanjaro – Ernest Hemingway

Unit-5: Fiction

The House on Mango Street – Sandra Cisneros

Unit-1: Introduction

Harlem Renaissance

With the **end of the Civil War in 1865,** hundreds of thousands of African Americans newly freed from the yoke of slavery in the South began to dream of fuller participation in American society, including political empowerment, equal economic opportunity, and economic and cultural self-determination.

Unfortunately, by the late 1870s, that dream was largely dead, as white supremacy was quickly restored to the **Reconstruction South**. White lawmakers on state and local levels passed strict racial segregation laws known as "**Jim Crow laws"** that made African Americans second-class citizens. While a small number of African Americans were able to become landowners, most were exploited as sharecroppers, a system designed to keep them poor and powerless. Hate groups like the **Ku Klux Klan (KKK)** perpetrated lynchings and conducted campaigns of terror and intimidation to keep African Americans from voting or exercising other fundamental rights

In the 1920's, creative and intellectual life flourished within African American communities in the North and Midwest regions of the United States, but nowhere more so than in Harlem. The New York City neighborhood, encompassing only three square miles, teemed with black artists, intellectuals, writers, and musicians. Black-owned businesses, from newspapers, publishing houses, and music companies to nightclubs, cabarets, and theaters, helped fuel the neighborhood's thriving scene. Some of the era's most important literary and artistic figures migrated to or passed through "the Negro capital of the world," helping to define a period in which African American artists reclaimed their identity and racial pride in defiance of widespread prejudice and discrimination.

The origins of the Harlem Renaissance lie in the Great Migration of the early 20th century, when hundreds of thousands of black people migrated from the South into dense urban areas that offered relatively more economic opportunities and cultural capital. It was, in the words of editor, journalist, and critic Alain Locke, "a spiritual coming of age" for African American artists and thinkers, who seized upon their "first chances for group expression and self-determination." Harlem Renaissance poets such as Langston Hughes, Claude McKay, and Georgia Douglas Johnson explored the beauty and pain of black life and sought to define themselves and their community outside of white stereotypes.

With booming economies across the North and Midwest offering industrial jobs for workers of every race, many African Americans realized their hopes for a better standard of living—and a more racially tolerant environment—lay outside the South. By the turn of the 20th century, the Great Migration was underway as hundreds of thousands of African Americans relocated to cities like Chicago, Los Angeles, Detroit, Philadelphia, and New York. The Harlem section of Manhattan, which covers just three square miles, drew nearly **175,000 African Americans**, giving the neighborhood the largest concentration of black people in the world. Harlem became a destination for African Americans of all backgrounds. From unskilled laborers to an educated middle-class, they shared common experiences of slavery, emancipation, and racial oppression, as well as a determination to forge a new identity as free people.

The Great Migration drew to Harlem some of the greatest minds and brightest talents of the day, an astonishing array of African American artists and scholars. Between the end of World War I and the mid-1930s, they produced one of the most significant eras of cultural expression in the nation's history—the Harlem Renaissance. Yet this cultural explosion also occurred in Cleveland, Los Angeles and many cities shaped by the great migration. Alain Locke, a Harvard-educated writer, critic, and teacher who became known as the "dean" of the Harlem Renaissance, described it as a "spiritual coming of age" in which African Americans transformed "social disillusionment to race pride."

The Harlem Renaissance encompassed poetry and prose, painting and sculpture, jazz and swing, opera and dance. What united these diverse art forms was their realistic presentation of what it meant to be black in America, what writer Langston Hughes called an "expression of our individual dark-skinned selves," as well as a new militancy in asserting their civil and political rights.

Among the Renaissance's most significant contributors were intellectuals W.E.B. Du Bois, Marcus Garvey, Cyril Briggs, and Walter Francis White; electrifying performers Josephine Baker and Paul Robeson; writers and poets Zora Neale Hurston, Effie Lee Newsome, Countee Cullen; visual artists Aaron Douglas and Augusta Savage; and an extraordinary list of legendary musicians, including Louis Armstrong, Count Basie, Eubie Blake, Cab Calloway, Duke Ellington, Billie Holiday, Ivie Anderson, Josephine Baker, Fats Waller, Jelly Roll Morton, and countless others

At the height of the movement, Harlem was the **epicenter of American culture**. The neighborhood bustled with African American-owned and run publishing houses and newspapers, music companies, playhouses, nightclubs, and cabarets. The literature, music, and fashion they created defined culture and "cool" for blacks and white alike, in America and around the world.

As the 1920s came to a close, so did the Harlem Renaissance. Its heyday was cut short largely due to the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and resulting **Great Depression**, which hurt African American-owned businesses and publications and made less financial support for the arts available from patrons, foundations, and theatrical organizations.

However, the Harlem Renaissance's impact on America was indelible. The movement brought notice to the great works of African American art, and inspired and influenced future generations of African American artists and intellectuals. The self-portrait of African American life, identity, and culture that emerged from Harlem was transmitted to the world at large, challenging the racist and disparaging stereotypes of the Jim Crow South. In doing so, it radically redefined how people of other races viewed African Americans and understood the African American experience.

Most importantly, the Harlem Renaissance instilled in African Americans across the country a new spirit of self-determination and pride, a new social consciousness, and a new commitment to political activism, all of which would provide a foundation for the Civil Rights Movement of the 1950s and 1960s. In doing so, it validated the beliefs of its founders and leaders like Alain Locke and Langston Hughes that art could be a vehicle to improve the lives of the African Americans.

World War II and its Aftermath

The **aftermath of World War II** was the beginning of a new era for all countries involved, defined by the decline of all European colonial empires and simultaneous rise of two superpowers: the Soviet Union (USSR) and the United States (USA). Allies during World War II, the US and the USSR became competitors on the world stage and engaged in the Cold War, so called because it never resulted in overt, declared total war between the two powers but was instead characterized by espionage, political subversion and proxy wars. Western Europe and Japan were rebuilt through the American Marshall Plan whereas Central and Eastern Europe fell under the Soviet sphere of influence and eventually behind an "Iron Curtain". Europe was divided into a US-led Western Bloc and a Soviet-led Eastern Bloc. Internationally, alliances with the two blocs gradually shifted, with some nations trying to stay out of the Cold War through the Non-Aligned Movement. The War also saw a nuclear arms race between the two superpowers; part of the reason that the Cold War never became a "hot" war was that the Soviet Union and the United States had nuclear deterrents against each other, leading to a mutually assured destruction standoff.

As a consequence of the war, the Allies created the United Nations, an organization for international cooperation and diplomacy, similar to the League of Nations. Members of the United Nations agreed to outlaw wars of aggression in an attempt to avoid a third world war. The devastated great powers of Western Europe formed the European Coal and Steel Community, which later evolved into the European Economic Community and ultimately into the current European Union. This effort primarily began as an attempt to avoid another war between Germany and France by economic cooperation and integration, and a common market for important natural resources.

The end of the war also increased the rate of decolonization from the great powers with independence being granted to India (from the United Kingdom), Indonesia (from the Netherlands), the Philippines (from the US) and a number of Arab nations, primarily from specific rights which had been granted to great powers

from League of Nations Mandates in the post World War I-era but often having existed *de facto* well before this time. Independence for the nations of Sub-Saharan Africa came more slowly.

The aftermath of World War II also saw the rise of communist influence in Southeast Asia, with the People's Republic of China, as the Chinese Communist Party emerged victorious from the Chinese Civil War in 1949.

Post-modern impulse

Postmodernism is a broad movement that developed in the mid-to-late 20th century across philosophy, the arts, architecture, and criticism, marking a departure from modernism. The term has been more generally applied to describe a historical era said to follow after modernity and the tendencies of this era.

Postmodernism is generally defined by an attitude of skepticism, irony, or rejection toward what it describes as the grand narratives and ideologies associated with modernism, often criticizing Enlightenment rationality and focusing on the role of ideology in maintaining political or economic power. Postmodern thinkers frequently describe knowledge claims and value systems as contingent or socially-conditioned, framing them as products of political, historical, or cultural discourses and hierarchies. Common targets of postmodern criticism include universalist ideas of objective reality, morality, truth, human nature, reason, science, language, and social progress. Accordingly, postmodern thought is broadly characterized by tendencies to self-consciousness, self-referentiality, epistemological and moral relativism, pluralism, and irreverence.

Postmodern critical approaches gained popularity in the 1980s and 1990s, and have been adopted in a variety of academic and theoretical disciplines, including cultural studies, philosophy of science, economics, linguistics, architecture, feminist theory, and literary criticism, as well as art movements in fields such as literature, contemporary art, and music. Postmodernism is often associated with schools of thought such as deconstruction, post-structuralism, and institutional critique, as well as philosophers such as Jean-François Lyotard, Jacques Derrida, and Fredric Jameson.

Criticisms of postmodernism are intellectually diverse and include arguments that postmodernism promotes obscurantism, is meaningless, and that it adds nothing to analytical or empirical knowledge.

The basic features of what is now called postmodernism can be found as early as the 1940s, most notably in the work of artists such as Jorge Luis Borges. However, most scholars today agree postmodernism began to compete with modernism in the late 1950s and gained ascendancy over it in the 1960s. Since then, postmodernism has been a powerful, though not undisputed, force in art, literature, film, music, drama, architecture, history, and continental philosophy.

The primary features of postmodernism typically include the ironic play with styles, citations and narrative levels, a metaphysical skepticism or nihilism towards a "grand narrative" of Western culture, and a preference for the virtual at the expense of the Real (or more accurately, a fundamental questioning of what 'the real' constitutes).

Since the late 1990s, there has been a growing sentiment in popular culture and in academia that postmodernism "has gone out of fashion". Others argue that postmodernism is dead in the context of current cultural production.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism, the view that cultures, races, and ethnicities, particularly those of minority groups, deserve special acknowledgment of their differences within a dominant political culture. That acknowledgment can take the forms of recognition of contributions to the cultural life of the political community as a whole, a demand for special protection under the law for certain cultural groups, or autonomous rights of governance for certain cultures. Multiculturalism is both a response to the fact of cultural pluralism in modern democracies and a way of compensating cultural groups for past exclusion, discrimination, and oppression. Most modern democracies comprise members with diverse cultural viewpoints, practices, and contributions. Many minority cultural groups have experienced exclusion or the denigration of their contributions and identities in the past. Multiculturalism seeks the inclusion of the views and contributions of diverse members of society while maintaining respect for their differences and withholding the demand for their assimilation into the dominant culture.

Multiculturalism as a challenge to traditional liberalism

Multiculturalism stands as a challenge to liberal democracy. In liberal democracies, all citizens should be treated equally under the law by abstracting the common identity of "citizen" from the real social, cultural, political, and economic positions and identities of real members of society. That leads to a tendency to homogenize the collective of citizens and assume a common political culture that all participate in. However, that abstract view ignores other politically salient features of the identities of political subjects that exceed the category of citizen, such as race, religion, class, and sex. Although claiming the formal equality of citizens, the liberal democratic view tends to underemphasize ways in which citizens are not in fact equal in society. Rather than embracing the traditional liberal image of the melting pot into which people of different cultures are assimilated into a unified national culture, multiculturalism generally holds the image of a tossed salad to be more appropriate. Although being an integral and recognizable part of the whole, diverse members of society can maintain their particular identities while residing in the collective.

Some more-radical multicultural theorists have claimed that some cultural groups need more than recognition to ensure the integrity and maintenance of their distinct identities and contributions. In addition to individual equal rights, some have advocated for special group rights and autonomous governance for certain cultural groups. Because the continued existence of protected minority cultures ultimately contributes to the good of all and the enrichment of the dominant culture, those theorists have argued that the preserving of cultures that cannot withstand the pressures to assimilate into a dominant culture can be given preference over the usual norm of equal rights for all.

Multiculturalism's impact on education

Some examples of how multiculturalism has affected the social and political spheres are found in revisions of curricula, particularly in Europe and North America, and the expansion of the Western literary and other canons that began during the last quarter of the 20th century. Curricula from the elementary to the university levels were revised and expanded to include the contributions of minority and neglected cultural groups. That revision was designed to correct what is perceived to be a falsely Eurocentric perspective that overemphasizes the contributions of white European colonial powers and underemphasizes the contributions made by indigenous people and people of colour. In addition to that correction, the contributions that cultural groups have made in a variety of fields have been added to curricula to give special recognition for contributions that were previously ignored. The establishment of African American History Month and National Hispanic Heritage Month in the United States is an example of the movement. The addition of works by members of minority cultural groups to the canons of literary, historical, philosophical, and artistic works further reflects the desire to recognize and include multicultural contributions to the broader culture as a whole.

Challenges to multiculturalism

There are two primary objections to multiculturalism. One is that multiculturalism privileges the good of the certain groups over the common good, thereby potentially eroding the common good in favour of a minority interest. The second is that multiculturalism undermines the notion of equal individual rights, thereby weakening the political value of equal treatment. Multiculturalism raises other questions. There is the question of which cultures will be recognized. Some theorists have worried that multiculturalism can lead to a competition between cultural groups all vying for recognition and that this will further reinforce the dominance of the dominant culture. Further, the focus on cultural group identity may reduce the capacity for coalitional political movements that might develop across differences. Some Marxist and feminist theorists have expressed worry about the dilution of other important differences shared by members of a society that do not necessarily entail a shared culture, such as class and sex.

Multicultural politics

Multiculturalism is closely associated with identity politics, or political and social movements that have group identity as the basis of their formation and the focus of their political action. Those movements attempt to further the interests of their group members and force issues important to their group members into the public sphere. In contrast to multiculturalism, identity politics movements are based on the shared identities of participants rather than on a specifically shared culture. However, both identity politics and multiculturalism have in common the demand for recognition and a redress for past inequities.

Multiculturalism raises important questions for citizens, public administrators, and political leaders. By asking for recognition of and respect for cultural differences, multiculturalism provides one possible response to the question of how to increase the participation of previously oppressed groups

Unit-2: Poetry

1) Richard Cory – Edward Arlington Robinson

Whenever Richard Cory went down town,
We people on the pavement looked at him:
He was a gentleman from sole to crown,
Clean-favoured, and imperially slim.

And he was always quietly arrayed,
And he was always human when he talked;
But still he fluttered pulses when he said,
"Good Morning!" and he glittered when he walked.

And he was rich — yes, richer than a king —
And admirably schooled in every grace:
In fine, we thought that he was everything
To make us wish that we were in his place.

So on we worked, and waited for the light,
And went without the meat, and cursed the bread;
And Richard Cory, one calm summer night,
Went home and put a bullet through his head.

Edwin Arlington Robinson, (1869-1935) was a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet who was also nominated for the Nobel Prize for literature. He was born in Maine but had an unhappy childhood since his parents seemed largely indifferent to him. His siblings went on to suffer great hardship through addiction to alcohol and drugs, and Robinson's poetry often dwelt on bleak themes, perhaps based on these first-hand experiences. Many think that the poem *'Richard Cory'* could have been based upon his brother who came to an inauspicious end when his business collapsed.

Richard Cory' is a poem that shows why we should not judge people on appearances as it subverts our expectations in the final line. Regarding the structure and form, the poem is written in four quatrains written in iambic pentameter with a simple ABAB rhyme scheme. The language is straightforward though quietly stirring. The fact that the rhythm and rhyme are so consistent throughout makes the revelation at the end of stanza four all the more shocking. There is almost a conversational tone to the poem. The frequent use of 'and' adds to this effect, loading detail upon detail as the speaker tells the sorry tale of Richard Cory.

This is our introduction to the eponymous character, Richard Cory. He is held in great esteem by the townspeople. This is clear as he attracts their attention for they 'looked at him' and noted that "He was a gentleman from sole to crown'. The final line of this stanza suggests that he was a morally upright fellow, and the adjective 'imperially' implies that he carries a sense of grace and regality about his person.

The repetition of 'and he was always' shows consistency and warmth of character. The fact that 'he was always human' indicates his sincerity. Despite his wealth and good looks, he talked to people without condescension or pretension. However, this does not stop him from causing a stir when he wishes them "Good Morning!" The

exclamation mark suggests that he has a genuine pleasure in meeting others. The verb 'glittered' is ambiguous as it hints at both his sparkling personality, but in the literal sense, it could be his watch or other accouterments which glint when they catch the sunlight.

Although he was 'quietly arrayed' there was something intoxicating about his person which meant that as he passed he 'fluttered pulses'. We have the immediate image of young ladies catching their breaths and fanning themselves as he passed, and the men looking on wistfully, wishing that they possessed something of his wealth and charm.

After suggesting that he came from a monied background, we are now informed that this was indeed the case, and the dashes in the line serve to emphasize the point. The assertion 'yes' and the comparative line 'richer than a king' snare the interest of the reader. We wonder how this man has made his fortune and picture some dashing Gatsby-like character. However, unlike Jay Gatsby who rose to wealth through illegal means such as gambling and bootlegging, Richard Cory appears to have acquired his riches through hereditary means, by the reference to a king, or perhaps through business. A doubt is sown in our minds in line three of this stanza where the speaker states 'We thought that he was everything'. This alerts us to the fact that all may not be well, and also reminds us of the old adage, 'be careful what you wish for.' The final monosyllabic line with its frequent alliteration propels us along to the poem's conclusion.

The speaker alludes to the difficulties faced by the other inhabitants of the town. The 'so' at the beginning almost carries a sigh, to suggest fatigue and hardship. There is an obvious discrepancy between the life led by the gentleman, Richard Cory, and the people who look up to him. While he 'allegedly' enjoys the good life, the others struggle. This is conveyed through the long drawn out assonance and the repeated 'w' sounds in the first two lines of the stanza. They have insufficient money even to have access to the most basic of goods since the 'went without the meat and cursed the bread', which was obviously of poor quality and lacking in nourishment. Even the word 'cursed' stands out here, as it seems ill-fitting after the descriptions of Cory.

There is thus a disparity between their lives and that of Cory, except they are not alone in their suffering. Such are his demons, that he shocks them all, by returning home from one of his strolls in town 'and put a bullet through his head'. The reader is left speechless by this revelation, and the fact that this event is preceded by the line 'one calm summer night' further compounds their shock. We are left wondering what on earth could have preempted the suicide from a man who appeared to have everything, including the respect of the townspeople.

2) The Road Not Taken – Robert Frost

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveller, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, just as fair
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same.

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence;
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I —
I took the one less travelled by,
And that has made all the difference.

In the poem - 'The Road Not Taken', the road symbolizes our life. The poet says that the path that we don't choose in our life is **the road not taken**. He describes his feelings about that choice that he had left in the past. The path which we have chosen, decides our future, our destination. The important message that the poet wants to give is that the choice that we make has an impact on our future and if we make a wrong choice, we regret it but cannot go back on it. So, we must be wise while making choices.

Summary

Once the poet was walking down a road and then there was a diversion, there were two different paths and he had to choose one out them? The poet says that as he was one person, he could travel on one road only. He had to choose one out of these two roads Yellow wood means a forest with leaves which are wearing out and they have turned yellow in colour – the season of autumn. It represents a world which is full of people, where people have been living for many years. They represent people who are older than the poet. The poet kept standing there and looked at the path very carefully as far as he could see it. Before taking the path, he wanted to know how it was. Was it suitable for him or no. He was able to see the path till from where it curved after which it was covered with trees and was hidden. It happens in our life also when we have choices, we have alternatives, but we have to choose only one out of them, we take time to think about the pros and cons, whether it is suitable for us or not and only then, we take a decision on what path we should choose

The poet kept on looking at one path for a long time to check if it is the right path for him or not and them he decided and started walking on another path because he felt that the both paths were equally good. He says just as fair, so, he felt that both paths were equally good and started walking on one of them. He adds that maybe he felt that the path was better for him so he chooses it as it had grass on it which means that it was unused. Not many people had walked on this path earlier that is why this path was grassy. 'And wanted wear' means that it was not walked over by many people. After he walked on the path for some distance, he realized that both the paths had been worm out the same way. Both the paths were similar and worn out. Even in our life, we take any path or option but all of them have the same benefits, disadvantages, problems, challenges and we must face them. We think that we are choosing a better option, but it is not that way.

The poet says that both the paths were similar that morning. Both had leaves on them and no one had stepped on them as they were still green in colour. He decided that that day he would take one path and keep the other path for another day, although he knew that one way leads on to another way. He knew that he could not go back on the choice that he had made. Similarly, even in our life once we choose an option, we must keep on moving ahead with that option and we never get a chance to come back and take the other option that we had left earlier.

He says that in the future, he will take a deep breath and say that once upon a time, he had reached such a point in life that there were two options for him and he travelled on that road which had been travelled upon by lesser number of people. That decision of his decided his future. Similarly, in future, when you grow up, then you will say that once upon a time, when you were young, you had two options. The choice that you made, made you what you became of it. This is a very strong message for all the students - that you should be wise and be careful while making choices out of the options that you have in your life because your future depends on the choice that you make today.

3) In a Station of the Metro – Ezra Pound

The apparition of these faces in the crowd:
Petals on a wet, black bough.

"In a Station of the Metro" is a poem by American writer Ezra Pound, originally published in 1913. Pound's two-line poem is a famous example of "imagism," a poetic form spear-headed by Pound that focuses above all on relating clear images through precise, accessible language. In just 20 words (including the title!), this poem manages to vividly evoke both a crowded subway station and petals on a tree branch. By juxtaposing these two very different images, the poem blurs the line between the speaker's reality and imagination and invites the reader to relate urban life to the natural world—and to perhaps consider each of these realms in a new light.

In this quick poem, Pound describes watching faces appear in a metro station. It is unclear whether he is writing from the vantage point of a passenger on the train itself or on the platform. The setting is Paris, France, and as he describes these faces as a "crowd," meaning the station is quite busy. He compares these faces to "petals on a wet, black bough," suggesting that on the dark subway platform, the people look like flower petals stuck on a tree branch after a rainy night.

Analysis:

The brevity of this poem can be intimidating to analyze; after all, how much can a poet possibly convey in merely two lines? However, the shortness of this poem fits with its topic; when reading, the words flash by quickly, just as a subway speeds away from the platform in an instant. The doors open quickly, revealing a sea of faces, and then closes again - the faces are gone after a fleeting glance. This poem's length and quick pace matches the constant motion of a train as it speeds by.

Though short, this poem is very sensory in nature; it allows the reader to imagine a scene while reading the lines. Through Pound's economical description of these faces as "petals on a wet, black bough," he is able to invoke a transient tone.

This poem is also a clear example of the Imagist style. Victorian poets would frequently use an abundance of flowery adjectives and lengthy descriptions in their poems. Yet Pound employs a Modernist approach to "In a Station of the Metro," using only a few descriptive words (and no verbs among them) to successfully get his point across.

Pound uses the word "apparition," which is a ghostly, otherworldly figure, something ephemeral that fades in and out of view. By using this word, Pound reveals surprise at seeing this sea of faces as the subway doors open, which, for a brief moment, fills him with a sense of awe and astonishment. Also, the impermanence of the image gives the poem a melancholy tone, as if Pound is contemplating the fragility of life.

Pound connects images of petals and boughs to a mass of humanity - linking a man-made metropolitan scene with the cycles of nature. Pound's use of living metaphors adds to the fleeting tone of this poem. Flowers and trees, like human beings on a metro, are constantly moving, growing, and changing. This short glimpse through the metro doors is the only time that group of people will be as they are in that instant. Similarly, no two petals will ever look exactly the same, as rains come and go, winters freeze, and new buds bloom.

4) The Snow Man – Wallace Stevens

One must have a mind of winter
To regard the frost and the boughs
Of the pine-trees crusted with snow;

And have been cold a long time

To behold the junipers shagged with ice,
The spruces rough in the distant glitter

Of the January sun; and not to think
Of any misery in the sound of the wind,
In the sound of a few leaves,

Which is the sound of the land
Full of the same wind
That is blowing in the same bare place

For the listener, who listens in the snow?
And, nothing himself, beholds
Nothing that is not there and the nothing that is.

'The Snow Man' by Wallace Stevens (1879-1955) was first published in 1921 in the magazine *Poetry*, and was reprinted in Stevens's first collection *Harmonium* in 1923. It is one of Stevens's most popular short poems. But what does it mean? In this post, we attempt to get to grips with 'The Snow Man', who he is, and how he should be analysed.

A brief summary or paraphrase of 'The Snow Man' first. Stevens states that the observer of nature during the winter needs to have a cold and detached approach when beholding the frost and the snow on the trees and bushes. The observer must resist the temptation to associate the mournful sound of the winter wind with misery: he must resist the urge to project human feelings onto the wintry landscape. If he successfully resists this, he will be able to see the bare nothingness of the landscape for what it is, rather than attributing incorrect attitudes and emotions to the world of nature.

We must all, in short, be snowmen. But the poem's title, 'The Snow Man', is ambiguous. It is not 'The Snowman', as in the Raymond Briggs story; so is this a real man who is among snow or a man *made* of snow? In fact, it is not quite either. The description of this Snow Man as 'nothing himself' suggests a literal snowman, but this is surely metaphor. Stevens is saying that the listener and observer of nature must be a 'man of snow' (compare 'man of steel', for instance), i.e. he must possess the qualities of snow: cold, detached, objective, but also ego-free (the 'egotistical sublime' was a description of Wordsworth's poetry made by another Romantic poet, Keats, which shows how bad things had got). This gets us into a bit of a paradox: Stevens appears to be telling us not to project human qualities (such as misery) onto the non-human world of the wind and the snow, yet he is telling *us* to be more like the snow. In other words, we might summarise: *we* must be more like the winter (cool, objective), rather than seeking to make the winter more like us (miserable, sad, filled with a sense of loss).

The first line, 'One must have a mind of winter', conjures up the famous Oscar Wilde quip ('One must have a heart of stone to read the death of Little Nell without laughing'), and so might be considered a continuation of Wilde's rejection of sentimental romanticising of human experience and sympathy (Wilde is referring to the gushingly tearful response British and American readers had to the death of the female protagonist in Dickens's novel *The Old Curiosity Shop*).The final line is especially clever in contrasting two different senses of 'nothing': this detached ideal observer will behold nothing that is not there (i.e. he won't project false meaning onto the landscape), and will instead be in a position to behold 'the nothing' that *is* there, i.e. the emptiness, the world of nature devoid of human projections such as misery or sadness. Yet how objective should, or can, we be? Wallace Stevens advocated something called perspectivism, which is about everything being subjective – there can be no objective experience of the world. Ironically, then, we must consciously adjust our perspective and stop seeing the winter as a time of misery (for Stevens, a false perspective) and instead see it more neutrally (but this is still a perspective, or way of viewing the winter world).

Although 'The Snow Man' is an unrhymed poem, its line endings provide a good example of what T. S. Eliot meant when he argued that free verse is never entirely free. Look at how 'winter' returns faintly in 'glitter' and then in 'wind' (twice); how 'land' falls between 'wind' and 'wind'; and how 'ice', via 'place', is thawed and thinned into the poem's final simple word 'is'. These rhymes-that-are-not-rhymes (nor even always half-rhymes) are like delicate prints in the snow, or the soft pale snow upon the juniper. They are not allowed to harden into the solid ice of full rhymes. Stevens wants us to regard nature with cool detachment, but not to become hardened or unreceptive to its beauty.

Wallace Stevens was much influenced by the Romantic poet John Keats (1795-1821) in the early stages of his career, but Stevens found his distinctive voice and approach once he moved away from under Keats's shadow. 'The Snow Man' is about a rejection of the Romantic impulse to project your own feelings onto the natural world around you, and so ties in with Stevens's rejection of the Keatsian aesthetic. It's difficult not to fall for the pathetic fallacy, we might say, but that is what we should strive to do: to stop viewing winter as a time of loss, and stop hearing notes of misery in the sound of the wind. These things do not have human agency and therefore we merely make these associations ourselves, projecting our own human feelings onto the rest of nature. The Snow Man' is a fine example of the crystalline style of Wallace Stevens' poetry and his ability to convey something sharp and clear – and yet complex and in need of close analysis – in a few lines.

5) A Dream Deferred – Langston Hughes

What happens to a dream deferred

Does it dry up

Like a raisin in the sun?
Or fester like a sore—
And then run?
Does it stink like rotten meat?
Or crust and sugar over—
like a syrupy sweet?

Maybe it just sags
like a heavy load.
Or does it explode?

The speaker wonders what happens to a deferred dream. He wonders if it dries up like a raisin in the sun, or if it oozes like a wound and then runs. It might smell like rotten meat or develop a sugary crust. It might just sag like a "heavy load," or it might explode.

Analysis:

This short poem is one of Hughes's most famous works; it is likely the most common Langston Hughes poem taught in American schools. Hughes wrote "Harlem" in 1951, and it addresses one of his most common themes - the limitations of the American Dream for African Americans. The poem has eleven short lines in four stanzas, and all but one line are questions.

Playwright Lorraine Hansbury references "Harlem" in the title of *A Raisin in the Sun*, her famous play about an African American family facing prejudice and economic hardship. The production debuted on Broadway in 1959, only 8 years after Hughes published "Harlem."
In the early 1950s, America was still racially segregated. African Americans were saddled with the legacy of slavery, which essentially rendered them second-class citizens in the eyes of the law, particularly in the South. Change was bubbling up, however.

Hughes wrote "Harlem" only three years before the seminal Supreme Court decision in the 1954 case *Brown vs. Board of Education* that declared state laws establishing separate public schools for black and white students top be unconstitutional. Thus, Hughes was intimately aware of the challenges he faced as a black man in America, and the tone of his work reflects his complicated experience: he can come across as sympathetic, enraged, hopeful, melancholy, or resigned.

Hughes titled this poem "Harlem" after the New York neighborhood that became the center of the Harlem Renaissance, a major creative explosion in music, literature, and art that occurred during the 1910s and 1920s. Many African American families saw Harlem as a sanctuary from the frequent discrimination they faced in other parts of the country. Unfortunately, Harlem's glamour faded at the beginning of the 1930s when the Great Depression set in - leaving many of the African American families who had prospered in Harlem destitute once more.

The speaker muses about the fate of a "dream deferred." It is not entirely clear who the speaker is –perhaps the poet, perhaps a professor, perhaps an undefined black man or woman. The question is a powerful one, and there is a sense of silence after it. Hughes then uses vivid analogies to evoke the image of a postponed dream. He imagines it drying up, festering, stinking, crusting over, or, finally, exploding. All of these images, while not outright violent, have a slightly dark tone to them. Each image is potent enough to make the reader smell, feel, and taste these discarded dreams. According to Langston Hughes, a discarded dream does not simply vanish, rather, it undergoes an evolution, approaching a physical state of decay.

The speaker does not refer to a specific dream. Rather, he (or she) suggests that African Americans cannot dream or aspire to great things because of the environment of oppression that surrounds them. Even if they do dare to dream - their grand plans will fester for so long that they end up rotting or even exploding. As critic Arthur P. Davis writes, "When [Hughes] depicts the hopes, the aspirations, the frustrations, and the deep-seated discontent of the New York ghetto, he is expressing the feelings of Negroes in black ghettos throughout America."

6) Mirror – Sylvia Plath

I am silver and exact. I have no preconceptions.
Whatever I see I swallow immediately
Just as it is, unmisted by love or dislike.
I am not cruel, only truthful ,
the eye of a little god, four-cornered.
Most of the time I meditate on the opposite wall.
It is pink, with speckles. I have looked at it so long
I think it is part of my heart. But it flickers.
Faces and darkness separate us over and over.

Now I am a lake. A woman bends over me,
Searching my reaches for what she really is.
Then she turns to those liars, the candles or the moon.
I see her back, and reflect it faithfully.
She rewards me with tears and an agitation of hands.
I am important to her. She comes and goes.
Each morning it is her face that replaces the darkness.
In me she has drowned a young girl, and in me an old woman
rises toward her day after day, like a terrible fish.

In this poem, a mirror describes its existence and its owner, who grows older as the mirror watches.

The mirror first describes itself as “silver and exact.” It forms no judgments, instead merely swallowing what it sees and reflecting that image back without any alteration. The mirror is not cruel, “only truthful.” It considers itself a four-cornered eye of a god, which sees everything for what it is.

Most of the time, the mirror looks across the empty room and meditates on the pink speckled wall across from it. It has looked at that wall for so long that it describes the wall as “part of my heart.” The image of the wall is interrupted only by people who enter to look at themselves and the darkness that comes with night.

The mirror imagines itself as a lake. A woman looks into it, trying to discern who she really is by gazing at her reflection. Sometimes, the woman prefers to look at herself in candlelight or moonlight, but these are “liars” because they mask her true appearance. Only the mirror (existing here as lake) gives her a faithful representation of herself.

Because of this honesty, the woman cries and wrings her hands. Nevertheless, she cannot refrain from visiting the mirror over and over again, every morning. Over the years, the woman has “drowned a young girl” in the mirror, and now sees in her reflection an old woman growing older by the day. This old woman rises toward her out of the mirror like “a terrible fish.”

Analysis

In this short but beloved poem, the narrator is a wall mirror in what is likely a woman's bedroom. The mirror is personified - that is, it is endowed with human traits. It is able to recognize monotony, commenting on the regularity of the wall that it reflects most of the time. Further, while it does not offer moral judgment, it is able to observe and understand its owner (the woman) as she grapples with the reality of aging.

Compared to most of the others in Plath's oeuvre, this poem is not particularly difficult to analyze. Though the speaker is a mirror, the subjects are time and appearance. The woman struggles with the loss of her beauty, admitting each day that she is growing older. Though the woman occasionally deludes herself with the flattering "liars" candlelight and moonlight, she continually returns to the mirror for the truth. The woman needs the mirror to provide her with an objective, unadulterated reflection of self, even though it is often discomfiting, causing her "tears and an agitation of hands." The mirror is well aware of how important it is to the woman, which evokes the Greek myth of Narcissus, in which a young man grows so transfixed with his own reflection that he dies.

Some critics have speculated that the woman is vexed by more than her changing physical appearance. They posit that the woman is observing her mind, her soul, and her psyche, stripped of any guile or obfuscation. By seeing her true self, she becomes aware of the distinction between her exterior and interior lives. In other words, she might be meditating on the distinction between a "false" outer self of appearance, and a "true" inner self. After Plath's 1963 suicide, many critics examined the writer's different facets, contrasting her put-together, polite, and decorous outer self with her raging, explosively-creative inner self. Perhaps Plath is exploring this dichotomy in "Mirror." The slippery and unnerving "fish" in the poem may represent that unavoidable, darker self that cannot help but challenge the socially acceptable self.
The critic Jo Gill writes of "Mirror" that even as the mirror straightforwardly describes itself as "silver and exact," it feels compelled to immediately qualify itself. Gill writes, "as the poem unfolds we see that this hermetic antonym may be a deceptive facade masking the need for communion and dialogue." The mirror actually dominates and interprets its world, and thus has a lot more power than it seems to suggest. It does not merely reflect what it sees, but also shapes those images for our understanding. Gill notes that the poem is catoptric, meaning that it describes while it represents its own structure; this is down through the use of two nine-line stanzas which are both symmetrical, and indicative of opposition.

The second stanza is significant because it, as Gill explains, "exposes...the woman's need of the mirror [and] the mirror's need of the woman." When the mirror has nothing but the wall to stare at, the world is truthful, objective, factual, and "exact," but when the woman comes into view, the world becomes messy, unsettling,

complicated, emotional, and vivid. Thus, the mirror is "no longer a boundary but a limninal and penetrable space." It reflects more than an image - it reflects its own desires and understanding about the world.Overall, "Mirror" is a melancholy and even bitter poem that exemplifies the tensions between inner and outer selves, as well as indicates the preternaturally feminine "problem" of aging and losing one's beauty.

7) Mr. Edward and the Spider- Robert Lowell

I saw the spiders marching through the air,
Swimming from tree to tree that mildewed day
In latter August when the hay

Came creaking to the barn. But where
The wind is westerly,
Where gnarled November makes the spiders fly
Into the apparitions of the sky,
They purpose nothing but their ease and die
Urgently beating east to sunrise and the sea;
.
What are we in the hands of the great God?
It was in vain you set up thorn and briar
In battle array against the fire
And treason crackling in your blood;
For the wild thorns grow tame
And will do nothing to oppose the flame;
Your lacerations tell the losing game
You play against a sickness past your cure.
How will the hands be strong? How will the heart endure?
.
A very little thing, a little worm,
Or hourglass-blazoned spider, it is said,
Can kill a tiger. Will the dead
Hold up his mirror and affirm
To the four winds the smell
And flash of his authority? It's well
If God who holds you to the pit of hell,
Much as one holds a spider, will destroy,
Baffle and dissipate your soul. As a small boy
.
On Windsor Marsh, I saw the spider die
When thrown into the bowels of fierce fire:
There's no long struggle, no desire
To get up on its feet and fly
It stretches out its feet
And dies. This is the sinner's last retreat;
Yes, and no strength exerted on the heat
Then sinews the abolished will, when sick
And full of burning, it will whistle on a brick.
.
But who can plumb the sinking of that soul?
Josiah Hawley, picture yourself cast
Into a brick-kiln where the blast
Fans your quick vitals to a coal—
If measured by a glass,
How long would it seem burning! Let there pass
A minute, ten, ten trillion; but the blaze
Is infinite, eternal: this is death,
To die and know it. This is the Black Widow, death.

Robert Lowell was born in 1917 into one of the first families of Boston, also called the Boston Brahmins, a class of New Englanders who claim descent from the original English Protestants who founded the city of Boston, Massachusetts. Lowell attended Harvard College but transferred to Kenyon College to study under John Crowe Ransom. He turned away from his Puritan heritage and converted to Roman Catholicism from 1940 to 1946, which influenced his first two books, Land of Unlikeness and Lord Weary's Castle.

Early in his literary career, Robert Lowell researched the life of the eminent eighteenth century American preacher Jonathan Edwards with the aim of writing his biography. He never wrote the life, but two of his best-known poems derive from this purported venture. “Mr. Edwards and the Spider” is a poem of five nine-line stanzas that fuses several experiences of the Northampton, Massachusetts, minister having to do with spiders, either literally or metaphorically. Lowell adopts the voice of Edwards in meditation.

The first stanza summarizes the content of a remarkable letter that Edwards wrote, probably at the age of ten or eleven, to an English correspondent of his father. In it, he recorded his observations of the habits of flying spiders and drew some unusually mature inferences, for example, that since their journeys were always seaward, the spiders were in effect seeking their own death. Written in a decidedly scientific spirit, the letter discloses a gifted naturalist in the making.

In his second stanza, Lowell shifts his attention to Edwards’s most famous (though hardly most representative) work, the sermon that he delivered as a guest preacher in Enfield, Connecticut, at the height of the religious revival called “The Great Awakening” in 1741. “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God” compares the individual members of that congregation to “a loathsome spider” that God dangles over hell. In a dramatic presentation of the intransigent Calvinist version of Original Sin, Edwards assured his listeners that God would be justified in dropping them into hell at any moment. “What are we,” Lowell asks, after Edwards, “in the hands of the great God?”

Next, Lowell introduces the black widow, whose bite is poisonous and can be deadly, and reiterates the appropriateness of God’s wrath. In the fourth stanza, the poet invents an incident in which Edwards, as a small boy, sees a spider being cast into fire and offering little resistance to it. The final stanza draws in Josiah Hawley, an uncle of Jonathan Edwards, who early in the Great Awakening committed suicide by cutting his own throat. Here and in another poem, “After the Surprising Conversions,” Lowell makes use of letters Edwards had written to Benjamin Colman, a fellow minister in Boston, describing Hawley as having fallen into “a deep melancholy, a distemper that the family are very prone to,” and attributing his death to the Satanic incursion that the Great Awakening was designed to combat. A few days after the bloody incident, Edwards saw evidence of “a considerable revival of religion,” but he later reported to Colman that the temptation to suicide was spreading alarmingly among the townspeople.

Finally, the black widow is death itself, “infinite” and “eternal.” To Edwards and no doubt to Hawley, death could be the prelude to an everlasting damnation, although Lowell couches his speaker’s concluding words in terms ambiguous enough to accommodate the possibility of different interpretations by successive readers.Lowell works the meditation into an elaborate stanza in an iambic meter ranging from three to six poetic feet long with a demanding rhyme scheme of *abbacccdd*. Having set this restrictive and regularly recurring form for himself, the poet runs the speaking voice across it in such a way as to create felicitous variations of rhythm, pace, and emphasis.

About half the lines as well as the transition between two of the stanzas show enjambment, and half the sentences begin within lines. There is great variety, also, in the length, arrangement, and function of the sentences. The first stanza, for example, is composed of two descriptive sentences of twenty-seven and thirty-five words, while the hexameter line at the end of the second stanza consists of two balanced questions: “How will the hands be strong? How will the heart endure?” Longer, often-periodic sentences combine with abrupt

questions such as these and snappy assertions such as the concluding "This is the Black Widow, death" to give the impression of an agile mind at work.In this and other early poems, Lowell shared the practice of poets such as Dylan Thomas and Marianne Moore, contrivers of intricate patterns who muted the rhymes and disguised the rhythmic schemes, thus artfully concealing art. The sound effects of this poem enhance the movement of the meditating mind without calling attention to them—which is why the analysis of such poems must do so.

"Mr. Edwards and the Spider" also illustrates Lowell's penchant for merging seemingly disparate elements into a surprising unity. Edwards's youthful admiration for flying spiders and his heavy-handed appropriation of them twenty-five years later, playing as it does on his congregation's theologically induced loathing of spiders for the sake of frightening them into the straight and narrow path, reveal two totally different aspects of a many-sided man. The modern reader, coming upon these two works of Edwards, are likely to lament the disappearance of the budding naturalist into the fire-and-brimstone preacher, but Lowell teases them imagistically into co-existence in this poem, adding also the poisonous black widow. Edwards's listeners would naturally tend to associate this type of spider with the Devil. In fact, Edwards's fellow Massachusetts minister Edward Taylor (who ended his long pastorate in Westfield about the time Edwards began his in nearby Northampton) had portrayed "Hell's spider" memorably in a poem and had doubtless also done so in his sermons. By amalgamating these spiders, Lowell suggests the complexities and contradictions of Edwards's character in one relatively short poem.

Lowell accomplishes this feat by collapsing time in the consciousness of his speaker. As a result, he could combine several elements, one of which is the early keen interest in nature's ways that surely continued in the preacher. Another is Edwards's painful recollection of an unbalanced parishioner harried by religious emotion into a desperate act. Lowell also infuses his subject's powerful rhetorical gift and, in acknowledgment of Edwards's philosophical bent, his predisposition to meditate on death. The result of Lowell's compression is no doubt a "Lowellized" Edwards but nevertheless a more comprehensive portrait of the man than one is likely to glean from any one of his surviving works.

8) An Agony. As Now. – Amiri Baraka

I am inside someone
who hates me. I look
out from his eyes. Smell
what fouled tunes come in
to his breath. Love his
wretched women.

Slits in the metal, for sun. Where
my eyes sit turning, at the cool air
the glance of light, or hard flesh
rubbed against me, a woman, a man,
without shadow, or voice, or meaning.

This is the enclosure (flesh,
where innocence is a weapon. An
abstraction. Touch. (Not mine.
Or yours, if you are the soul I had
and abandoned when I was blind and had
my enemies carry me as a dead man
(if he is beautiful, or pitied.

It can be pain. (As now, as all his
flesh hurts me.) It can be that. Or
pain. As when she ran from me into
that forest.

Or pain, the mind
silver spiraled whirled against the
sun, higher than even old men thought
God would be. Or pain. And the other. The
***yes*. (Inside his books, his fingers. They**
are withered yellow flowers and were never
beautiful.) The yes. You will, lost soul, say
'beauty.' Beauty, practiced, as the tree. The
slow river. A white sun in its wet sentences.

Or, the cold men in their gale. Ecstasy. Flesh
or soul. The yes. (Their robes blown. Their bowls
empty. They chant at my heels, not at yours.) Flesh
or soul, as corrupt. Where the answer moves too quickly.
Where the God is a self, after all.)

Cold air blown through narrow blind eyes. Flesh,
white hot metal. Glows as the day with its sun.
It is a human love, I live inside. A bony skeleton
you recognize as words or simple feeling.

But it has no feeling. As the metal, is hot, it is not,
given to love.

It burns the thing
inside it. And that thing
screams.

Stanza I starts off with a heart-constricting and terrifying statement: "I am inside / someone who hates me," (lines 1-2). From the first few lines of this poem, readers are clued into the fact that this poem will constitute some sort of psychological and identity-based experience. When taken literally, it can be jarring to think about the idea of a person—an "I" who sees the world similarly to how we do—that is trapped inside their body. This body "hates" the person that is trapped inside of it (line 2). The speaker has no means of escape from his body and therefore is stuck in a limbo of internal division and internalized malice.

The mood, even from the first few lines, certainly is hopeless and horrifying—it is difficult to imagine the torture of being in that kind of situation. The speaker says he "looks out" from the eyes of the body and experiences every physical sensation that the body experiences, including the gross smells he breathes in and his romantic interactions with women (lines 3-6). These women are described as "wretched," which continues the moods of loathsomeness and internal degradation throughout Stanza I.

Baraka offers more descriptions of the psychological state of the speaker in Stanza II. The speaker experiences "slits in the metal" designed to let in sun (line 7). The speaker describes the body in which he is trapped as made out of metal; the body feels mechanical, foreign, cold.
The opening two lines of Stanza II also offer a greater sense of the speaker's psychological state—it is as if he is in some metal coffin or jail that has tiny openings that let in light. The speaker is completely removed from the natural world, which streams in only through small openings in an impenetrable barrier. The speaker finally feels something tangible—his *own* eyes "sit turning" in his head observing his enclosure and the things outside of it (line 8).
The speaker reveals that his corrupted body experiences physical pleasure: an erotic situation is brought up again. This situation, however, is just as problematic as that of the previous stanza: even though there is skin-to-skin contact, the people that the body interacts with have "hard" flesh and they are seen as soulless creatures "without shadow, or voice, or meaning," (line 11). While the speaker is stuck in some kind of malicious trap that is also his own body, the other bodies he interacts with are creatures whose bodies are completely unfeeling. Their skin is hard and machinic like the speaker's own. At this point, it seems like the speaker is not the only one who feels a separation between their body and soul. More evidence of other people experiencing this state will come in later stanzas.
Stanza III opens up the qualities of the speaker's "enclosure": it is made of "flesh" in a world so cruel that "innocence is a weapon" (lines 12-3). The speaker feels trapped in his flesh because he lives in a society that

preys on the weak for their very weakness—their innocence is wielded against them in the hands of their abusers. This enclosure is "an abstraction"—it is figurative rather than literal, using the power of ideas or thoughts or beliefs, rather than physical restraint, to hold him in. And yet, the entrapment *feels* physical, and so the speaker records his sensations: for example, "Touch," (line 14). This touch does not come from the speaker himself or from another person, who he directly addresses as "you," but rather from some unknown outside presence. He then goes on to describe this other person, the "you": someone who the speaker knew in a past life. In this past life, the speaker didn't have eyes to see out of ("I was blind") and was surrounded by "enemies" who interacted with him in some kind of ritual procession (lines 15-6).

The speaker in this scene from the past was carried around as if he were "a dead man" because of his beauty and the pity they felt for him.The speaker lists pain in many different forms starting in Stanza IV. The first pain is described as what the speaker is feeling at the moment: "As now, as all his / flesh hurts me" (lines 19-20). This pain is connected to the separation between himself and his body. His flesh turns against him and wounds him. The second kind of pain listed is reminiscent of a time in his past when a woman ran away from him into a forest—an eerie and threatening image (lines 21-2). The image of a woman escaping into the woods brings up associations of abandonment or desertion.

Stanza V continues the list of the different kinds of pain the speaker is experiencing. There is the pain of losing your mind so that it "spirals" and "whirls" in the sky, reaching magnificent and impossible heights (line 24). Or this pain could be connected to "the other," which could be an allusion to the "othering" of certain groups of people through societal divisions and prejudices that are largely institutional (i.e. racism, homophobia) (line 26). This "other" is connected to "the *yes*": an affirmation rather than a command, a keeping of the status quo rather than a questioning of the systems in place (line 27).

A parenthetical statement splits Stanza V in half, in which Baraka inserts an image of an old man looking through all of his books with fingers like "whithered yellow flowers," (line 29). This image calls up associations of previous scholarship and some sort of literary canon. It is also slightly ominous: before we see the old man, we see his fingers inserting themselves into his books. An image is given of wrinkly and liver-spotted fingers clawing at a page. Once again, at the end of Stanza V, the speaker addresses the "you," the person who he abandoned in a past life: "you will, lost soul, / say 'beauty'" (lines 29-30). This beauty is connected to nature since it is "practiced" in a way that likens it to trees, a river, and a "white sun" (lines 30-1).

There are two different things going on in Stanza VI. First, the speaker asserts that the beauty he describes could also be "the cold men in their gale" and develops this image over the course of several lines (line 32). This is an image that brings people into nature, which connects to the ways that beauty is manifested through nature in the previous stanza. The description of the men as "cold" is reminiscent of the metal bodies referred to in the first few stanzas in its eeriness and detachment. The cold men's robes are flapping around in the wind and their dishes have no food in them (line 33). The cold men "chant" at the speaker's heels, but not at the heels of the person from the speaker's past life (line 34).

Along with the descriptions of the cold men in the gale, there are fragmented lines in Stanza VI that contain images that are much more abstract. The speaker sends out a sensation: "Ecstacy," (line 32). Like "Touch" in line 14, he lets it stand alone which gives it immediacy and fills it with importance. Next, he uses enjambment and grammar to mark a separation between body and identity: "flesh / *or* soul" (lines 32-3, emphasis added). The separation between flesh and soul is repeated later on in the stanza and given a qualifier: "corrupt," (line 35). The flesh is corrupt or the soul is corrupt; maybe both.

An intense kind of degradation must be occurring for the speaker to find himself in this kind of psychological state. The ultimate meaning of all of this, or "the answer," is hard to pin down and is too shifty to fully grasp (line 35). The speaker can find no sense in the chaos of his surroundings. The complete disaster of his experience proves to him that "God is a self, after all" (line 36). This line can be read in two different ways: either God has the consciousness of another human "self" and is brought down to the level of humans, or a particular human is lifted up to the level of God.

The opening line of Stanza VII brings us back to of the opening line of Stanza II: "Cold air blown through narrow blind eyes," (line 37). The speaker no longer explicitly associates himself with this image, and instead, the image becomes more general as well as more lifeless. These "narrow blind eyes" don't necessarily belong to the speaker, since he did not say that they are his. In fact, they likely do *not* to belong to the speaker: remember that it is revealed in Stanza III that the speaker used to be a "blind man" but no longer is (line 15). It might be useful, therefore, to think of these eyes as belonging to someone who is not the speaker. The flesh of this blind person is "white hot metal"—think of the glowing white color that metal becomes after it is put into a fire or a kiln (line 38). This white colored metal glows brightly, like the sun.

The speaker then reveals that he lives in a "human love" (line 39). This is an important moment; up until this point the speaker has been feeling trapped in his bodily surroundings, and now he rises above the body to live in an emotion instead. This human love is a "bony skeleton" that is recognizable as "words or simple feeling"

(lines 39-40). This is a revolutionary thought. Instead of being trapped inside his body, the speaker instead recognizes that his real being exists in "love" and in his relationships with other people. You know the people you love not because of what they look like but because of who they *are* and how they make you feel.
Stanza VIII returns to an examination of the white-hot flesh: "it has no feeling," (line 41). The implicit meaning is that people cannot actually live in their flesh because the flesh is not connected to personhood in the same way that words, feelings, and actions are. The metal, as an object, cannot feel emotions like love (lines 41-2).

Stanza IX leaves the poem on a terrifying and pessimistic note. Because people are forced to live inside of the "metal" of their flesh rather than existing purely in human emotion and connection, their souls experience continual torture and degradation. The soul that is trapped inside the body "screams" in the final line (line 45). We are given no solution to the problem posed by the separation of the soul and the body. Instead, we are left with an image of continual torture and suffering, of which there is no means of escape.

Unit – 3

THE CRUCIBLE- Arthur Miller

Background

Inspired by the McCarthy hearings of the 1950s, Arthur Miller's play, *The Crucible,* focuses on the inconsistencies of the Salem witch trials and the extreme behavior that can result from dark desires and hidden agendas.

Miller bases the play on the historical account of the Salem witch trials. In particular he focuses on the discovery of several young girls and a slave playing in the woods, conjuring — or attempting to conjure — spirits from the dead. Rather than suffer severe and inevitable punishment for their actions, the girls accused other inhabitants of Salem of practicing witchcraft. Ironically, the girls avoided punishment by accusing others of the very things of which they were guilty. This desperate and perhaps childish finger-pointing resulted in mass paranoia and an atmosphere of fear in which everyone was a potential witch. As the number of arrests increased, so did the distrust within the Salem community. A self-perpetuating cycle of distrust, accusation, arrest, and conviction emerged. By the end of 1692, the Salem court had convicted and executed nineteen men and women.

Miller creates an atmosphere and mood within the play reminiscent of the historical period and of Puritan culture. The inhabitants of Salem lived in a restrictive society. Although the Puritans left England to avoid religious persecution, they based their newly established society upon religious intolerance. The Puritans demonstrated their faithfulness, honesty, and integrity through physical labor and strict adherence to religious doctrine. They considered material and physical wants — especially sexual desires — as the Devil's work and a threat to society. The Bible and the minister's interpretation of the Bible determined what was considered socially acceptable behavior. The Puritans had no tolerance for inappropriate or unacceptable behavior and punished individuals publicly and severely if they transgressed. Miller captures the intolerance and religious fanaticism of the period and effectively incorporates them into the play.

Reading about the Salem witch trials and the paranoid frenzy going on at the time is one thing, but witnessing the trials first hand is quite another experience. Miller permits the audience to do just that by transforming the faceless names from history into living, breathing characters with desires, emotions, and freewill. Miller did make adjustments to the ages, backgrounds, and occupations of several of the individuals mentioned in the historical records, however. For example, he lowers the age gap between John Proctor and Abigail Williams from sixty and eleven, respectively, to thirty-five and seventeen, enabling the plot line of an affair between the two. Proctor and his wife Elizabeth ran an inn as well as a farm, but Miller eliminates this detail. Proctor's friend Giles Corey was actually pressed to death a month after Proctor's execution; however, Miller juxtaposes his

death and Proctor's. Finally, Miller chose to omit the fact that Proctor had a son who was also tortured during the witch trials because he refused to confess to witchcraft.

Although no one can know for certain what the actual individuals thought, felt, or believed, Miller's incorporation of motive into the play's characters provides his audience with a realistic scenario that is both believable and applicable to society. For example, when the play was first produced during the 1950's, as McCarthyism submerged America in paranoia and fear, audiences could relate to the plot because Americans were turning in their friends so they would not be labeled as Communists. Although today's society may not be engaged in so-called "witch hunts," stories of an individual attempting to reestablish a relationship with a former lover by eliminating what he or she perceives to be the only obstacle — the person currently involved in a relationship with the former lover — are not uncommon. This classic love triangle appears repeatedly in literature, not to mention the supermarket tabloids.

Miller's exploration of the human psyche and behavior makes the play an enduring masterpiece, even though McCarthyism has faded into history. On one hand Miller addresses a particularly dark period in American history — a time in which society believed the Devil walked the streets of Salem and could become manifest in anyone, even a close neighbor or, worse yet, a family member. On the other hand, Miller moves beyond a discussion of witchcraft and what really happened in Salem to explore human motivation and subsequent behavior. The play continues to affect audiences by allowing them to see how dark desires and hidden agendas can be played out.

Summary

The Crucible takes place in Salem, Massachusetts in 1692. The action begins in the home of Reverend Parris, whose daughter Betty lies unconscious and appears very ill. Around midnight the night before, Parris had discovered Betty, his niece Abigail, and Tituba, his black slave, dancing in the woods, causing Betty to swoon. The local physician is unable to determine the cause of Betty's illness. Mr. and Mrs. Putnam arrive and reveal that their daughter Ruth is also ill. There is talk in the village of an unnatural cause.

Abigail warns her friend Mercy Lewis and the Proctors' servant Mary Warren, not to reveal that they were all casting spells in the woods. Betty wakes, and Abigail threatens the other girls with violence if they tell anyone that she drank blood and cast a spell in order to kill Goody Proctor. Betty loses consciousness again.

John Proctor and Abigail talk privately about their former relationship. Prior to the opening of the play, Abigail worked as a servant in the Proctor home. Elizabeth Proctor was ill at the time and Abigail took on more responsibility within the Proctor household. When Elizabeth discovered the affair, she dismissed Abigail. During their discussion, Abigail becomes angry with Proctor because he refuses to acknowledge any feelings for her.

Betty wakes again and is hysterical. The well-respected Rebecca Nurse is visiting the Parris household and calms her. Prophetically, Rebecca warns Parris that identifying witchcraft as the cause of Betty's illness will set a dangerous precedent and lead to further problems in Salem. Mr. Putnam asks Rebecca to visit Ruth and attempt to wake her. Ruth is the only Putnam child to survive infancy, and Mrs. Putnam is jealous of Rebecca because all of Rebecca's children are healthy, whereas Mrs. Putnam had lost seven infant children.

Putnam, Proctor, and Giles Corey argue with Parris about his salary and other expectations. Parris claims that a faction is working to drive him out of town, and he disputes their salary figures. Putnam, Proctor, and Corey then begin arguing over property lines and ownership. Putnam accuses Proctor of stealing wood from land that he does not own, but Proctor defends himself, stating that he purchased the land from Francis Nurse five months ago. Putnam claims Francis had no right to the land and, therefore, could not sell it.

Reverend Hale arrives from another town to investigate the strange events in Salem. The people of Salem have summoned him as an expert in witchcraft to determine if witchcraft is behind the children's illnesses. Hale learns that the girls were dancing in the woods with Tituba, and that Tituba can conjure spirits. Abigail blames Tituba for enticing her to sin. Hale then questions Tituba, and she admits that she has seen the Devil, as has Goody Good and Goody Osburn. Abigail also confesses to witchcraft, stating that she had given herself to the Devil, but that she now repents. Betty wakes up, and she and Abigail name individuals that they say they have seen with the Devil.

Eight days later, Elizabeth discovers that Proctor spoke to Abigail privately while in Salem. Elizabeth and Proctor argue over this. Mary Warren comes home from Salem where she is serving as an official of the court, and gives Elizabeth a poppet (doll) that she made for her while sitting in the courtroom. Mary Warren tells Proctor that some of the girls accused Elizabeth of witchcraft, but the court dismissed the charge because Mary Warren defended her.

Hale arrives at the Proctor house and questions Proctor about his poor church attendance. He asks Proctor to name the Ten Commandments. Proctor names nine successfully, but he forgets the commandment forbidding adultery. Hale questions Elizabeth as well. Proctor reveals that Abigail admitted to him that the witchcraft charges were false.

Marshal Herrick then arrives and arrests Elizabeth. Earlier that evening, Abigail feels a needle-stab while eating dinner, and she accuses Elizabeth of attempted murder. The authorities of Salem search the Proctor house and discover the poppet, along with a needle. Hale questions Mary Warren and learns that she sewed the poppet and stored the needle inside. Mary Warren also tells him that Abigail saw her sew the poppet and store the needle. Nevertheless, Elizabeth is arrested.

The court convicts Martha Corey and Rebecca Nurse of witchcraft. Giles Corey tells the court he has proof that Putnam is accusing his neighbors of witchcraft in order to gain their land. Judge Danforth asks the name of the witness who gave Corey the information, but Corey refuses to cooperate. The court arrests him. Judge Danforth informs Proctor that Elizabeth is pregnant.

Mary Warren tells the court that she pretended to see spirits and falsely accused others of witchcraft. She reveals that Abigail and the other girls are also lying. Abigail denies Mary Warren's charge, however, and she and the others claim that Mary Warren is sending out her spirit against them in the court.

Proctor denounces Abigail's charge against Mary Warren, stating that Abigail is a lying whore. Proctor informs the court of his affair with Abigail and states that she is lying in order to have Elizabeth executed, thereby providing herself with the opportunity to become his wife. After Proctor agrees that Elizabeth would never lie, the court summons Elizabeth and questions her about the affair. Not knowing that her husband has confessed it, Elizabeth lies about the affair and is returned to jail. Abigail resumes her claim that Mary Warren is attacking her until Mary Warren recants her confession that she lied about the witchcraft and charges John Proctor as the Devil's man.

Several months pass. Proctor is in prison, scheduled to hang, along with Rebecca Nurse. Elizabeth is also in prison, although the court has delayed her execution until after she gives birth. Hale attempts to convince the prisoners to confess rather than hang, but all refuse. Proctor confesses and signs a written affidavit, but he destroys the document rather than have it posted on the church door. Proctor is taken to the gallows.

Character List

Reverend Parris is a Minister in Salem. He believes a faction plans to force him to leave Salem, so he attempts to strengthen his authority through the witch trial proceedings.

Betty Parris - Parris' daughter. Her father discovers her dancing in the woods, and she later accuses individuals of practicing witchcraft.

Abigail Williams - Parris' niece. She instigates the witch trials by falsely accusing others of witchcraft. She pretends to see spirits and instructs the other girls to pretend as well.

Tituba - Parris' black slave. Parris discovers her casting spells and making potions with the girls in the woods.

Mrs. Ann Putnam - Wife of Thomas Putnam. She believes that a witch is responsible for the deaths of her seven infant children. Her jealousy of Rebecca Nurse leads her to accuse Goody Nurse of being a witch.

Thomas Putnam - A greedy landowner in Salem. He systematically accuses his neighbors of witchcraft so that he might purchase their lands after they hang.

Ruth Putnam The Putnams' daughter. She accuses individuals of practicing witchcraft. A witness claims to have heard Putnam say Ruth's accusations helped him obtain land.

Mary Warren - Servant to the Proctors. She goes along with Abigail and the girls by falsely accusing others of witchcraft; however, she later admits that she was lying.

Mercy Lewis - Servant to the Putnams and friend to Abigail. She participates in the witch trials by pretending to see spirits and falsely accusing individuals of witchcraft.

John Proctor - Salem farmer and former lover of Abigail's. He openly denounces Parris and does not attend church.

Elizabeth Proctor - Wife of John Proctor. She is a decent and honest woman, who dismissed Abigail because of her affair with John Proctor.

Reverend Hale - Minister in Beverly. The people of Salem summon him to investigate Betty's condition and determine if witchcraft is responsible. He supports the witch trials, but later denounces them when he learns that Abigail is lying.

Rebecca Nurse - Wife of Francis Nurse. She is one of the most respected individuals in Salem because of her kindness and charity. She argues against the witch trial investigations. Mrs. Putnam accuses her of witchcraft.

Francis Nurse - Farmer and landowner in Salem. He is a respected member of the community often called upon to settle disagreements between individuals.

Susanna Walcott - Friend to Abigail. She also takes part in the trials by falsely accusing others of witchcraft.

Giles Corey – Elderly inhabitant of Salem. He challenges the court in an attempt to defend his wife who has been convicted of witchcraft. He is pressed to death as a result.

Sarah Good - Beggar in Salem. She is the first individual accused of witchcraft.

Judge Hathorne - A judge in the Salem court.

Deputy Governor Danforth - A special judge serving in the Salem court during the witch trials. He signs the death sentences for those individuals who refuse to confess their crimes. He refuses to delay any execution for fear that he will appear weak and irresolute.

Ezekial Cheever - Appointed by the court to assist in arresting accused individuals.

Marshal Herrick - Appointed by the court to arrest the accused individuals.

Hopkins - Jailer.

Act I: Scene 1

The Crucible begins in the house of Reverend Samuel Parris, whose daughter, Betty, lies unconscious in bed upstairs. Prior to the opening of the play, Parris discovered Betty, his niece Abigail, and Tituba, his black slave from Barbados, dancing in the forest outside of Salem at midnight. After Parris came out of the bushes, Betty lost consciousness and has remained in a stupor ever since. The town physician, Doctor Griggs, who has not been able to determine why Betty is ill, suggests witchcraft as a possible cause.

Parris, distraught and troubled because he knows that Abigail has not been entirely truthful regarding her activities in the woods, confronts Abigail. Parris says that he saw her and Betty dancing "like heathen[s]," Tituba moving back and forth over a fire while mumbling unintelligibly, and an unidentified female running naked through the forest. Abigail denies that she and the other girls were participating in witchcraft, but Parris suspects she is lying. He thinks that she and Betty have conjured spells. Parris also questions Abigail about her character and the reason why Goody Proctor, who is the wife of John Proctor and a very respected woman in Salem, dismissed her from working as the Proctors' servant.

Mr. and Mrs. Putnam, members of one of the prominent families in Salem, enter the room and declare that Betty's illness results from witchcraft. They reveal to Parris that their daughter, Ruth, has also fallen into a strange trance. Ruth's condition, coupled with the fact that seven of Mrs. Putnam's children have died as infants under mysterious conditions, convince the Putnams that evil spirits are at work in Salem. Putnam tries to persuade Parris that he should declare the presence of witchcraft, but Parris is worried. He knows that a group of townspeople want to remove him from Salem, and a witchcraft scandal involving his family would give them the power to oust him from the town.

Act I: Scene 2

Abigail and Mercy, the Putnams' servant, try to wake Betty. Abigail tells Mercy what to say when she is questioned about what she was doing in the woods. She informs Mercy that Parris knows they were dancing in the woods. She also says he knows Tituba called to Ruth's dead sisters. Abigail reveals that Mercy is the female that Parris saw running naked through the woods.

Mary Warren enters the room and tells Abigail that everyone in Salem blames witchcraft for Betty's illness. The idea that the townspeople will label her and the other girls witches frightens and worries Marry Warren. The three girls begin to argue and Betty wakes.

Abigail tells Betty that Parris knows everything they did in the woods. Betty confronts Abigail and accuses her of not admitting she drank blood. She also accuses her of casting a spell in order to kill Goody Proctor. Threatening to practice witchcraft on Betty, Mercy, and Mary Warren if they tell anyone about the spell, Abigail tells them to say that they only danced, that Tituba raised Ruth's sisters from the dead, and that nothing else happened. Betty collapses again in a stupor.

Act I: Scene 3

John Proctor and Abigail are alone in the room with Betty. Proctor questions Abigail about Betty's illness, suspecting that responsibility for "this mischief" probably lies with Abigail. Denying any involvement in witchcraft, Abigail states that she and the girls merely danced in the woods.

Abigail asks Proctor if he has come to see her, but Proctor denies it. The conversation reveals that approximately seven months earlier, Abigail and Proctor had an affair while Abigail lived and worked in the Proctor household. Goody Proctor subsequently dismissed Abigail. Now Abigail accuses Proctor of still being in love with her, even though he will not admit it to her or himself.

Act I: Scene 4

Betty begins screaming and covering her ears. Parishioners downstairs have been singing a hymn. Mrs. Putnam interprets Betty's behavior as a sign of witchcraft because "she cannot bear to hear the Lord's name!" Rebecca Nurse instructs everyone to be quiet and then stands by Betty until she calms down.

Putnam asks Rebecca to visit Ruth and attempt to wake her. Rebecca tells Putnam and the others that Betty and Ruth's condition will pass, and she warns Parris that looking to witchcraft would be a dangerous explanation of the girls' behavior. Putnam declares that witchcraft is to blame for the loss of his seven infant children, and Mrs. Putnam becomes hostile to Rebecca. She is suspicious because Rebecca has not lost any of her children.

Proctor criticizes Parris for preaching about money rather than God. Putnam, Proctor, and Giles Corey argue with Parris about his salary and his expectations as the minister of Salem. Parris claims that a faction within Salem is determined to get rid of him. The men begin discussing lawsuits and land rights. Putnam accuses Proctor of stealing wood from his land, but Proctor says he bought the land five months before from Goody Nurse's husband. Putnam states that Goody Nurse's husband did not own the land because it belonged to Putnam's grandfather. Proctor counters Putnam.

Act I: Scene 5

Reverend Hale arrives at Parris' house. Hale tells Rebecca Nurse that people in his town know her good deeds well. The Putnams describe Ruth's condition to Hale and ask him to examine her, but first Hale prepares to look at Betty. Hale tells everyone in the room that he will not examine Betty unless they accept the fact that witchcraft may not be the reason for her ailment: "I shall not proceed unless you are prepared to believe me if I should find no bruise of Hell upon her."

Mrs. Putnam states that Tituba can conjure spirits. Mrs. Putnam admits that she sent Ruth to Tituba so that Tituba could conjure Ruth's dead sisters in order to find out who murdered them.

Goody Nurse leaves when Hale prepares to examine Betty for signs of the Devil because Hale says the process may cause the child pain. Giles Corey tells Hale that his wife Martha has been secretly reading books and that these books prevent him from praying.

Parris tells Hale about Abigail, Betty, and the others dancing in the woods. Hale questions Abigail, and she blames Tituba for everything. Abigail says that Tituba makes her drink blood, plagues her dreams, and tempts her to sin.

Hale questions Tituba and tells her that she can redeem herself by admitting that she has been working with the Devil and by telling him the names of anyone else involved. She admits that she has seen the Devil and that Goody Good and Goody Osburn were with him.

Abigail admits that she has given herself to the Devil by writing her name in his book. She renounces the Devil and says that she wants "the sweet love of Jesus." Abigail also claims to have seen Goody Good and Goody Osburn with the Devil, along with Bridget Bishop. Betty wakes up and claims that she saw George Jacobs and Goody Howe with the Devil. Act I ends with Abigail and Betty naming individuals that they have seen with the Devil.

Act II: Scene 1

Act II begins in the house of John Proctor eight days after Abigail and Betty began accusing individuals of witchcraft. Proctor returns late after working in the fields and eats dinner with his wife Elizabeth. Proctor tells Elizabeth that he is striving to make her happy.

Elizabeth questions Proctor to find out if he was late for dinner because he had gone to Salem. She tells Proctor that their servant, Mary Warren, has been in Salem all day. Proctor becomes angry because he told Mary Warren not to go to Salem. Elizabeth tells Proctor that Mary Warren has been named an official of the court. Proctor learns that four magistrates have been named to the General Court and the Deputy Governor of the Province is serving as the judge. The court has jailed fourteen people for witchcraft.

Elizabeth tells Proctor that he must go to Salem and reveal that Abigail is a fake. Proctor hesitates and then reveals that he cannot prove what Abigail said because they were alone when they talked. Elizabeth becomes upset with Proctor because he did not tell her he spent time alone with Abigail. Proctor and Elizabeth argue. Proctor is angry because he believes Elizabeth is accusing him of dishonesty and is suspicious that he has resumed his affair with Abigail. Elizabeth is angry because she does not believe Proctor is completely honest with her.

Act II: Scene 2

Mary Warren returns to the Proctor house. Proctor is furious that she has been in Salem all day, but Mary Warren tells him she will be gone every day because she is an official of the court. Mary Warren gives Elizabeth a poppet that she made while in court. Mary Warren tells Elizabeth and Proctor that thirty-nine people are in jail, and Goody Osburn will hang because she did not confess to witchcraft. Proctor becomes angry because he believes the court is condemning people without solid evidence. Mary Warren states that Elizabeth was accused, but she defended Elizabeth and the court dismissed the accusation.

Elizabeth tells Proctor that Abigail wants to get rid of her. Elizabeth believes that Abigail will accuse her of witchcraft and then have her executed. Elizabeth realizes that Abigail wants to take her place as Proctor's wife. Elizabeth asks Proctor to speak to Abigail and tell her that no chance exists of Proctor marrying her if something happened to Elizabeth. Elizabeth and Proctor argue again.

Act II: Scene 3

Reverend Hale visits the Proctor house. Hale tells Elizabeth and Proctor that Elizabeth was named in court. Hale questions Proctor about his poor attendance in church. Hale asks Proctor to recite the Ten Commandments. Proctor can only recall nine and Elizabeth reminds him of the one he forgot — the commandment forbidding adultery. The fact that Proctor forgets this particular commandment is not unintentional. Irony is created here because the audience, along with Proctor and Elizabeth, realizes that he really "forgot" the commandment when he had the affair with Abigail. Proctor has not incorporated this commandment into his life, so it fails to remain in his memory.

Proctor tells Hale that Abigail admitted to him that witchcraft was not responsible for the children's ailments. Hale asks Proctor to testify in court that Abigail is a fraud. Hale then questions Elizabeth to find out if she believes in witches. Giles Corey and Francis Nurse arrive and tell Proctor, Hale, and Elizabeth that the court has arrested both Martha Corey and Rebecca Nurse for witchcraft.

Act II: Scene 4

Ezekiel Cheever and Marshal Herrick arrive at the Proctor house with a warrant for Elizabeth's arrest. Cheever discovers the poppet that Mary Warren made for Elizabeth, and he finds a needle inside the doll. Cheever tells

Proctor and Hale that Abigail has charged Elizabeth with attempted murder. Cheever says that Abigail was stabbed with a needle while eating at Parris' house, and Abigail accused Elizabeth's spirit of stabbing her.

Mary Warren tells Hale that she made the doll in court that day and stored the needle inside the doll. Mary Warren also states that Abigail saw her sewing because she sat next to Mary Warren. The men still take Elizabeth into custody, and Hale, Corey, and Nurse leave.

Proctor tells Mary Warren that she must testify in court against Abigail. Mary Warren tells Proctor that she fears testifying against Abigail because Abigail and the others will turn against her. Proctor discovers that Mary Warren knows about his affair.

Act III: Scene 1

Act III begins in the Salem meeting house. The court questions and accuses Martha Corey of witchcraft. Giles Corey interrupts the court proceedings and declares that Thomas Putnam is "reaching out for land!" He is removed from the courtroom and taken to the vestry room.

Judge Hathorne, Deputy Governor Danforth, Ezekiel Cheever, and Parris enter the vestry room. Corey says that he owns six hundred acres of land, and a large quantity of timber. Corey also states that the court is holding his wife Martha by mistake. Corey tells Danforth that he had asked Hale why Martha read books, but he never accused her of witchcraft.

Corey and Francis Nurse state that they both have evidence for the court. They have been waiting for three days to present the evidence, but to no avail. Danforth responds that they must file the appropriate paperwork for the court to hear them. Nurse tells Danforth the girls are pretending.

Act III: Scene 2

Proctor and Mary Warren enter the vestry room. Proctor tells Danforth that Mary Warren did not see spirits. Although Danforth refuses to accept Mary Warren's signed deposition, he does agree to talk with her.

Danforth asks Mary Warren about the spirits that she saw. She tells him that she and the other girls only pretended to see spirits. Danforth also questions Proctor to find out if he is trying to undermine the court. He warns Proctor that anything he is hiding will come out. Proctor states that the court is condemning people solely on the basis of children's accusations.

Danforth informs Proctor that Elizabeth claims she is pregnant. Even though the court physically examined Elizabeth, it could not find any sign to prove her pregnancy. Proctor tells Danforth that she "will never lie." Danforth agrees to let Elizabeth live for another year, because of the unborn child.

Proctor gives Danforth a testament stating that Rebecca Nurse and Martha Corey are good, upright women. Ninety-one people have signed the document. Parris argues that the court should summon these people because they question the court. Francis Nurse is upset because he himself promised them that no reprisal would come for from signing the document.

Danforth reads Giles Corey's deposition. Thomas Putnam is brought into the room. Corey accuses Putnam of prompting his daughter to falsely accuse George Jacobs of witchcraft. Corey claims that Putnam wants Jacobs to hang, because anyone hung for witchcraft loses all property rights. Putnam is the only person in Salem who can afford to purchase Jacobs' land once it becomes available. Putnam denies the charge and Danforth requires proof from Corey. Corey refuses to name the individual who overheard Putnam. The court arrests Corey for contempt of court.

Hale tells Danforth that people fear the court. Danforth becomes angry and states that only the guilty should be afraid. Hale disagrees and tells Danforth that not everyone who the girls accuse can be guilty.

Danforth reads Mary Warren's deposition. The deposition states that she never saw the Devil and that the other girls are lying. Hale states that a lawyer should present Proctor's important claim. Hale and Danforth argue over this. After reading the deposition, Parris demands that the court allow him to question Mary Warren. Danforth becomes angry with Parris and denies his request.

Danforth warns Mary Warren that she must tell the truth. He also informs her she will go to jail for committing perjury, whether during her previous testimony or now.

Act III: Scene 3

Danforth summons Abigail and three of the girls into the vestry room, where he questions Abigail. She denies Mary Warren's charge that she is lying and that she falsely accused Elizabeth Proctor.

Danforth learns that the girls danced in the woods. Hathorne questions Mary Warren and asks her to pretend to faint. When she cannot, he insists that she is lying now because she cannot faint as she claims to have done before.

Danforth asks Abigail if she could have imagined the spirits. Abigail denies such a possibility. Suddenly Abigail and the other girls claim that Mary Warren is sending out her spirit against them.

Proctor calls Abigail a whore and tells the court about their affair. He then defends his wife Elizabeth by saying that she is incapable of lying. The court summons Elizabeth. When she enters the room, no one will speak and she notices that Proctor and Abigail both have their backs to her. When Danforth asks Elizabeth why she dismissed Abigail, Elizabeth lies, concealing Proctor and Abigail's affair.

Abigail and the girls again begin accusing Mary Warren, who recants again and claims that Proctor forced her to say that Abigail is lying. Danforth asks Proctor if he is in league with the Devil, placing Proctor under arrest. Hale denounces the proceedings and quits the court.

Act IV: Scene 1

Act IV begins in the Salem jail. Marshall Herrick wakes up Sarah Good and Tituba to move them to a different cell. Sarah and Tituba tell Herrick that they are waiting for the Devil. They plan to fly to Barbados with the Devil.

Act IV: Scene 2

Parris summons Danforth and Hathorne and informs them that Hale is attempting to convince the prisoners to confess their crimes. Parris also tells Danforth that Abigail and Mercy Lewis have disappeared. Abigail robbed Parris, and he believes she and Mercy boarded a ship.

Danforth and Parris discuss a recent rebellion in Andover. Parris worries that the people of Salem will throw out the court, as the people in Andover did. He tells Danforth the townspeople are not happy about the upcoming execution of Rebecca Nurse and John Proctor. Parris found a dagger outside his door and he fears for his life. He attempts to convince Danforth to postpone the executions until Hale successfully convinces a prisoner to confess. Danforth refuses.

Act IV: Scene 3

Hale informs Danforth that none of the prisoners will confess. Hale asks Danforth to pardon the seven individuals condemned to die, or allow him more time to persuade them to confess. Danforth refuses.

Hale summons Elizabeth. He asks her to convince Proctor to admit his guilt so that the court will not hang him. Elizabeth agrees to speak with him. Proctor and Elizabeth discuss their children and the child she carries.

Proctor admits that he is considering confessing. He asks Elizabeth if she will respect him if he does. Elizabeth states that it is his decision, and she tells him that she has forgiven him for the affair. Elizabeth realizes that she bears part of the blame for the affair because she has been a cold, suspicious wife in response to her own insecurities.

Act IV: Scene 4

Proctor confesses orally to witchcraft, but refuses to implicate anyone else. Danforth informs him that the court needs proof of his confession in the form of a signed, written testimony. Proctor confesses verbally to witchcraft, and Rebecca Nurse hears the confession. She is shocked by Proctor's actions, and she still refuses to confess to witchcraft. Proctor signs his name to the confession, but destroys the document when he learns the court will post it on the church door.

The authorities of the court take Proctor out of the prison toward the gallows. Hale pleads with Elizabeth to convince Proctor to change his mind. Elizabeth refuses. She sees that he is now at peace with himself.

Unit – 4

Short stories

1) This is What it Means to Say Phoenix Arizona – Sherman Alexie

Storytelling is an intricate part of indigenous cultures. It is a method in which cultural history is passed down from generation to generation. In addition, it is also used to address moral questions, offer advice and life lessons. This is true for many cultures and societies including Native Americans. The theme of storytelling is also a found in Sherman Alexies' short story, "This is What it Means to Say Phoenix Arizona". Told through the use of backstory and third person narrative, it introduces the reader to strained relationships and the quest of self-identity from the Native American perspective. Alexie illustrates to his audience how personal conflicts and broken relationships between loved ones can cause internal struggle for guidance, understanding, and direction. The author encourages others to ask important questions about themselves and others, allowing individuals to gain clarity and insight through self reflection. In this way, the reader is able to identify with the characters and the culture embedded throughout the piece. By observing the strained relationships between the characters and the organizational structure of the work, one can not only learn more about the Native people, but also learn more about themselves.

The story is introduced around one of the main characters, Victor, who receives the news of his father's passing. The reader is able to sense how the news of his father's death affected Victor. Although he has not seen or spoken to his father in years, "there was still a genetic pain, which was as real and immediate as a broken bone," (Alexie 1). By the second page, the reader is introduced to Thomas Builds-The-Fire. Like his father, Victor also has a strained relationship with Thomas. While Victor's relationship with his father became strained due to abandonment, his relationship with Builds-The-Fire occurred through a drunken fight. Scholars provide further incite to the incident stating that, "Victor and Thomas relationship was strained through puberty" (Ferguson 8). This indicates the struggles that Victor faced in his past. This includes peer-pressure, his father's neglect, and

his need to fit in. It provides guidance, as well as an example, of his loss of self-identity. The backstory suggests how lost identity shaped Victor and his relationships with others.

The reader is introduced to Thomas Builds-The-Fire when Victor, "watched Thomas Builds-The-Fire standing near the magazine rack talking to himself" (Alexis 2). The reader is given Builds-The-Fire's negative attributes before provided more knowledge regarding his character. He is also "a storyteller"(2) "could fly"(6) and saw "visions"(7). The functional role of Builds-The-Fire is storyteller. At first light, Builds-The-Fire is observed as someone who is crazy or insane. However once this stigma is removed, we see Builds-The-Fire telling a story in which no one is listening. Builds-The-Fire is being himself and playing his critical role. As the storyteller, Thomas is reflecting a theme observed in Native American culture. This is the passing down of Native history through oral stories. Although he plays this role, no one on the reservation will hear him. The stories Builds-The-Fire tells represents Native culture, however in this case it also provides healing. "Not only does Thomas provide friendship for Victor, but he offers a sense of family and heritage to a fellow Native American" (Ferguson 8). Thomas Builds-The-Fire reveals stories that provide clarity, incite, and understanding which lead Victor and the reader on a journey to renewed relationships and self-identity.

Thomas Builds-the-Fire is there to aide Victor during his time of need. The two men are drawn to each other. Somehow, Builds-The-Fire is aware of Victor's loss and offers to help. He asks to help Victor retrieve his father's ashes, while Victor still contemplates and works up the courage to have Builds-The-Fire come along. However, as observed through backstory, Victor is struggling for self-identity and loss which directly influence his feelings and behavior towards Builds-The-Fire. "Thomas [is] trying to seize this trip as an opportunity to use stories to transform Victor's sense of worthlessness into purpose" (Carroll 80). This struggle causes a turning point in his relationships making broken connections into healed ones. He does not want to go on this journey with Thomas Builds-The-Fire because of what others may think. Like the readers first impression of Builds-The-Fire, Victors views him as lucid and full of old tales. Though Victor did not recognize it before, Thomas Builds-The-Fire becomes a major role throughout their journey. Little be known to Victor, deciding to accept assistance from Thomas is going to help build the lost connection between not only he and his father, but his lost relationship with Thomas Builds-The-Fire as well.

During the travel, Builds-The-Fire explores a series of different memories and flashbacks. This format relates back to the Native American culture of oration. It is noted that the story outline and use of backstory, "relates to the traditional storytelling methodology and a reflection of the ancient traditions of aboriginal literature (Tabur-Jogi 25). These memories serve to better explain the relationship and the history between the once close friends. Builds-The-Fire's flashbacks reflect the person who Victor once was. The stories told describe the earlier times when they were close friends, happy and content. Builds-The-Fire also gives Victor personal stories and memories he has of Victor's father. In this way, Builds-The-Fire is able to renew Victors relationship with his father by telling his stories. In the midst of remembering who he once was, Victor is understanding his own conflict with his self-identity and his role in the community. This need for community and identity was addressed early in the story when the narrator states, "Victor felt a sudden need for tradition" (Alexie 3). Through backstory, or rather storytelling, Victor finds his identity through Native American traditions.

Victor and Thomas Builds-The-Fire embark on their journey to retrieve his father's ashes. On their return trip the men notice the emptiness of their surroundings. There is an eerie absence of life down the silent road in Nevada. The two finally spot a jackrabbit, the only life found in the desolate place. Builds-The-Fire accidently kills it. The two men stop at the side of the road and observe it, taking time to reflect on its life. In sadden humor, both men decide "it was suicide" (5). The moment reshaped their relationship and created unity between the two men. They both felt sympathy and remorse towards killing the only living thing observed on their journey. It also, "further contributes to the characterization of [Thomas] as a strange and funny story teller". Although unintentional, it provides an example of the impact of their journey. It gives finality to an old relationship that Victor and Thomas Builds-The-Fire once had. In this way, the two men were united not only through their past friendship and Victor's father; they are also united through their shared experience. This is an

experience that will provide the storyteller a new story to tell all the while the revelation helps Victor better understand his role in society.

Victor and Builds-The-Fire return home and as they begin to go their separate ways "they both searched for words to end the journey" (Alexie 10). The father was a figure for both Victor and Thomas Builds-The-Fire. As Thomas shared stories of the father to him, Victor gave him half of his father's ashes. This simple act of kindness further extends their ongoing story. Victor and Builds-The-Fire agree to a renewed friendship through simple acts of kindness observed both in the community and self-identity. This handing over of the ashes provides literal and figurative symbolism of their bond, reassuring them both to remain connected as friends. Thomas Builds-The-Fire is assured to remain the same. He will continued to be labeled as crazy because he is a storyteller. Yet, through their renewed kinship Victor will now respectfully listen. They return from their journey with better understanding and self acceptance of Native American identity and a healed relationship with each other.

By the end of the story, Victor manages to renew both relationships. In a delicate fashion, Alexie rebuilds Victor's relationship through a sequence of short stories told at random and out of order. Within the first two pages of this piece the reader is taken on a journey bouncing from today, to the past, in order to fix a broken puzzle. It also shows that although Victor has not heard from his father, the pain of losing him struck a nerve that played a pivotal role in his inner conflict. The conflict is the relationship that he and his father did not have. In this way, "Alexies', intent on reinventing the paradigm presents characters who are modern representatives of Indians" (Miles 24). The story illustrates the interpretation and greater impact that can be caused by lack of human connection and companionship. Our friendships with others, whether friends or family, help make up who we are and play a very important role on how we communicate and further connect with our society, our own communities, as well as how we may feel about ourselves.

2) Something to Remember Me By – Saul Bellow

At a superficial level this story could easily be perceived as a comic farce. An adolescent boy is duped by an unscrupulous prostitute who steals his clothes. He is forced to return home dressed as a woman. But when the elements of the story are viewed differently, it can be seen as almost a Biblical parable of descent into shame and personal humiliation. Beneath the comic-grotesque surface there is a deadly serious purpose.

The story is set during the Depression; young Louie's mother is dying of cancer, and Chicago is in the grip of midwinter ice and snow. He is not particularly successful at school; and he is forced to miss the Discussion Club meeting to do his after-school job as a delivery boy. He sets out on his journey in a bleak mood and hostile weather.His assignment takes him straight to a house of mourning where he is confronted by a dead young girl in her open coffin. Then the friendly relative he hopes to meet is not in his office, but Louie is confronted instead by another female lying down, but this time completely naked. Her appearance is disturbing to Louie, but she appears to hold out some sort of sexual promise.

He is taken to a sleazy boarding house and a featureless room where his expectations are quickly shattered. She not only tricks him by reneging on her erotic signals; she steals all his clothes and money, leaving him as naked as the condition in which he found her. He is then forced to dress in women's clothes to make his way home.As he descends into what he calls at the outset of the story as 'a whirlpool, a vortex', his principal fear is the wrath of his father:

If I were to turn up in this filthy dress, the old man, breaking under his burdens, would come down on me in a blind, Old Testament rage.

The drugstore attendant takes him for a female, and Louie begins to feel that he is losing his identity. At this point he is referred to a destination even lower down the social scale – an illegal drinking den or speakeasy. The bartender points out the errors in Louie's behaviour: "In short, you got mixed up with a whore and she gave you the works". But the bartender is prepared to help him, by giving him a further degrading task – carrying home the habitual drunk McKern.When Louie reaches yet another sordid boarding house, he is confronted by two further sources of humiliation in the form of two young girls – McKern's daughters. The younger girl follows him into the bathroom and sits on the edge of the bath, watching him whilst he lifts up his dress to pee into the toilet. Then the elder girl invites him to join the meal of three pork chops he has cooked for them – which as an orthodox Jew he finds nauseating:

All that my upbringing held in horror geysered up, my throat filling with it, my guts griping.

So he has been cheated, robbed, degraded, shamed, and humiliated at a personal, social, and even a religious level. And when he finally arrives back home his father greets him with a blow to the head – which Louie receives with gratitude, because it suggests his mother has not died during the day.

The novella

This story appears in a collection whose sub-title is 'Three Tales by Saul Bellow'. At just over 10,000 words in length it might well be considered as a long short story. Certainly there are many stories and tales of this length, and many are longer. But it has all the structural and the thematic density of a novella and has a good claim to be regarded as such.

What are the defining factors of the novella? How does it differ from the long short story or even the short novel? The critical consensus seems to be loosely based on the Aristotelian notion of the *unity* of elements in a single work. That is, the character, the events, their duration, the location, and the main theme or issue should be as tightly concentrated as possible.

The events of the story are concentrated on a single character – the younger Louie. The incidents take place over a single day – starting from his breakfast and ending back home in the early evening. The drama takes place in a single location – Chicago. Even the *tone* of the story is remarkably consistent – its atmosphere dominated by the bleak winter weather and the ice-bound streets of the city.The central metaphors of the story are sex and death, which the elder Louie flags up at the beginning of his narrative:

In my time my parents didn't hesitate to speak of death and the dying. What they seldom mentioned was sex. We've got it the other way round.

The young Louie has a girlfriend (Stephanie) whose body he fondles under her raccoon-skin coat, and he is powerfully excited by the sight of the whore's naked body on the gynaecologist's examination table. We are also given to understand that the prostitute has been used in some sort of sexual experiment: Louie's brother-in-law tells him about the doctor:

"He takes people from the street, he hooks them up and pretends he's collecting graphs. This is for kicks, the science part is horseshit."

But the very sight of the woman's breast only serves to remind the young Louie of his mother's mastectomy – and she is dying of the cancer that was its cause. Moreover the very purpose of his after-school errand is to deliver flowers to a family whose young daughter has died – a daughter who he sees,

lying in her coffin.Death even hovers over the composition and purpose of the narrative itself. The elder Louie, at the age of a 'grandfather' and prior to his own death, is passing on the story to his only son as a supplement to a reduced inheritance:

Well, they're all gone now, and I have made my preparations. I haven't left a large estate, and that is why I have written this memoir, a sort of addition to your legacy.

The story acts as a very dark and negative sort of 'coming of age' parable, an initiation into the basic facts of life (sex and death) for young Louie. The older man has decided to pass on the episode to his own son – though given that the older Louie is now the age of a 'grandfather' it might come as a warning too late.

Aristotle also believed that one of the most important elements of tragic drama was that the action of the story should be *continuous*. That is – a unity of time and events. Louie's experiences unfold in one continuous movement – from his home, to the other side of the city, and then back home again. There are no digressions or interruptions, no temporal shifts or extraneous elements in the action. The story forms, as one critic claims (echoing the American dramatist Eugene O'Neil) one Short Day's Journey into Night.

The symbolic significance of these events and the successful unity of their design outweigh the brevity of the narrative to make this a powerful candidate for a remarkably short *novella*

Kafka

There are distinct similarities between Louie and any number of Kafka's protagonists, and many of the issues in the story (and the themes in Bellow's other works) explore elements of the Jewish experience.Louie is something of the Holy Fool figure. He is well intentioned, but he keeps making matters worse for himself. He prepares an explanation for turning up to his brother-in-law's dental surgery, then asks himself:

Why did I need to account for my innocent behaviour when it *was* innocent? Perhaps because I was always contemplating illicit things Because I was always being accused.

Later, carrying the drunk McKern in a fireman's lift on his shoulders, he thinks of 'This disgrace, you see, whilst my mother was surrendering to death'. Finally, when summarising his experiences, he reflects in similarly telling language: 'The facts of life were having their turn. Their first effect was ridicule … [then] I could have a full hour of shame on the streetcar'.

This combination of the grotesque with self-criticism and an acute sense of embarrassment is very similar to the scenes which are abundant in Kafka's work. Indeed they seem to reflect a particularly *Jewish* experience and perception of the world – and they are also present in the work of writers such as (Polish) Bruno Schultz and (Italian) Italo Svevo – real name Aron Ettore Schmitz.

3) Separating – John Updike

The affluent Maples are getting a divorce, but they cannot decide on the right time to tell their four children. They finally decide to break the news after their eldest, Judith, 19, returns from studying abroad in England. Richard Maple hopes to make an announcement at the dinner table, while Joan prefers to tell the children individually. After bickering, they finally agree that Joan's way is better.

As one of his final tasks while he still lives in the house, Richard replaces a lock on the porch door. Unaware that anything is wrong, his children happily mill around the house as usual. Judith regales him with stories of her time in England. He sadly reflects that Judith is the only child that he and Joan "endured together" (37) long enough to raise into adulthood. That night, the Maples serve a dinner of lobster and champagne to welcome Judith back from her travels. Richard begins to cry at the table, something his children attempt to ignore.

Eventually John, the second-youngest at 15, asks his mother why Richard is crying. Joan tells the boy the truth, and talk of the separation ripples through the dinner table. It becomes clear that Margaret, 13, the youngest child, somehow figured out that her parents were separating and her fears are now named. John demands to know why Richard and Joan failed to tell their children that they were having problems getting along. Richard tries to explain that they do get along but they don't love each other, but trails off.

John is drunk from the champagne, and begins playing with matches, holding them close to his mother's face. He stuffs a cigarette into his mouth and shows it to Margaret. Judith warns him to act mature. After dinner, Richard and John go on a walk, over which John confides that he is frustrated with his new school as well as the separation. Richard assures John that they will transfer him to a new school, as "life's too short to be miserable" (39).

Later, Joan reprimands Richard for crying at the table, because it made Joan look like the separation was all her idea. Both parties agree, though, that they are lucky the children didn't think to ask whether the separation was caused by "a third person." They realize that they still need to inform their second-oldest child, Dickie, 17, who has been away at a rock concert. Richard will confront him alone, as the boy is most like him.

After sleeping badly, Richard goes to the train station to pick Dickie up after the concert. He dreads telling Dickie about the separation, and happily procrastinates by driving Dickie's friend's home. When he finally reveals the news, Dickie is stunned but takes it stoically. Richard confides that he hates being the bearer of such bad news. On their way home, Richard acknowledges a home on their block that contains a woman he hopes to marry. When they get home, Dickie goes to his room without another word.

Joan and Richard go up to say good night to Dickie. They offer to call him in sick to work, but he declines. As Richard goes to kiss his son good night, Dickie turns and kisses him on the lips as "passionate as a woman" (41). With agony, he asks *"Why?"* Richard realizes that after living with the decision for such a long time, he has forgotten why he is separating from his wife.

Analysis

The first section of "Separating" focuses closely on Richard's consciousness. Updike describes his thought processes in great detail, and shows how particular objects and images inspire emotion and recollection. Like "Short Easter," the initial focus of "Separating" is on the character's internal world; exposition of plot and setting only comes later.

The effect of this narrative choice is that Richard is irrevocably established as the protagonist. This is important because as the story continues, his passivity and self-absorption make him increasingly difficult to identify with. Updike's decision to reveal Richard's affair only after the majority of the story has passed is an equally shrewd measure. The reader has already made up their minds about these characters until this time, and the potentially unpalatable aspect to the separation almost slips by unnoticed. Through Richard's behavior, Updike subverts the traditional notions of hero and anti-hero—the protagonist of "Separating" does not fit easily into either archetype. If anything, he is a non-hero, too helplessly absorbed in his own thoughts and emotions to exercise real agency in the world.

Self-interest is the most important driver for the characters of "Separating," and Updike explores the theme with nuance and complexity. For example, John's upset is directed more toward his experience in school than his parents' split. And Joan is ostensibly more selfish than Richard, insisting on having things her way. However,

her decisions also make more sense for her children, and late in the story, it is revealed that Richard is the one having an affair, not Joan.

The strategic timing of this revelation calls attention to Updike's treatment of gender norms. Although received ideas about 20th-century gender norms suggest that men were more likely to have affairs, Richard's love for the woman in the house is surprising because in the context of the story, women seem to be the source of the male characters' problems. Importantly, Updike is unclear about whether Richard has actually consummated the affair, or even if the "third person" is aware that Richard loves her. This adds a level of moral ambiguity to the situation, and complicates its implication that Richard might be an antihero.

Dickie's kiss at the end of the story, "passionate as a woman ['s]," demonstrates the broad variety of emotional expression in Updike's fiction. The kiss is not a gesture of physical affection, but rather an expression of confusion, one that has little to do with Dickie's relationship to his father. His unorthodox expression of the confusion calls into questions the other gestures of affection in the story, and suggest that similar complexity may underlie the other children's reactions.

"Separating" is one of 18 stories Updike wrote about the Maple family, considered a loosely autobiographical account of a dissolved marriage that spans over two decades. The similarities between Richard Maple's and John Updike's first marriage are numerous. The Maples reside outside of Boston and have four children whose ages and genders match the progression of Updike's own children with his first wife - the eldest daughter, the older son, younger son and then youngest girl. Details of the Maple children's lives also echo Updike's own children. Elizabeth Updike, for example, studied abroad in England. (De Bellis 462-3) Holding a mirror up to his own life, Updike created a compelling figure through which he could express profound emotional strife.

4) The Snows of Kilimanjaro – Ernest Hemingway

Harry, a writer, and his wife, Helen, are stranded while on safari in Africa. A bearing burned out on their truck, and Harry is talking about the gangrene that has infected his leg when he did not apply iodine after he scratched it. As they wait for a rescue plane from Nairobi that he knows won't arrive on time, Harry spends his time drinking and insulting Helen. Harry reviews his life, realizing that he wasted his talent through procrastination and luxury from a marriage to a wealthy woman that he doesn't love.

In a series of flashbacks, Harry recalls the mountains of Bulgaria and Constantinople, as well as the suddenly hollow, sick feeling of being alone in Paris. Later, there were Turks, and an American poet talking nonsense about the Dada movement, and headaches and quarrels, and watching people whom he would later write about. Uneasily, he recalls a man who'd been frozen, his body half-eaten by dogs, and a wounded officer so entangled in a wire fence that his bowels spilled over it.

As Harry lies on his cot, he is aware that vultures are walking around his makeshift camp, and a hyena lurks in the shadows. Knowing that he will die before he wakes, Harry goes to sleep and dreams that the rescue plane is taking him to a snow covered summit of Kilimanjaro, the highest mountain in Africa. Its Western summit is called the Masai "Ngàje Ngài," the House of God, where he sees the legendary leopard.

Helen wakes, and taking a flashlight, walks toward Harry's cot. Seeing that his leg is dangling alongside the cot and that the dressings are pulled down, she calls his name repeatedly. She listens for his breathing and can hear nothing. Outside the tent, the hyena whines — a cry that is strangely human.

Analysis

Hemingway opens his story with an epigraph, a short, pithy observation about a lone leopard who sought the tip of Kilimanjaro (literally, "The House of God").

The African safari was Harry's attempt to put his life back on track. Harry, the central character, has been living a life of sloth, luxury, and procrastination, so this safari was supposed to bring him back to the virtues of hard work, honesty, and struggle as a step in the right direction. Living off of his wife's wealth has led him down a path of steady, artistic decline and he knows it.

Also interesting to note is that both Harry and Hemingway were of the "Lost Generation" of World War I who had to rebuild their lives after being wounded in combat and seeing the horrors of war. This particular work, some have asserted, seems to reflect both Harry's and Hemingway's concerns about leaving unfinished business behind as a writer and the proper lifestyle for a writer that is conducive to writing on a daily basis. Hemingway was quoted as saying once that "politics, women, drink, money, and ambition" ruin writers.

Concerning the structure of this story, note that Hemingway divides it into six sections and within each of these sections inserts a flashback that appears in italic, continually juxtaposing the hopeless, harrowing present with the past, which often seemed full of promise.

The flashbacks themselves center around concerns about the erosion of values: lost love, loose sex, drinking, revenge, and war. They are a mix of hedonism, sentimentality toward the human condition, and leaving unfinished business. Here, in this story, the symbolism of Kilimanjaro is contrasted with the symbolism of the plains. Harry is dying in the plains from gangrene, a stinking, putrid, and deadly infection, causing his body to rot and turn greenish black. Against Harry's background of dark, smelly horror and hopelessness, Hemingway contrasts Harry's memories of the good times that he had in the mountains. Good things happen in the mountains; bad things happen on the plains. Hemingway ends his story with Harry's spirit triumphant, as when Harry dies, his spirit is released and travels to the summit of the mighty mountain where the square top of Kilimanjaro is "wide as all the world"; it is incredibly white as it shines dazzlingly in the sunlight. The mountain is brilliant, covered with pure white snow; it is incredibly clean — a clean, well-lighted place.

It is important to note here that there were three deeds throughout Harry's life that facilitated his otherworldly trip to Kilimanjaro at the time of this death:

- Giving away his last morphine pills that he saved for himself to his friend Williamson, who is in horrendous pain
- Harry's intention to write (the mental writing of the flashbacks) in his painful stupor
- Sacrificing himself to his wife as opposed to absolving himself

During his otherworldly flight over Kilimanjaro, Harry sees the legendary leopard. The dead, preserved leopard can be seen as a symbol of immortality, a reward for taking the difficult road. Harry himself was a "leopard" at certain times in his life, as were some of his acquaintances in his own stories. Specifically, Harry can be seen as a leopard during

- His youth, when he lived in a poor neighborhood of Paris as a writer
- In the war, when he gave his last morphine pills for himself to the horribly suffering Williamson
- On his deathbed, when he mentally composes flashbacks and uses his intention to write
- When he stays loyal to his wife and does not confess to her that he never really loved her

Some mystic impulse within Harry and within the leopard drove them to seek out God, or the god within themselves, or immortality that resided far from ugly, mundane reality.

In most civilizations, God or God's promise of immortality resides on the highest mountain top: Mount Olympus for the Greeks, Mount Sinai for the Hebrews, Mount Fuji for the Japanese. If the leopard was searching for some sort of immortality, then it found immortality at the summit of Kilimanjaro, where it lies frozen — preserved for all eternity.

When Harry looks at Kilimanjaro, he sees it as a symbol of truth, idealism, and purity. When he dies, tragic irony exists. The leopard died in a high, clean, well-lighted place; Harry, in contrast, dies rotting and stinking on the plains, lamenting his wasted life and his failure to complete his desired projects.In his novels and especially in his short stories, Hemingway often uses mountains to symbolize goodness, the purity, and cleanness, and he uses the plains as a symbol of evil and confusion. This contrast has often been commented on by Hemingway scholars.

Not surprisingly, because death is at the core of this story, one of the central themes that occurs again and again in Hemingway's stories and novels is man's direct encounter with death or with approaching death. Whether a man is in war and on the battlefield (as Nick Adams is in several stories; as are Hemingway heroes in his novels *A Farewell to Arms*, *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and parts of *The Sun Also Rises*) or facing death (as Nick Adams is when he is severely wounded in "A Way You'll Never Be" and "In Another Country"), or on big game hunts, facing charging animals (as Francis Macomber is in "A Short Happy Life"), the theme of man's direct encounter with death is always pivotal to the story. Death is always present as Hemingway examines how man reacts and behaves in the face of death. In this case, as with other of Hemingway's heroes, we have a writer, Harry, who never writes what he has wanted to; now it is too late. Death is so near that it can be smelled, even in the presence of the stinking, smelly hyena.

Part 1

Hemingway opens this story with a typical Hemingway narrative device: Two people are talking; moreover, they are talking about pain and a horrible odor. Hemingway zeroes in on the immediate problem: Harry's certain death — unless help arrives. Hemingway does not immediately identify the people who are talking; and readers don't yet know the names of the characters, the place, the time, or any other kind of background, expository information about them. Readers know only that something is terribly wrong with the male character, causing a potent stench, and that three big birds squat "obscenely" close by. The woman's first comment — "Don't! Please don't." — indicates that tension exists between her and the man, a tension that will soon erupt into antagonism.

Also, mainly through conversation only, readers learn that the man has some type of injury but that the pain has disappeared; he is lying on a cot under some trees while "obscene" birds (vultures) are circling overhead. A truck that the man and woman were driving has broken down, and they are now waiting for a rescue plane to take them away.

The man mentions for the first time that the big birds — the vultures (or buzzards, as they are often referred to) — are birds of prey, who have ceased circling over Harry and Helen and now have begun to walk around on the ground. They seemingly know that Harry is close to death. During the day, the ugly vultures gather around the camp; the putrid, foul smell of Harry's rotting, gangrenous flesh attracts them. Hemingway uses the symbol of the vulture in its natural setting, Africa, to convey the horror of approaching death and the agony of waiting for death. Ironically, the reader also learns that in happier times, Harry spent time observing the vulture's behavior so that he could use them in his writing.

As spiritual symbols of ascension, these birds represent both what could've been and what now can't be. It is interesting to note that Hemingway chose the vulture to represent Harry's "cycle" of opportunity and termination, as vultures themselves are inherently tied to global life and death on the plain because of their ecological function. Life, because their scavenging enables the plain to stay clean and free of rotten debris that could be harmful to other animals, and death, because they portend when an animal will expire and become carrion. In essence, these "trash men" of the plains are also the trash men of Harry's wasted life. They appeared at a time when Harry could have cleaned up his lifestyle and used his ability when he had his health, and now they appear again as Harry is about to die. These vultures represent Harry's physical death. Vultures have long been a symbol of death and rebirth in American Indian folklore as well.

The woman mentions that she would like to do something for Harry until the rescue plane arrives. The plane, of course, is another symbol. The airplane is airborne — that is, from the heavens — it is a symbol that is filled with hope that Harry and Helen can escape from the plains and from the horrible vultures.

This is the beginning of the jarring realization that Harry has run out of time and that all of the writing he planned to do will never get done. Camping on the hot, sweltering plain at the foot of Kilimanjaro, Harry vents his anger and frustration at himself onto his wife. It is on this low, hot plain with land-bound animals that Harry is at his most frustrated, baser, unrealized self as death, symbolized by the vultures, creeps nearer and his unused talent slips further away from him.

Harry's impending death causes him to evaluate his life. He knows now that he will never "write the things that he had saved to write until he knew enough to write them well." Now it is too late, and he will never know "if he could have written them." His day-by-day closing in on death makes him realize how often and how much he frittered away his life, avoiding writing the things that he wanted to. Thus, Hemingway combines two themes: man's confrontation with death and man as a failed artist.

Flashback 1

All of the five flashbacks (some literary critics refer to them as "interior monologues") deal with brief scenes, or vignettes, about the things that Harry experienced in the past; he had meant to write about them but never did.

In this first flashback, snow is a central element in each of his recollections. He remembers the railway station in Karagatch, Turkey, and leaving on the famous Orient Express and riding through northern Greece, where he recalled fighting between the Greeks and Turks (during the Greco-Turko war that Hemingway, when he was a reporter, covered).

He remembers Bulgaria: the mountains covered with snow; the exchange of populations and people walking in the snow until they died in it. There, he also protected a deserter. While snowed in at the Madlener-haus for a week, the owner of the gasthaus lost everything while gambling. There in the cold, bright mountains someone named Barker bombed Austrian officers' leave train and strafed those who escaped and then came into the Austrian mess hall and bragged about it.

He remembers Vorarlberg and Arlberg, winter ski resorts with many activities, including skiing on the snow like a bird in the air (Hemingway skied often in these places); Harry never wrote about any of these adventures.

Throughout this section, there is an overwhelming sense of loss. Loss of lives from war, and loss of life due to despair and adverse financial circumstances. Throughout the flashback, the snow sets the stage for spiritual ascension and release. Spiritual ascension in terms of being released during death, although through unpleasant means, from the earthly plane, and release in terms of finding joy and peace in skiing free and unfettered in the wind.

A second level of loss is also the loss of opportunity. All of these experiences in this flashback are ripe opportunities for artistic expression, as they are events that Harry experienced himself and knew. Harry went many places and saw many things, but never wrote about any of them.

Part 2

Here, the narrative is divided into two sections, separated by three asterisks (* * *). The first section of this narrative resumes the conversation between Harry and his wife, but now it becomes more bitter and hateful. When she reminds him that in Paris he loved a place where they stayed, he angrily responds that "Love is a dunghill," which debases their love. She asks him if he must destroy everything by killing his horse and wife and burning his saddle and armor. She alludes to a warrior's trophies that were set afire after the death of a

warrior. Harry blames her "bloody money" for his predicament; then he repents and lies to her about his love for her. Lastly, he admits that his abuse stems from frustration about leaving things behind that he never did. It is here that the reader gets the most vivid glance into Harry's bitterness, rage, and frustration at himself and at his wife for what she represents in his life.

In the second section, he later wakens and discovers that Helen is away, hoping to shoot a Tommie (a small gazelle) for meat and broth. The sun has gone down, and although the vultures are no longer walking on the ground around the camp, they are roosting for the night in a nearby tree in greater numbers. Even the stillness and cover of the night and the comfort of sleep do not rid Harry of the feathered reminders of his impending death; even while roosting to sleep, the vultures are ever vigilant of his continuing decline. The small animals scurrying on the ground are another yet minor symbol to note, as they indicate that life still goes on, business as usual, all around Harry despite his life-threatening situation.

Harry considers his procrastination — not writing, and writing becoming daily more and more difficult. Finally, he did no work at all. Almost without knowing it, he traded his artistic talents for money and comfort, and the exchange was not worth it. He acknowledges, however, that it was not his wife's fault. If it had not been Helen, there would have been another rich woman. Also, he realizes that he destroyed his talent for writing by drinking so much that his perceptions were finally blunted.

Helen returns with game — a male Tommie that she successfully shot. As Helen and Harry are having drinks, a hyena appears in the early evening, just it has been doing for two weeks. Hemingway uses the hyena as the second important, prominent symbol of Harry's deterioration. The hyena is another carrion eater that is probably the most despised of all African animals because of its filth and aggressive team efforts to destroy and to steal other animals wounded and suffering on the plain. In this sense, the hyena can represent Harry's loveless marriage and the moral sloth of choosing material comfort over true love, because it is these two elements intermingled in his marriage that are the most destructive to him as a writer. Hence, although the hyena is a symbol of death, it is a spiritual death as opposed to a physical one.

Seeing the hyena, knowing about the vultures, and realizing that his wife and her money all symbolize the death of an artist, Harry suddenly knows for certain that he is actually going to die here on the plains of Africa.

However, even at this point, he realizes that Helen does really love him whether he really loves her, and he sees that she is a good, honest woman. He likes her pleasantness and appreciation and admires her shooting. Instead of having an honest conversation about his real feelings for her, he sacrifices himself to her to avoid hurting her, and chooses not to make any deathbed confessions that would cause her emotional pain. Because he doesn't break with her and stays true to her in the end, he reestablishes his higher self. This is the second one of the three important deeds of his life that facilitates his flight over Kilimanjaro at the end of the story.

Helen is improved by her association with Harry, as he makes her life complete. She has selfless love and respect for him, and is considered to be one of Hemingway's heroic women. Conversely, Harry has declined because he has lived hypocritically with a woman he doesn't love.

Flashback 2

Harry remembers quarreling in Paris and going to Constantinople and spending his time having sex with all kinds of women and finally getting into fights. After one fight, he decided to leave for Anatolia, the great plains of Turkey, where poppies are grown for opium. He recalls what strange things opium did for him: He seemed to see men wearing white ballet skirts and upturned shoes with pom-poms on their toes. He saw such horrors that when he returned to Paris, he couldn't talk about it or write about it.

In Paris, Harry met Tristian Tzara, a Romanian poet who founded the Dada movement (Dadaism) and who represented everything that Harry (and Hemingway) opposed. Harry "had never written any of this," but he'd like to write about it.

This particular flashback focuses on escapism, futility, and what doesn't come to fruition, particularly in Harry's relationships with women. The empty, one-night sexual encounters with women, winning a fight with a man for a woman he has for one evening, and the sentimental relapse for a past love that ruins his present marriage all are in response to a quarrel that happened and then passed.

Another level of futility can also be seen in the war. Harry and the British observer run as fast as they can, only to see the Turks coming upon them as they hide.

Rather than facing his feelings, Harry escapes into the world of booze, one-night stands, as well as opium for altered states of consciousness that enable him to forget the quarrel with his wife and the war.

Part 3

Harry feels as if he's going to die tonight; he wants to sleep outside. Helen brings him broth to keep up his strength, but he doesn't need any "strength" to die. He wants to write and wonders if Helen can take dictation so that he could record his last thoughts. If he were able to write one perfect paragraph, one last time, he could "get it right." Despite his physical deterioration, Harry still yearns for one last chance and entertains hope that maybe his wife could do the physical aspect of the writing for him.

Flashback 3

Here, this third flashback deals with two themes: destruction and a lingering loss despite recovery and rebuilding; and productivity and happiness in the midst of poverty.

Harry recalls his grandfather's log house that burned and destroyed all of his grandfather's guns, and how even though it was rebuilt, his grandfather never bothered to get more guns and never hunted again. Even though the log house was rebuilt, the remnants of the destroyed guns lay in the ashes of the fire like a coffin in its crypt, with his grandfather and everyone else giving the remnants of the guns the same respect and berth due a gravesite.

He then remembers Germany's Black Forest, where he went after the war and fished; he remembers the hotel where, because of inflation, the proprietor lost all his money and because he didn't have enough money from the previous year to buy supplies and open the hotel, he hanged himself. Although the hotel may have lingered after the inflation, the proprietor was lost forever.

Harry recalls all of the little neighborhoods in Paris where he lived when he was poor, including the drunkards and the sportifs; he remembers the inexpensive hotel where he rented the top room to live in and write. He could see the rooftops of Paris from his window and observe the various things that were happening in the streets below.

Here, these poor little neighborhoods in Paris were full of vivid characters and vital people, productive in some way and happy despite their poverty. It was here that Harry was penniless yet productive, enjoying the people-watching opportunities and quaint beauty that these neighborhoods offered. It was his favorite part of Paris, and it represents his youth, happiness, and potential.

The purple dye that the flower sellers use to dye the flowers could be an interesting metaphor for writing itself. The purple dye could represent the creative license, liberty, and literary devices that writers use to color real life events with to create their fiction.Important here also is the mention of the famous writer Paul Verlain dying in a

cheap hotel in the neighborhood. This talented writer's demise in this neighborhood parallels Harry's potential for talent and demise as well, as Harry's demise started when he left this neighborhood and abandoned this lifestyle.

Part 4

Harry's wife wants him to drink some broth; instead, he asks for whiskey. He waits; after Helen leaves, he'll drink all he wants. He considers sleep, but death seems to have gone down a different street, on a bicycle. Harry is hallucinating, rapidly approaching his death.

Flashback 4

Harry realizes that he never wrote about many things: a ranch and a "half-wit chore boy" who was given the task of protecting the farm in the absence of the owner. When another farmer, a mean-spirited, sadistic man, tried to get himself some feed from the barn and threatened to beat the chore boy if he tried to stop him, the chore boy was loyal to the owner. That was when the chore boy got a rifle, shot the man, and left him for the dogs to eat. Harry remembers taking the carcass into town with the chore boy's help, who thought he was going to be rewarded for protecting his master's property, but to his amazement, was arrested and handcuffed. Then he turned to Harry and began to cry.

That was one story that Harry had "saved to write." He's sure that he has at least twenty good stories inside him, stories that he would never write.

This particular flashback deals with misguided loyalty. Although the chore boy protected the hay and was loyal to the owner as he was told to do, his misguided sense of how to be loyal and protect his owner results in a grisly crime and desecration of a corpse.

Part 5

Looking at his rich wife, Harry gives us his view of the rich and of the very rich. Harry recalls talking about this subject with Julian. Actually, this same conversation occurred between Hemingway and F. Scott Fitzgerald. Some biographers have placed the conversation in a cafe in Paris, when Fitzgerald told Hemingway, "The very rich are different from you and me." And Hemingway replied, "Yes, they have more money."

Harry is also fighting intense, prolonged pain and is trying to overcome it by not caring about it. Just when he thinks he can't bear it, it goes away.

Flashback 5

Harry remembers the death of a soldier named Williamson, who had been hit by a bomb and, while he was trying to move, realized that he was snagged and caught in a wire fence with his bowels spilling out onto the wire. He begged Harry to kill him. This is the only flashback in this short story where Harry doesn't mention that he failed to write about a certain memory or memories.

This particular flashback was one Harry probably didn't want to write about, as it deals with a man who "couldn't stand things." Readers aren't told whether Williamson could've survived. However, the fact that he was brought from the battlefield alive and conscious for some time even after being given a fatal dose of morphine pills that Harry saved for himself indicated to Harry that Williamson was a very strong man. Despite his strength, he didn't wait to find out whether the Lord gave him more than he could bear. He simply didn't try to beat the pain.

This is the first deed of the three in Harry's life that facilitates his flight to Kilimanjaro. Because Harry sacrifices the morphine pills to ease Williamson's pain, this episode is parallel to the one in Part 2 where Harry sacrifices himself to his wife and stays loyal to her as opposed to absolving himself and admitting that he never loved her.

Part 6

For Harry, death has been easy compared to the soldier who was impaled on the wire fence; in fact, death has become boring for Harry — he's as bored with it as he is with everything else.

Also, he tells his wife that "I've been writing." At this point in the story, Harry's intention is as good as his deed. In his current situation, Harry feels that he has done everything he can (in intention) to redeem himself and be worthy of Heaven before he dies. This is the final of the three deeds that facilitates Harry's eventual flight over Kilimanjaro.

At that moment, he feels "death come by again" — a hyena — resting its head on the foot of his cot.

Harry tells his wife, Helen: "Never believe any of that about a scythe and a skull." These traditional Western-world medieval symbols of death are not valid in Africa. Here, the vulture and the hyena dominate Harry's sure knowledge of his inevitable death. Indeed, the hyena becomes the more dominant symbol when it sits, "pressing," on Harry's chest.

At this point, readers should realize that Harry has died. At the point of death, ideas and dreams are reality for Harry, so the trip to Kilimanjaro (Heaven) is not in italic. For Harry, the reality is that the rescue plane has come and he has been saved and rewarded. There are two images of Harry ascending — one, when he is lifted from the cot to take him inside, and the other, when the plane lifts off and heads toward Mount Kilimanjaro. For some readers, there are more endings than simply this one. One occurs when the hyena presses on Harry's chest, signifying his death. The other ending occurs when the plane flies Harry toward the square top of Kilimanjaro.

Metaphorically, a few things happen here to indicate that the flight to Kilimanjaro isn't a worldy trip:

- Compton refuses the cup of tea before he and Harry leave
- There is no room in the plane for any passengers except for Harry
- The plane doesn't go to Arusha to refuel The plane veers toward the white, shining, square top of Kilimanjaro, for, at that moment, Harry knows "where he [is] going."

To summarize, the deeds that Harry does that secure his flight to Kilimanjaro are:

- He gives his morphine pills to Williamson
- Harry's intention to write (the mentally composed flashbacks) in a painful stupor
- He sacrifices himself to his wife by not telling her that he never really loved her to absolve himself

For Harry's wife, the reality is that Harry is dead and she is alone again.

Unit-5

THE HOUSE ON MANGO STREET – Sandra Cisneros

On a series of vignettes, *The House on Mango Street* covers a year in the life of Esperanza, a Chicana (Mexican-American girl), who is about twelve years old when the novel begins. During the year, she moves with her family into a house on Mango Street. The house is a huge improvement from the family's previous apartment, and it is the first home her parents actually own. However, the house is not what Esperanza has dreamed of,

because it is run-down and small. The house is in the center of a crowded Latino neighborhood in Chicago, a city where many of the poor areas are racially segregated. Esperanza does not have any privacy, and she resolves that she will someday leave Mango Street and have a house all her own.

Esperanza matures significantly during the year, both sexually and emotionally. The novel charts her life as she makes friends, grows hips, develops her first crush, endures sexual assault, and begins to write as a way of expressing herself and as a way to escape the neighborhood. The novel also includes the stories of many of Esperanza's neighbors, giving a full picture of the neighborhood and showing the many possible paths Esperanza may follow in the future.

After moving to the house, Esperanza quickly befriends Lucy and Rachel, two Chicana girls who live across the street. Lucy, Rachel, Esperanza, and Esperanza's little sister, Nenny, have many adventures in the small space of their neighborhood. They buy a bike, learn exciting stories about boys from a young woman named Marin, explore a junk shop, and have intimate conversations while playing Double Dutch (jumping rope). The girls are on the brink of puberty and sometimes find themselves sexually vulnerable, such as when they walk around their neighborhood in high-heeled shoes or when Esperanza is kissed by an older man at her first job. During the first half of the year, the girls are content to live and play in their child's world. At school, Esperanza feels ashamed about her family's poverty and her difficult-to-pronounce name. She secretly writes poems that she shares only with older women she trusts.

Over the summer, Esperanza slips into puberty. She suddenly likes it when boys watch her dance, and she enjoys dreaming about them. Esperanza's newfound sexual maturity, combined with the death of two of her family members, her grandfather and her Aunt Lupe, bring her closer to the world of adults. She begins to closely watch the women in her neighborhood. This second half of *The House on Mango Street* presents a string of stories about older women in the neighborhood, all of whom are even more stuck in their situations and, quite literally, in their houses, than Esperanza is. Meanwhile, during the beginning of the following school year, Esperanza befriends Sally, a girl her age who is more sexually mature than Lucy or Rachel. Sally, meanwhile, has her own agenda. She uses boys and men as an escape route from her abusive father. Esperanza is not completely comfortable with Sally's sexual experience and their friendship results in a crisis when Sally leaves Esperanza alone, and a group of boys sexually assaults Esperanza in her absence.

Esperanza's traumatic experiences as Sally's friend, in conjunction with her detailed observations of the older women in her neighborhood, cement her desire to escape Mango Street and to have her own house. When Esperanza finds herself emotionally ready to leave her neighborhood, however, she discovers that she will never fully be able to leave Mango Street behind, and that after she leaves she'll have to return to help the women she has left. At the end of the year, Esperanza remains on Mango Street, but she has matured extensively. She has a stronger desire to leave and understands that writing will help her put distance between herself and her situation. Though for now writing helps her escape only emotionally, in the future it may help her to escape physically as well.

"The House on Mango Street"

Esperanza describes how her family came to live at the house on Mango Street. She, her parents, her brothers, Carlos and Kiki, and her sister, Nenny, moved to Mango Street when the pipes broke in their previous apartment and the landlord refused to fix them. Before they moved into the house on Mango Street, the family moved around a lot. The family had dreamed of a white house with lots of space and bathrooms, but the house on Mango Street has only one bedroom and one bathroom. Esperanza notes that this is not the house that she envisioned, and although her parents tell her it's only temporary, she doubts they'll move anytime soon. The house, however, does have some significant advantages over the family's previous apartments. The family owns this house, so they are no longer subject to the whims of landlords, and at the old apartment, a nun made Esperanza feel ashamed about where she lived. The house on Mango Street is an improvement, but it is still not the house that Esperanza wants to point out as hers.

"Hairs"

Esperanza describes the different types of hair of all the members of her family. Her own hair doesn't do what she wants it to do, while her sister's is smooth and oily. Her mother's hair is beautiful and smells like bread. Esperanza likes to sleep near her mother so she can smell it.

"Boys and Girls"

Esperanza notes that boys and girls do not socialize with each other in the neighborhood. Even though she can talk to her brothers at home, they refuse to talk to her outside. Esperanza must socialize with her younger sister Nenny, who, Esperanza notes, is too young and would not be her choice for a friend if she were not her sister. Worse, Nenny is Esperanza's responsibility. Esperanza has to make sure that Nenny does not play with the Vargas kids. Esperanza longs for a best friend. Without one she compares herself to a "red balloon tied to an anchor."

"My Name"

We learn the narrator's name, Esperanza, for the first time. Esperanza muses on the meanings of her name, but she does so in a random, nonsensical way that we are not meant to take seriously. In English, she reflects, her name means "hope," while in Spanish it means "too many letters" as well as "sadness" and "waiting." She likes the way her name is pronounced in Spanish, but not in English.

Esperanza is named after her great-grandmother, and both she and her great-grandmother were born in the Chinese year of the horse. The horse is an animal that represents strength, and being born under this sign is supposed to be bad luck for women. Esperanza rejects this superstition, explaining that she believes both the Chinese and the Mexicans discourage women from being strong. Esperanza never met her great-grandmother, but she compares her to a wild horse. She did not want to get married but was forced into marriage and never forgave her husband. She spent her life gazing sadly out the window. Esperanza says that while she has inherited her great-grandmother's name, she does not want to "inherit her place by the window."

Esperanza would like to change her name to one that expresses her true self. She lists several possible choices, settling eventually on Zeze the X.

"Cathy Queen of Cats"

Cathy becomes Esperanza's first friend in her new neighborhood. Cathy claims to be related to the queen of France and hopes to go to France someday to inherit the family house. She tells Esperanza about the other people on Mango Street and disparages nearly all of them. She agrees to be Esperanza's friend only for a week, until next Tuesday, when her family will move. She offends Esperanza by telling her that her family is moving because the neighborhood is getting bad, when clearly what makes it bad is that families like Esperanza's are moving in.

"Our Good Day"

Esperanza sacrifices her friendship with Cathy by pitching in for a bike that she will share with her two new friends, Lucy and Rachel. Cathy does not want Esperanza to have anything to do with Lucy and Rachel, explaining that they "smell like a broom." Lucy and Rachel are Chicana sisters whose family is from Texas, and they are more similar to Esperanza than Cathy is. Esperanza is embarrassed to tell her new friends her name, but they don't laugh at it or find it unusual. Esperanza knows she eventually must share her friends and bike with her sister Nenny, since she took money from Nenny to help pay for the bike, but for now, she decides to wait and keep her new friends to herself. The three girls ride their new bike together around the block, and Esperanza describes the geography of the neighborhood.

"Laughter"

Esperanza explains that although she and Nenny do not look alike as Lucy and Rachel do, they do have a lot in common. They laugh in the same, loud way, and sometimes they have the same ideas. One day Esperanza sees a house that reminds her of houses in Mexico, although she can't say exactly why. Rachel and Lucy laugh at her, but Nenny tells them she was thinking the same thing as Esperanza.

"Gil's Furniture Bought & Sold"

In Esperanza's neighborhood, an old black man runs a junk store, and he doesn't turn on the lights unless he knows his customers have money. Esperanza and Nenny wander around the store in the dark. The store is labyrinthine and full of mysterious items, as well as piles of broken televisions. This is the store where Esperanza's family bought their refrigerator when they moved into the neighborhood. Esperanza is afraid to talk to the owner and only does so when she buys a little Statue of Liberty. Nenny is not intimidated by him, and one

day she asks him about a wooden box in the shop. It is a music box, and the man plays it for them. Esperanza finds the music surprising and emotional. Nenny tries to buy the box, but the man tells her it's not for sale.

"Meme Ortiz"

Meme, whose real name is Juan, and his dog, who has both English and Spanish names, move into Cathy's house after her family leaves the neighborhood. Esperanza describes the house, a wooden house Cathy's father built. It has a tree in the backyard that is taller than Esperanza's house. When the kids had a Tarzan jumping contest, Meme jumped out of the tree and broke both his arms.

Analysis

These chapters paint a geographical and cultural picture from both the past and the present of Mango Street and the surrounding neighborhood. Cathy indicates what the neighborhood may have been like in the past, while the two families that move into her house once she's left are more representative of the whole neighborhood as Esperanza comes to experience it. The black man who owns Gil's furniture is an aberration from the rest of the neighborhood, different from the people Esperanza sees from day to day. His race makes him so unfamiliar that Esperanza is afraid to talk to him. Meme and his dog each have two names, a fact that highlights the neighborhood's two cultures, Latin American and American, and two languages, Spanish and English, revealing the new cultural makeup of Mango Street. When Esperanza bikes around the neighborhood with Lucy and Rachel, she reveals its physical limitations. She points out her house again as rundown, and the neighborhood seems no better. Mango Street is near a dangerous busy street, and her house is still near a laundromat. The laundromat is reminiscent of the laundromat below the apartment where Esperanza used to live. That one was boarded up because it was robbed, and it was a keen source of embarrassment for Esperanza. That her new house is also near a laundromat suggests that the move to Mango Street is far from enough to change her circumstances.

She looked out the window her whole life, the way so many women sit their sadness on an elbow. I wonder if she made the best with what she got or was she sorry because she couldn't be all the things she wanted to be. Esperanza. I have inherited her name, but I don't want to inherit her place by the window.

"Louie, His Cousin & His Other Cousin"

Meme Ortiz's family rents their basement apartment to a Puerto Rican family. The family's son Louie is a friend of Esperanza's brother. Louie's cousin Marin also lives with the family in the basement. Marin is older than Esperanza and wears nylons and Avon makeup, which she also sells in her free time. She sings sassy songs about boyfriends while she baby-sits Louie's little sisters. One day, another cousin of Louie's drives up in a beautiful new Cadillac and takes the neighborhood kids for a ride. They go around the block again and again, until they hear sirens. Louie's cousin orders everyone out and takes off in the car. He doesn't quite make the turn at the end of the alley, though, and crashes into a streetlight. The cops arrest him.

"Marin"

Louie's cousin Marin has a boyfriend in Puerto Rico whom she plans to marry when she goes back. At the same time, she hopes to stay in Chicago next year so she can get a job downtown. She hopes to meet a rich man on the subway who will marry her and take her to live outside the barrio. She tells Esperanza and her friends' useful things like how girls get pregnant and how to remove unwanted facial hair, as well as girlish superstitions, such as how the number of calcium deposits on their fingernails corresponds with the number of boys who like them. She spends her days baby-sitting Louie's sisters, and in the evening, she takes her radio outside and dances, smokes cigarettes, and waits for boys to come by. Esperanza notes that she does not seem afraid of the boys. The section ends with a description of Marin in the future somewhere else. She is still dancing under a streetlight, waiting for a man to swoop down and change her life.

"Those Who Don't"

Esperanza says that people "who don't know any better" think her neighborhood is dangerous, and that if they find themselves in it at night, they fear they'll get stabbed. Esperanza and her friends are never scared in the neighborhood, since they know the people outsiders might find frightening, including the man with the crooked eye, the tall intimidating man in the hat, and a large retarded man. However, Esperanza notes that when she enters a non-Chicano ethnic neighborhood, she herself gets scared.

"There Was an Old Woman She Had So Many Children She Didn't Know What to Do"

Esperanza describes the Vargas kids, whom she described earlier as being bad. They have a single mother, Rosa Vargas, who is overwhelmed by and unable to control her many children, and who is still sad about the fact that

their father left her without a note or any money to help. The children don't care about themselves or anybody else. At first the people in the neighborhood feel bad for the children and try to make them stop misbehaving, but eventually the people become tired of trying and stop caring. They don't care when the children hurt themselves, even when Angel Vargas falls from a great height and dies.

Analysis

Esperanza manages to chronicle the passing of time in these and other sections, even though, on the surface, the stories seem to be independent, unconnected incidents. At the beginning of *The House on Mango Street*, Esperanza meets Cathy, who agrees to be her friend only until Tuesday, and then she meets Lucy and Rachel sometime within that week. The section about Meme takes place soon after Cathy's family moves out, and then Louie's family moves into the basement apartment in that house about a month later. Esperanza's year in the house on Mango Street is already well underway, without her ever having explicitly noted that time has passed. Since these new characters—Meme, Louie, Louie's other cousin, Marin, the Vargas kids—appear in only one or two sections, Esperanza must tell their stories in the past, present, and future. Meme probably doesn't break his arms during his first week in the house, for example, and in the section about the Vargas kids, Esperanza shows an evolution of the neighborhood's attitudes toward the kids, from caring and pity to apathy. The incidents Esperanza describes take place at any time during the year, and Marin's section even moves into the future, beyond what Esperanza can really know.

These sections contain many images of people who try to fly and cannot quite make it. Angel Vargas and Meme both fall from great heights. Angel is trying to fly, and Meme is trying to be Tarzan, both with disastrous results. Similarly, Marin is waiting for a star to fall from the sky to change her life. The children's efforts to fly suggest their efforts to escape their current situations in the world—Angel is trying to fly away while Meme is looking for a life of adventure. Marin hopes the star that will fall will be a man who will bring her back up with him. Esperanza has previously described herself as a red balloon on a tether. When she finally abandons her tether, she'd like to fly away, not fall to the ground, but her future is at this point uncertain.

"Alicia Who Sees Mice"

Alicia is a neighborhood girl whose mother has died. She must do all the cooking and cleaning for her father. Alicia is also trying to attend college, traveling far on public transportation every day so she can escape a life of domestic toil. She stays up all night studying and thus sees the mice that come out at night. Her father gives her a hard time about her studies. He says the mice don't exist and that a woman's job is to get up early to make tortillas for her younger siblings' lunches.

"Darius and the Clouds"

Esperanza complains about living in the inner city, saying there is not enough sky or flowers or butterflies. Yet the children in the neighborhood make the best of what they have. One day, when the sky is full of puffy clouds that everyone is admiring, Darius, a boy Esperanza doesn't like because he tries to be tough, says something Esperanza finds wise: he looks up at a particular cloud and calls it God.

"And Some More"

A conversation about clouds between Esperanza, Nenny, Lucy, and Rachel turns into a fight. Esperanza says the Eskimos have thirty different names for snow, which leads them into a discussion about names for clouds. Esperanza knows two names: cumulus and nimbus. She is concerned with the actual names, while Nenny makes up lists of everyday names, such as Lisa and Ted. Nenny does this throughout the story and refuses to respond to her sister or to her friends while they are fighting. Rachel and Lucy are more interested in what the clouds are similar to in their everyday lives, like hair after it's been brushed or their friend's fat face. One of the girls says Esperanza has an ugly fat face, and after this the girls playfully exchange creative insults.

"The Family of Little Feet"

Esperanza imagines a family of people with tiny, plump feet. Her description of the fairy-tale family merges into an account of a day when a woman gives her, Nenny, Rachel, and Lucy some old pairs of high-heeled shoes that happen to fit their small feet perfectly. The girls are amazed at these shoes because when they put them on, they suddenly have attractive, womanly legs. Some of their male neighbors warn them that such suggestive shoes are not meant for little girls, but the girls ignore them. Other men tease them with sexual comments. The shoes cause a flirtation between Rachel and a drunken bum. He asks her to kiss him for a dollar. Frightened, Lucy leads the girls back to Mango Street. They hide the shoes on Rachel and Lucy's porch, and later Rachel and Lucy's mother throws them away. The girls are glad the shoes are gone.

Analysis

Though Cathy introduced Alicia in an earlier section as having gotten snobby since she went to college, here we see that Cathy's description is inaccurate. Alicia isn't snobby—she's busy. She is struggling to fulfill the responsibilities of a full-time mother while trying to get an education. Her father faults her for not working enough for the family, and the neighborhood calls her "stuck-up," but she is actually striving for self-improvement. The patriarchal nature of Hispanic society poses a problem for girls with ambitions, such as Alicia and Esperanza. In these families, when the mother dies, the oldest female child, not the father, takes over responsibility for raising the children, which is why Alicia wishes there were someone older to do the work. To escape her situation, Alicia has chosen to pursue an education, much different from Marin's or Louie's other cousin's escape routes. Alicia does not have the support of her family or the community, which means she'll have a difficult time overcoming a sexist tradition. Because Alicia is the character most similar to Esperanza so far, her struggles suggest that Esperanza, too, will have difficulty asserting and achieving her independence.

Darius is the first boy Esperanza encounters who has poetic instincts similar to hers. This chapter is closer to a poem than any of the chapters so far. It contains many repeated words and internal rhymes: the word *sky* appears four times in the first paragraph, and the rhyming *school* and *fool* appear in the second. Though Esperanza lists Darius's transgressions, including chasing girls with firecrackers and a stick he says has touched a rat, she can't help expressing admiration for Darius's explanation that a single cloud is God. She is surprised that such a profound observation could come from a boy like Darius. Cisneros gives the impression that Darius may be forced by society into acting tough. Just as Esperanza does, he has his own way of coping with the barrio, necessarily different from Esperanza's way because he is a boy. However, he too has the ability to be poetic and wise despite his circumstances.

"A Rice Sandwich"

Esperanza envies the kids who get to eat lunch in the canteen at school instead of having to go home for lunch. She pesters her mother to write her a note giving her permission to eat at the canteen and to pack her a lunch. Her mother is reluctant at first, but after it becomes clear that none of the other kids will need bag lunches, she writes a note for Esperanza and packs her a sandwich, one made of rice since the family cannot afford lunch meats. At school, Sister Superior does not accept Esperanza's mother's note, saying that Esperanza lives too close to school and must go home to eat. The Sister points to some rundown tenements up the street, accusing Esperanza of living there. Esperanza is embarrassed and nods her head, even though the buildings the nun points to are much more rundown than her own house. She gets to eat at the canteen that day but is too upset to enjoy the experience.

"Chanclas"

For Esperanza's cousin's baptism, Esperanza's mother buys her a beautiful new outfit but forgets to buy the shoes that go with it. At the party after the baptism, Esperanza refuses to dance because she is embarrassed by her old brown saddle shoes. Her Uncle Nacho insists she is beautiful, and the two of them do a fancy new dance while everyone watches and applauds. Esperanza is proud that one particular boy watches her dance.

"Hips"

Esperanza, Nenny, Lucy, and Rachel jump rope and discuss the meaning of the hips they are beginning to develop. Rachel says that hips are good for propping a baby on while cooking, but Esperanza thinks this idea is unimaginative. Lucy says that hips are for dancing, while Nenny, who is too young to understand what it's like to develop hips, says that without them, you might turn into a man. Esperanza defends Nenny, then tries to give a scientific explanation about the purpose of hips that she gleaned from Alicia. Esperanza begins to believe hips have a musical quality. Rachel, Lucy, and Esperanza make up original chants about hips while dancing and jumping rope. Nenny repeats a rhyme she already knows, embarrassing Esperanza with her childishness.

"The First Job"

Esperanza's family wants her to get a summer job. She has been spending her days playing in the street and plans to begin looking sometime in the near future. One day, when she comes home after she lets a boy push her into the water from the open fire hydrant, she discovers that her aunt has found her a job matching pictures with negatives at the local photofinishing store. Esperanza just has to show up and lie about her age. The actual work is easy, but the social aspects of the job are difficult for Esperanza. She doesn't know whether she can sit down. She eats her lunch in the bathroom and takes her break in the coatroom. In the afternoon, a man Esperanza describes as older and Oriental befriends her. Esperanza feels more comfortable now that she has someone to eat

lunch with. He asks her to give him a kiss because it's his birthday, but when Esperanza leans over to kiss him on the cheek he grabs her face and kisses her hard on the lips for a long time.

Analysis

Esperanza experiences shame and embarrassment so acutely in these sections that the feelings nearly paralyze her. When she wants to eat at school, the nun makes her feel ashamed about where she lives—the second time a nun has demeaned Esperanza this way. In "Chanclas," which means "sandal," Esperanza's immense shame at her clunky school shoes keeps her from enjoying the party. When Esperanza has her first job, she is embarrassed because she doesn't know whether to stand up or sit down, and her shame leads her to scarf down her lunch in the bathroom. In all three of these situations, Esperanza's shame is largely self-imposed. People do not try to make Esperanza feel bad. Even in her experience with the nun, who does try to embarrass her, Esperanza ultimately exiles herself out of shame once she gets to the canteen. These sections suggest that, to succeed, Esperanza must overcome not only the obstacles society sets up, but also the stumbling block of her own feelings of shame.

"A Rice Sandwich" and "Hips" reveal the often vast differences between spoken and written language, or, in other words, public and private voices. In "A Rice Sandwich," we can hear Esperanza's mother's written voice in her note to the nun. Esperanza is ashamed of the note, which is not written convincingly enough to make the nun follow its instructions. The writing is stilted and childish, much different from the dynamic style in which Esperanza writes, and the voice of Esperanza's mother that we hear in the writing differs from other playful neighborhood voices. Esperanza has her own shortcomings in the voice she shares with others. The voice Esperanza uses with her friends is neither as lyrical nor as interesting as her written voice. In "Hips," Esperanza expresses greater interest in the scientific explanation for hips than in the more creative, everyday uses her friends suggest, just as in "And Some More" Esperanza concerns herself with the actual names for clouds.

"Papa Who Wakes Up Tired in the Dark"

Esperanza's father tells her that her grandfather, or *abuelito*, has died. He cries, which is astounding for Esperanza to see. He will have to go to Mexico for the funeral, and Esperanza will have to explain to her younger siblings that they will not be able to play or go out today. Esperanza tries to imagine what it would be like if her father, who wakes up every morning before sunrise to go to work, died. She holds her father in her arms.

"Born Bad"

Esperanza and her friends Rachel and Lucy pray for themselves because they played a game that made fun of Esperanza's Aunt Lupe just before she died. Aunt Lupe was a strong and beautiful swimmer in her youth, but for all of Esperanza's life, she was bedridden and sick. The game consisted of the girls imitating someone they all knew. They usually imitated famous people, but one day they picked Lupe. Although Esperanza was afraid to visit Lupe, she liked her. She would bring library books and read to Lupe, and one day she whispered one of her own poems in Lupe's ear. Aunt Lupe told Esperanza that she should keep writing because it would keep her free. Out on the schoolyard it was different, and Esperanza and her friends took turns imitating Lupe, not knowing she would die the next day. For this transgression, Esperanza believes she will go to hell.

"Elenita, Cards, Palm, Water"

Esperanza has her fortune told at the house of Elenita, a witch woman. Elenita seems very much like the other women in the neighborhood, except that she is somewhat better off. She is home with her two kids and has covered her sofas with plastic so the baby won't dirty them. She tries to get Esperanza to see something in a glass of water, but Esperanza can't really concentrate or believe in the spirits. Esperanza pays more attention to the Bugs Bunny cartoon in the background. Elenita puts out the Tarot cards and sees jealousy, sorrow, and luxury. Esperanza just wants to know whether Elenita sees a house in her future, but Elenita sees only a house of the heart. Esperanza pays Elenita five dollars and goes home disappointed.

"Geraldo No Last Name"

Marin meets a young man named Geraldo at a dance and dances with him a few times. After they leave the dance hall, a car strikes Geraldo, who speaks no English. He dies in the emergency room because no doctors come to help him. Marin has stayed with him at the hospital, although she does not know why. She has to answer the police's questions, but she can't tell them much. She doesn't even know Geraldo's last name. Esperanza imagines Geraldo's life—a series of run-down apartments and demeaning jobs to send money back

home to Mexico. She also imagines the people in Geraldo's community in Mexico, who will wonder what became of him and will not know he is dead.

Analysis

In "Papa Who Wakes Up Tired in the Dark," Esperanza empathizes with her father for the first time. She tries to put herself in her father's shoes by imagining what it would be like if her own father died. Previously, Esperanza has empathized with people only implicitly, and all of the people whose lives she has tried to imagine, such as Marin and Alicia, have been women. Esperanza's grandfather's death brings her face to face with her father's emotions for the first time. This section also marks the first time Esperanza must act as a parent. Since her father goes to Mexico for the funeral, Esperanza must explain the death to her siblings and keep discipline. While Alicia had to take the role of her mother, Esperanza takes over for her father. This subversion of gender roles foreshadows Esperanza's future rejection of her role as a woman in her own house.

Until "Born Bad," Esperanza has enjoyed writing and wanted to leave the neighborhood, but she never made the connection between the two desires. Aunt Lupe broaches the idea that Esperanza might be able to use the first to achieve the second. Lupe is the first person in *The House on Mango Street* to strongly support Esperanza's writing. Lupe doesn't compliment Esperanza after hearing her recite a poem, but instead tells her to keep writing because it "will keep [her] free." In the poem Esperanza recites for Lupe, Esperanza writes that she would like to jump out of her skin and shake the sky. Lupe resembles many seers and prophets from ancient mythology. She is blind, but she is wise and prophetic. Yet like most seers, she is ignored and mocked while she is alive. The girls are uncomfortable in her smelly apartment and play games in which they imitate her. Only after her death does Esperanza look back upon her as having been wise.

"Edna's Ruthie"

Ruthie is the grown-up daughter of Edna, a mean and exploitative landlord who owns the apartment building next door to Esperanza's house. One day when Angel Vargas is teaching them to whistle, Ruthie comes up and whistles beautifully. She likes to play with the children because she has never grown up enough to handle the adult world. She doesn't go into stores with the children, and one night when her mother's friends invite her to play bingo, she is paralyzed at the thought of going out with them. Ruthie is talented, but when she was young she got married instead of taking a job. Now she lives with her mother, but she waits for her husband to come and take her home. Esperanza brings her books. One day, Esperanza memorizes and recites "The Walrus and the Carpenter" from *Through the Looking Glass*. The beauty of Esperanza's recital moves Ruthie, but she cannot express herself. Instead, she tells Esperanza she has beautiful teeth.

"The Earl of Tennessee"

Earl, another of Esperanza's neighbors, is a jukebox repairman who works nights and is seen only when he comes out to tell the children sitting in front of his door to keep quiet. He has two lively dogs, and occasionally he gives the children old jukebox records. Earl supposedly has a wife, and many of the neighbors claim to have seen her, but everyone describes her differently. Earl clearly has a series of women whom he brings to his apartment for quick visits every now and then.

"Sire"

Sire is Esperanza's first real crush. He is a neighborhood boy who sometimes stares at her. Esperanza always tries to stare straight ahead when she passes him and not to be afraid. Her parents tell her Sire is a punk and that she shouldn't talk to him. Sire has a pretty, petite girlfriend, Lois, who doesn't know how to tie her shoes. Esperanza watches Sire and Lois take walks, or Lois riding Sire's bike. Esperanza wonders what it would be like to be in Lois's place, but her parents say that Lois is the kind of girl who goes into alleys. That doesn't keep Esperanza from wishing she could sit up outside late at night on the steps with Sire, or from wondering what it feels like to be held by a boy, something she so far has felt only in her dreams.

"Four Skinny Trees"

Esperanza compares herself to the trees outside her house. She thinks that both she and the trees do not belong in the barrio, but are stuck there anyway. Both she and they have secret strength and anger. The trees teach her not to forget her reason for being. They inspire her because they have grown despite the concrete that tries to keep them in the ground.

Analysis

Ruthie demonstrates the limited nature of a child's perspective, but her section also brings up the darker, very adult subject of death. Despite Ruthie's childishness, Esperanza hopes she'll act as another Aunt Lupe and

encourage her to create art, but Ruthie is either not mature or not aware enough to be of any help. Whether she is mentally handicapped or mentally ill is not clear, and whether her statements about her past are true is also a mystery. Although Ruthie shares some of Esperanza's poetic talents, Esperanza can see more of people's motives than Ruthie can, which makes her more adult than Ruthie. Because of Ruthie's many limitations, she is another figure who, like Geraldo in the last section, represents the ultimate outcast—she fits into neither the child's world nor the world of adults. Angel Vargas, the boy who fell and died in "There Was an Old Woman She Had So Many Children She Didn't Know What to Do," reappears in this section, which indicates that Esperanza met Ruthie fairly early on. However, not until she needs someone else to listen to her read poetry does Esperanza feel compelled to mention Ruthie. Angel Vargas's reappearance in this section acts as a reminder that death lurks everywhere and that it doesn't affect only older people, such as those who died in the previous sections.

The womanizing Earl reveals the neighborhood's vastly different standards for men and women regarding sex. Earl is one of the few grown men actually present in the barrio during the day. While Ruthie innocently waits for her husband to return for her, neighbors gossip about a wife Earl abandoned. He brings home many women, and different people believe different women might be his wife, though these women are most likely prostitutes. Esperanza notes off-handedly that no one in the neighborhood can agree on what Earl's wife actually looks like. This is one of Esperanza's more naïve observations, since the adults in the neighborhood are almost certainly aware that these "wives" are all different women. Associating sex with marriage and love is a child's mistake, but the neighbors, who insist, seriously or otherwise, that all these different women are somehow his one "wife," perpetuate the misunderstanding. No ugly judgments are made about Earl. He can do as he pleases with as many women as he wants, while Lois from "Sire" already has a bad reputation as a sexually willing and available girl.

"No Speak English"

Mamacita is the wife of one of Esperanza's neighbors. Her husband works very hard to bring her and her child to Mango Street, but once Mamacita arrives, she never leaves the house. She misses Mexico and refuses to assimilate. She is hugely fat, but Esperanza also finds her beautiful. She sits by the window, listens to Spanish radio, and wishes to go home. Some people think she never leaves her room because she is too fat or because she cannot get down the three flights of stairs, but Esperanza believes she refuses to come down because she doesn't speak any English. Esperanza's father explains how hard it is to live in the United States without knowing English, saying that when he first arrived, the only food he knew was "ham and eggs," so he had to eat ham and eggs three times a day. The final blow for Mamacita is that her child, whom she has brought with her from Mexico, learns English. It breaks her heart that even he insists upon speaking this ugly language that she cannot understand.

"Rafaela Who Drinks Coconut & Papaya Juice on Tuesdays"

On Tuesdays, when Rafaela's husband has his poker game, he locks her in their third-floor apartment because she is so beautiful, he's afraid she'll escape. She spends these afternoons and evenings leaning out the window, which makes her prematurely old. She wants to go dance at the bar down the street while she is still young, but instead she has to drop a dollar out of the window so that Esperanza and her friends can buy her some coconut or papaya juice at the store, which Rafaela then hauls up on a clothesline. At the bar, women who are older than Rafaela are allowed to dance and flirt, but each risks being imprisoned in the same way as Rafaela.

"Sally"

Sally is extremely beautiful. She wears Cleopatra makeup, nylons, and short skirts. At school she leans against the fence, and all the boys spread vicious gossip about her. Sally's father thinks her beauty is dangerous and doesn't let her out of the house, but Esperanza thinks Sally is wonderful and would like to be her new best friend. She wants to learn to line her eyes as Sally does. Esperanza understands that Sally wishes she didn't have to go home after school so she wouldn't have to worry about her father, gossip, or not belonging.

"Minerva Writes Poems"

Minerva is only two years older than Esperanza, but she is married with two children. Her husband has left her, but he sometimes returns, only to leave again. At night, after the children go to bed and she is alone, Minerva writes poems. She shares her poems with Esperanza, and Esperanza shares hers. However, Minerva also continues to take her husband back, even when he beats her. She visits Esperanza one night after being beaten up and asks for advice, but Esperanza cannot offer any. She doesn't know what will happen to Minerva.

Analysis

Each of the four women in these sections represents a possible fate for women on Mango Street, and they appear in the order of how similar they are to Esperanza, as well as in the order of how vulnerable they are. Such ordering suggests the urgency of Esperanza's situation. Mamacita is from Mexico and is stuck because of language, which is one thing Esperanza will not have to worry about. Rafaela has become prematurely old, which distances her from Esperanza. While Sally is Esperanza's age, she is not as similar to Esperanza as is poetic Minerva. Minerva and Esperanza are nearly the same age and are both aspiring poets. Although Mamacita is unhappy, her sadness springs from her own helplessness, not from her husband. Rafaela is trapped at home, but she does have the freedom to make exchanges with the children through the window. Sally is completely under her father's thumb, and Minerva is in constant personal danger. While other women can sit by the window to dream, Minerva's husband throws a rock through her window. When Minerva comes to Esperanza for guidance, Esperanza says she can do nothing to help. Esperanza will have to work hard, and quickly, if she does not want to end up like Minerva.

In "No Speak English," Esperanza sees that not knowing the language can keep people caged. Without language, Mamacita is miserable. While others make fun of her appearance, Esperanza views Mamacita as a tragic figure. She believes Mamacita is stuck at home because of the language barrier. In other vignettes, Esperanza has associated naming and linguistic ability with power and freedom, and here, she shows that the converse of that theory is true. Because Mamacita does not speak English, she must live her life in a cage. In Esperanza's experience, language leads to freedom. If self-expression does equal freedom as Esperanza hypothesizes, becoming a writer suddenly makes sense as the perfect way to escape the neighborhood.

"Bums in the Attic"

Esperanza wants a nice suburban house with a garden, like the ones where her father works. On the weekends, the family visits these houses and dreams about moving there. Esperanza has stopped going with her family. She, too, would like to live in one of those houses, but she is tired of looking at what she cannot have. She imagines that when she owns one of these houses in the future, she will not forget where she is from. When bums pass her house she will invite them in and give them a place to live in her attic, because she knows, she says, "how it is to be without a house." When people think that the squeaking in the attic is rats, she will shake her head and say it is bums.

"Beautiful & Cruel"

Esperanza worries that she is unattractive and that her looks will leave her stuck at home. Her sister, who is more attractive, wants a husband to take her away, but she doesn't want to leave by having a baby with just any man, as Minerva's sister did. Esperanza's mother comforts Esperanza by saying she will be more beautiful as she gets older, but Esperanza has decided not to wait around for a husband to take her away. Instead, she wants to be like the femme fatales in movies who drive the men crazy and then refuse them. These women do not give their power away. Esperanza's way of beginning to be like this is to leave the dinner table like a man, without pushing in her chair or doing her dishes.

"A Smart Cookie"

Esperanza's mother complains that she could have done something with her life. She has many skills—she can speak two languages, sing, draw, and fix a television—but she does not know how to use the subway. While making a family meal, Esperanza's mother sings along to a *Madame Butterfly* record she has borrowed from the public library. She tells Esperanza that she needs to be able to take care of herself and not just rely on a man. She gives as examples two of her friends, one whose husband has left and the other who is a widow. Then she describes how when she was younger she dropped out of school, not because she lacked intelligence, but because she was ashamed about not having nice clothes. She seems disgusted with her young self and tells Esperanza not to be like she was.

Analysis

Esperanza finally matures and realizes that she needs to change her strategy in trying to get what she wants. She separates herself from her family, refusing to go with them to visit houses in the suburbs because she no longer wants to dream about a house. Rather, she wants to go and get one. She resolves not to forget her origins. Until this point, Esperanza has expressed nothing but a desire to leave her neighborhood, never to return. Now she dreams of letting homeless bums from the neighborhood live with her in her imaginary home away from Mango

Street. She has begun to understand that her perfect suburbs on the hill are flawed because they have no system for including people like her. Esperanza suspects that if she escapes the barrio, she will not be satisfied by a suburban world that ignores the existence of less privileged people.

Esperanza decides how she'll approach her future in "Bums in the Attic," while in "Beautiful & Cruel," she decides how she will define herself sexually. Her new thoughts, however, introduce new problems. Tragic women like Minerva and Rafaela in the previous sections have reaffirmed Esperanza's desire to be independent. As a femme fatale, Esperanza can be independent without ignoring her new sexual awareness. She understands that adult sexuality is tied up with independence, and that to accept men is to give up her autonomy. She also decides she will not spend her time doing petty tasks like washing the dishes, tasks she could spend time doing every day without ever really accomplishing anything. However, Esperanza's solution presents a problem. By standing up and leaving her dishes on the table, she is creating more work for another woman. Yet there is no room in Esperanza's imagination to make society fairer by asking that men and women share tedious tasks like doing the dishes.

In the opinion of Esperanza's mother, to be a "smart cookie" is not a positive attribute. She gives the example of dropping out of school because her clothes were not nice as an example of being a "smart cookie." If you think you are too smart for school or too smart to take your mother's advice, her mother is saying, then you'll end up with a husband when you're too young and will have no way to escape. Esperanza has to realize that she is not smarter than the women around her. Surrounded by clever and creative women, Esperanza can view none of them, including her own mother, as role models because they are stuck on Mango Street. Her mother knows how to do everything except take the subway—that is, she knows how to do everything but leave. Esperanza finds her mother's frankness about her regrets surprising, which suggests that their relationship is not usually so open and honest. Her mother compares her friends to Madame Butterfly, a character in an opera who spends her life waiting for her lover to return. This observation plays on Esperanza's earlier thesis that the Chinese and the Mexicans do not like their women strong.

"What Sally Said"

Sally's father beats her. She comes to school bruised and says she fell, but it's easy to see she's been beaten. She tells Esperanza that one time her father beat her with his hands instead of with a belt. Sally's father is afraid she'll run off with a man and bring shame to the family like his sisters did. At one point Sally asks to come and stay with Esperanza's family. She brings over a bag and prepares to move in, but that evening her father comes by with tears in his eyes. He apologizes and asks her to come home. She does, and she is safe for a while. However, one day Sally's father sees Sally talking to a boy. He beats her with a belt and then with his fists. She is injured so badly that she misses two days of school.

"The Monkey Garden"

A family with a pet monkey moves away, and the neighborhood kids take over the garden behind their house. The garden quickly becomes a dump for old cars and other trash, but to the children it is a magical place where anything is possible. They explore it, looking for the old, lost things the garden keeps. One day Esperanza is there with Sally. Esperanza wants to run around with the boys, but Sally stays to the side. She does not like to get her stockings dirty, and she plays a more grown-up game by talking to the boys. Tito, a neighborhood boy, steals Sally's keys, and he and his friends tell her that she has to kiss all of them to get them back. Sally agrees, and they go behind an old car. Esperanza wants to save Sally from being exploited this way, so she runs to tell Tito's mother what the boys are doing. His mother doesn't care, and Esperanza sets out to save Sally herself. Arming herself with a brick, she confronts the boys. Sally and the boys laugh at her and tell her to go away. Esperanza hides beneath a tree and tries to will her heart to stop. When she finally gets up she looks at her feet, which look clunky and unfamiliar. The garden seems unfamiliar too.

"Red Clowns"

Esperanza narrates this section after she has been sexually assaulted by a group of boys, and though she gives her impressions and expresses her confusion, she never specifies exactly what the boys do to her. We know Esperanza goes to a carnival with Sally and that she enjoys watching Sally on the rides. Sally seems careless and free, and at one point she disappears with an older boy. While Esperanza waits for Sally to return, a group of non-Latino boys attacks Esperanza. The event is nothing like sexual encounters Esperanza has seen in the movies or read in magazines, or even like what Sally has told her. She is traumatized and keeps hearing the

voice of one of the boys saying mockingly, “I love you, Spanish girl.” She blames Sally for abandoning her and not being there to save her, and her anger spreads to all the women who have not told her what sex is really like.

“Linoleum Roses”

Sally marries before the end of the year. She marries a much older salesman who has to take her to another state where it is legal to marry girls who are under fourteen. Esperanza believes Sally married to escape her house. Sally claims to be happy because her husband sometimes gives her money, but her husband sometimes becomes violent and angry as well. He does not let her go out, talk on the phone, see her friends, or even look out the window. Sally spends her days sitting at home and looking at the domestic objects around her.

Analysis

Esperanza’s love for her friend Sally translates into a violent need to protect Sally from the outside world, and in this way Esperanza resembles Sally’s father and Sally’s husband. Esperanza wants to keep the boys away from Sally, just as the men do. However, unlike them, Esperanza saves her violence for the boys. In “The Monkey Garden,” she threatens the boys with sticks and a brick. For Esperanza, Sally is part of a possible new lifestyle that she tries on for a little while, abandoning her former friends for her stylish, beautiful, and sexy new one. While Esperanza interprets Sally’s sexual experience as maturity when she first meets her, she eventually discovers that Sally’s search for sexual experiences is actually a desperate attempt to escape her violent father. Sally’s father is one of the worst characters in *The House on Mango Street*, but when Sally manages to escape him, she finds someone equally bad. She gives up her education to live with a man who does not even let her look out the window. Looking out the window is the last bit of freedom for most of the trapped women Esperanza knows, including Mamacita, Marin, and Rafaela, but Sally is not even allowed to do that. Esperanza tried to protect Sally, but Sally is fated now to a life of looking at the artificial roses on her linoleum floor.

The monkey garden, much like the Garden of Eden, is the place where Esperanza loses a large measure of her innocence, and when Esperanza loses her innocent ideals about her friends and community, she cannot return to the garden. For Esperanza and other young people, the monkey garden is a place of childhood games, but Sally and the boys use it for a more grown-up purpose by hiding behind a car and experimenting sexually. Esperanza is appalled by the complicity of the women in her neighborhood with what she sees as the boys’ sexual manipulation of Sally. The boys are playing a game with Sally that only they can win. Tito’s mother doesn’t seem to care, and her indifference gives the boys tacit permission for what they are doing. Additionally, Sally does not want to be saved. Esperanza is dismayed to see that Sally, too, approves of the boys’ manipulation. Esperanza is ashamed that she put herself at such personal risk, arming herself with a brick, only to be laughed away by the girl she tried to protect. The garden has become a place of danger and confusion, and it is no longer hers.No, this isn’t my house I say and shake my head as if shaking could undo the year I’ve lived here. I don’t belong. I don’t ever want to come from here.

“The Three Sisters”

Lucy and Rachel’s baby sister dies. The neighborhood gathers in Lucy and Rachel’s house to view the baby before she is buried. Three of the guests are old aunts. Esperanza finds them fascinating and thinks they are magical. The sisters can tell that Esperanza is uncomfortable at the wake and call her over to talk to her. They compliment Esperanza on her name and tell her she is special and that she will go far. They tell her to make a wish, so Esperanza does, and then they tell her it will come true. One of the women takes Esperanza aside and tells her that even though she will be able to leave, she should come back for the others. She has guessed Esperanza’s wish, and Esperanza feels guilty for wishing for such a selfish thing. The woman tells her she will always be Mango Street.

“Alicia & I Talking on Edna’s Steps”

Esperanza is jealous of Alicia because she has a town to call home, Guadalajara, and she will return there someday. Alicia observes that Esperanza already has a home. But Esperanza shakes her head. She does not want to have lived in the house for a year, or to come from Mango Street. She declares that she will never come back to Mango Street until someone makes it better. Then Alicia asks who will make it better, suggesting the mayor as a possibility. The girls laugh because the idea of the mayor coming to Mango Street is so far outside the realm of possibility.

"A House of My Own"

Esperanza describes the qualities and parts of her ideal house: picturesque, not belonging to a man, flowers in front, a porch, and her shoes beside the bed. She describes the house as safe and full of potential, "clean as paper before the poem."

"Mango Says Goodbye Sometimes"

Esperanza defines herself as a storyteller. She frames the story by saying she is going to tell the audience a story about a girl who did not want to belong. She repeats the paragraph from the first chapter about having not always lived on Mango Street, naming the other streets she has lived on. The house on Mango Street is the one she remembers the most. When she writes about it, she is able to free herself from the house's grip. She knows that one day she will pack her books and writing materials and leave Mango Street, but she will have left only to come back for the others who cannot get out on their own.

Analysis

The old women's palm reading at the wake differs significantly from Esperanza's earlier visit to the fortuneteller Elenita. This time, fate seems to have sought out Esperanza: The sisters call to her, whereas earlier Esperanza pursued Elenita. Though Esperanza doubted Elenita's prediction, she is now more willing to believe in an external source of wisdom that may not have a logical explanation. More important, while Elenita used Tarot cards to predict Esperanza's future, the sisters read the future in Esperanza's own hand, which seems to make the prediction more personal. Esperanza has not yet left Mango Street physically, but she is already gone spiritually, and the sisters sense this. They encourage her to be faithful to the experiences that have shaped her and sympathetic to those who lack her abilities and her will to escape. They want her to accept herself for who she is, including her name. The three women resemble the three Fates from Greek mythology, who spin a string for each human's life. One spins the thread and controls birth, the second measures and spins the events of the human life, and the third decides the moment of death and cuts the thread. Like the mythological Fates, these three women seem to know Esperanza's destiny just by looking at her. The women's relationship to these mythical figures gives their advice to Esperanza more weight.

Although she does not say so, Esperanza, like Alicia, realizes that if Mango Street is ever to improve, it will have to be through the efforts of people like her who escape, become successful, and then return. Esperanza spends time with Alicia at the end of *The House on Mango Street*, instead of with Sally, who has married and dropped out of middle school. Alicia is pursuing her own form of escape by working hard to attend college, and she has not married. Although Alicia has a difficult family situation, she has not turned her back on her roots. Instead, she is doing what she can, the hard way, to make an eventual change. Alicia provides the final step in Esperanza's escape from Mango Street: she instills in her a sense of responsibility to who she is. Rather than trying to be someone else or to escape through someone else, as Sally did, Esperanza needs to work with what she has and eventually come to terms with her roots. Even if she leaves it, Mango Street can be incorporated into her future home.

Character List

Esperanza - The novel's heroine and narrator, an approximately twelve-year-old Chicana (Mexican-American girl). Esperanza is a budding writer who wishes for a home of her own. *The House on Mango Street* chronicles a year in her life as she matures emotionally and sexually. The name Esperanza means "hope" in Spanish.

Rachel and Lucy - Esperanza's best friends. Rachel and Lucy are Mexican-American sisters who live across the street from Esperanza. Lucy, the older sister, was born in Texas, while Rachel, the younger, was born in Chicago. Esperanza eventually chooses a more sexually mature friend, Sally.

Sally - A young girl Esperanza befriends the same year she moves to Mango Street. Sally is the same age as Esperanza but is sexually bold and seems quite glamorous to Esperanza. She is not a good friend to Esperanza, abandoning her time and again to go off with boys. She has a physically abusive father and runs off before eighth grade to marry a man who won't let her see her friends or leave the house. Esperanza feels protective of Sally..

Nenny - Esperanza's little sister. Nenny, whose real name is Magdalena, is a pretty, dreamy little girl for whom Esperanza is often responsible. Since Nenny is immature, she is often a source of embarrassment for Esperanza when the two of them play with Rachel and Lucy.

Marin - A young woman from Puerto Rico who lives with her cousin's family. Marin spends most of her time baby-sitting and so cannot leave the house. She sells makeup for Avon and teaches Esperanza and her friends about the world of boys. Although she has a fiancé back in Puerto Rico, she also dreams about American men taking her away from Mango Street to the suburbs. At the end of the year, her cousins send her back to Puerto Rico.

Papa - Esperanza's father. Originally from Mexico, Papa is less domineering than the other father figures in the neighborhood. He works most of the time and is rarely home.

Mama - Esperanza's mother. Mama grew up in the United States. She is one of the strongest-willed and smartest women in the novel, yet she seems to influence Esperanza very little. She is sometimes a source of comfort for Esperanza. All of her admirable attributes are lost on Esperanza because Mama has not escaped Mango Street to live somewhere nicer.

Alicia - Esperanza's friend who attends a local university. Since Alicia's mother died, her father forces her to take over the family's domestic chores. Alicia is a rare example of a neighborhood girl who has not tried to escape the neighborhood through marriage, but instead works hard and hopes to change her life from within.

Cathy - Esperanza's first friend in the neighborhood. Cathy's family moves out the week after Esperanza's family moves in. She discourages Esperanza from becoming friends with Rachel and Lucy. She is one of the few characters who is not from Mexico or Latin America.

Minor characters

Carlos and Kiki - Esperanza's younger brothers. Carlos and Kiki appear infrequently, and Esperanza explains that they live in a different, male world.

Meme Ortiz - The new resident of Cathy's house. Meme's real name is Juan, and he has a dog with two names.

Louie - The eldest sibling in a Puerto Rican family that lives in the basement of the Ortiz house. Louie is friends with Esperanza's brothers, while Esperanza is friends with Louie's cousin Marin. Louie's other cousin appears once with a stolen car, only to get arrested later that afternoon.

The Vargas Kids - An unspecified number of poorly raised, vagrant siblings whose father has abandoned them. One of the Vargas kids, Angel Vargas, dies by falling from a great height.

Uncle Nacho - Esperanza's friendly uncle, who gets her to dance at her cousin's baptism in "Chanclas."

Aunt Lupe - Esperanza's aunt. In her youth, Lupe was a vibrant, beautiful swimmer, but now she is old, blind, and bed-ridden. She listens to Esperanza's poems and encourages her to keep writing, but Esperanza and her friends mock Lupe behind her back.

Elenita - A witch woman Esperanza visits to have her fortune told. Elenita reads Tarot cards and tells Esperanza that she will have "a home in the heart."

Ruthie - A childish grown-up neighbor who enjoys playing with Esperanza and her friends. Ruthie's mother, Edna, is a landlady for the large building next door and ignores Ruthie.

Geraldo - A Mexican man Marin meets at a dance. Geraldo dies in a car accident the evening she meets him. Nobody, including Marin, knows anything about him, including his last name.

Mamacita - The overweight Mexican wife of another neighbor.Mamacita comes to America at great expense to her husband, but she is wildly unhappy. She never learns English and never leaves her third-floor apartment.

Rafaela - A neighborhood woman whose husband locks her in their apartment because he is afraid she'll run off. Rafaela sends money down on a clothesline to Esperanza and her friends so they can buy her sweet juices from the convenience store.

Minerva - The married woman in the neighborhood who is most similar to Esperanza. Minerva and Esperanza share their poems with each other. She is only two years older than Esperanza but already has a husband and two children. Her husband leaves for long periods, only to return in a violent rage.

Tito - A neighborhood boy who relates to girls in violent and sexual ways. Tito flirts with Esperanza by pushing her in front of an open fire hydrant, and later he steals Sally's keys in order to get her to kiss him and his friends.

Sire - Esperanza's first crush. Sire sometimes stares at Esperanza, and though she is afraid, she tries sometimes to look back at him. Sire and his girlfriend Lois hang around outside late at night. Esperanza's father tells her Sire is a punk, and Esperanza's mother tells her Lois is the kind of girl who will go with a boy into an alley.

Earl - A neighbor who works nights and tries to sleep during the day. Earl sometimes brings women home with him for short periods. The neighbors see these women at different times, and each thinks a different woman is his wife, but the women are probably prostitutes.

The Three Sisters - Old ladies Esperanza meets at Lucy and Rachel's baby sister's wake. The three sisters are mysterious and guess Esperanza's hopes and dreams. They advise Esperanza always to return to Mango Street after she leaves it.

Character of Esperanza

As Esperanza matures during the year that makes up *The House on Mango Street*, she experiences a series of awakenings, the most important being a sexual awakening. At the beginning of the novel, Esperanza is not quite ready to emerge from the asexuality of childhood. She is completely ignorant about sex and says that boys and girls live in completely different worlds. She is so much a child that she cannot even speak to her brothers outside of the house. When she becomes an adolescent, she begins to experiment with the power she, as a young woman, has over men. Marin teaches her fundamental facts about boys, but the first major step in Esperanza's awareness of her sexuality is when she and her friends explore the neighborhood in high-heeled shoes. She relishes the power the shoes seem to give her, and she plays with the idea that physical beauty could help her escape the squalor of her surroundings.

Esperanza quickly learns, however, that the patriarchal society in which she lives denies the power of female sexuality. The bum who attempts to kiss Rachel is the first in a series of men who will use force to take what girls don't want to give freely. After being sexually assaulted, Esperanza decides to try to forget some of what she has learned about sex in the past year in order to focus on writing. By the end of the novel, Esperanza's views on sex have evolved, and she rejects sex as a means of escape.

Esperanza's moral sense develops from an intense individualism to a feeling of responsibility toward the people in her community. As a child, Esperanza wants only to escape Mango Street. Her dreams of self-definition don't include the fact that she has any responsibility to her family or to the people around her, and she wishes to leave them all behind. Once Esperanza has become familiar with the people in her neighborhood, however, she begins to feel affection and, ultimately, responsibility for them. She no longer sees herself as an individual striving for self-determination. Instead, she recognizes herself as a member of a social network who must give back to her community in order to break the cycle of poverty that plagues the neighborhood.

Esperanza also develops feelings of moral responsibility toward her community of women. Her negative experiences as Sally's friend show that she has the courage to try to help her friends, even if they do not always understand that they need to help her as well. Not until she talks with the three sisters and Alicia, however, does Esperanza understand that helping the neighborhood women will be a lifelong effort.

Esperanza's final and most important awakening is her realization of her writing ability, which gives her the means to escape from Mango Street. Because Esperanza is a writer, she is a keen observer, and we see her powers of observation mature. She is present in all of the early stories she narrates, but by the middle of the novel she is able to narrate stories based wholly on observation of the people around her. This change shows that she is becoming an artist, and also that she is becoming more detached from her neighborhood, since she does not always see herself in the stories she tells. By the end of *The House on Mango Street*, she knows she has become more detached from her home through her writing. Although she has not yet found a home of her own, her writing has helped her to find privacy within herself.

Themes

The Power of Language

Throughout *The House on Mango Street*, particularly in "No Speak English," those who are not able to communicate effectively (or at all) are relegated to the bottom levels of society. Mamacita moves to the country to be with her husband, and she becomes a prisoner of her apartment because she does not speak English. She misses home and listens to the Spanish radio station, and she is distraught when her baby begins learning English words. His new language excludes her. Similarly, Esperanza's father could not even choose what he ate when he first moved to the country, because he did not know the words for any of the foods but ham and eggs. Esperanza's mother may be a native English speaker, but her letter to the nuns at Esperanza's school is unconvincing to them in part because it is poorly written.

Esperanza observes the people around her and realizes that if not knowing or not mastering the language creates powerlessness, then having the ability to manipulate language will give her power. She wants to change her name so that she can have power over her own destiny. Her Aunt Lupe tells her to keep writing because it will keep her free, and Esperanza eventually understands what her aunt means. Writing keeps Esperanza spiritually free, because putting her experiences into words gives her power over them. If she can use beautiful language to write about a terrible experience, then the experience seems less awful. Esperanza's spiritual freedom may eventually give her the power to be literally free as well.

The Struggle for Self-Definition

The struggle for self-definition is a common theme in a coming-of-age novel, or bildungsroman, and in *The House on Mango Street*, Esperanza's struggle to define her underscores her every action and encounter. Esperanza must define herself both as a woman and as an artist and her perception of her identity changes over the course of the novel. In the beginning of the novel Esperanza wants to change her name so that she can define herself on her own terms, instead of accepting a name that expresses her family heritage. She wants to separate herself from her parents and her younger sister in order to create her own life, and changing her name seems to her an important step in that direction. Later, after she becomes more sexually aware, Esperanza would like to be "beautiful and cruel" so men will like her but not hurt her, and she pursues that goal by becoming friends with Sally. After she is assaulted, she doesn't want to define herself as "beautiful and cruel" anymore, and she is, once again, unsure of whom she is.

Eventually, Esperanza decides she does not need to set herself apart from the others in her neighborhood or her family heritage by changing her name, and she stops forcing herself to develop sexually, which she isn't fully ready for. She accepts her place in her community and decides that the most important way she can define herself is as a writer. As a writer, she observes and interacts with the world in a way that sets her apart from non-writers, giving her the legitimate new identity she's been searching for. Writing promises to help her'
