

New Literary Criticism Approach

Ch.1-10: Sample Seminar Discussion + Chapter Overview



SAMPLE SEMINAR

Identify **THREE** literary devices in this passage. For each device, explain how it contributes to the text as a whole (how the device contributes to your understanding of the atmosphere, characterization, OR thematic development).

PASSAGE: PAGE 18

Personification, Diction, Simile, Metaphor

“...set off to paddle our way to where Gods Lake sat in the thickest part of the bush country...One day the clouds hung low and light rain freckled the slate-grey water that peeled across our bow. The pellets of rain were warm and Benjamin and I caught them on our tongues as our grandmother laughed behind us. Our canoes skimmed along and as I watched the shoreline it seemed the land itself was in motion. The rocks lay lodged like hymns in the breast of it, and the trees bent upward in praise like crooked fingers. It was glorious. Ben felt it too. He looked at me with tears in his eyes, and I held his look a long time, drinking in the face of my brother. When he coughed, I put a hand on his back” (18)

Personification

Quote: “Gods Lake **sat** in the thickest part of the bush country”

The use of the word “sat” makes the reader imagine a human, perhaps a god, sitting and waiting for the family. The fact that it is in the “thickest” part of bush country indicates that this is a safe haven away from the forced assimilation and threat of residential schools and alcohol. Also, later in the passage, Saul refers to hymns in the **“breast”** of the land making the reader imagine the land as a woman. This, coupled with an earlier quote, “Our legends tell of how we emerged from the womb of our **Mother the Earth**”(1) helps to personify Gods Lake as a mother who is waiting for her children to return. This is significant because it indicates the sacred connection between Saul’s family and the land and stresses the land’s healing powers, like a mother who nourishes her child.

Simile

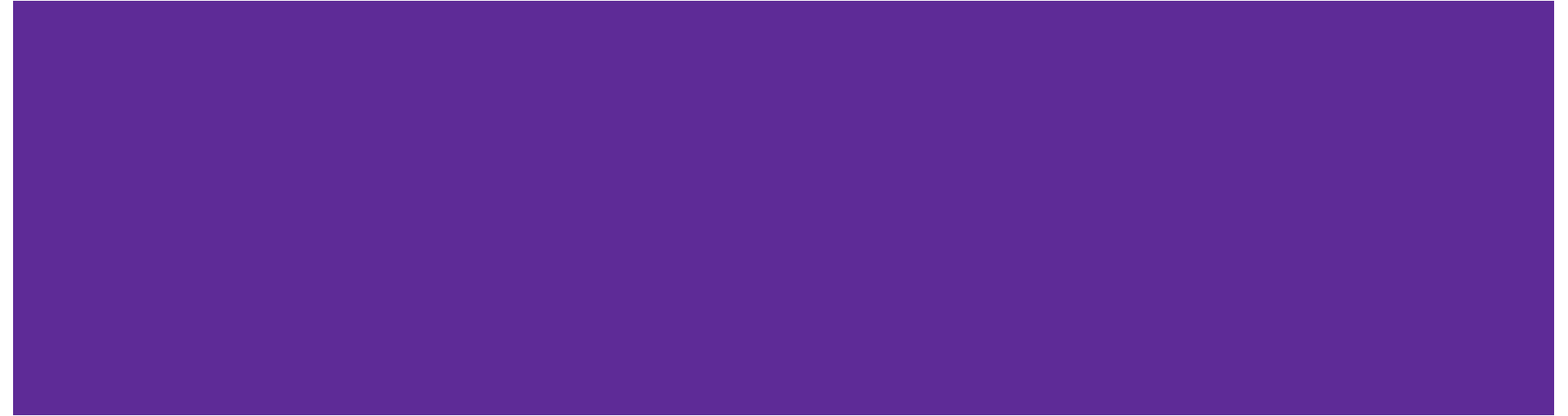
Simile: “The rocks lay lodged **like hymns** in the breast of it, and the trees bent upward in praise **like crooked fingers**. It was glorious.”(18) This simile invites the reader to compare elements of the land to religious songs to praise God. Additionally, the trees are personified to create the image of elders pointing to the heavens. This is significant because it stresses the sacred relationship Saul has with the land. This challenges my perspective regarding land claims I see in the news. These land claims suddenly go beyond land ownership because the land is not an object to be owned. It becomes a part of individual spirituality which reminds the reader that the loss of this connection can impact mental and emotional wellness.

Metaphor

In the quote, “He looked at me with tears in his eyes, and I held his look a long time, drinking in the face of my brother” the reader is made to realize the importance of family. The fact that Saul compares looking at his brother to drinking something, makes the reader infer that he loves his brother so much that he wants to consume him to keep him forever as a part of his being. The tears in his brother’s eyes makes the reader feel sympathy for the time he spent in the residential school away from his family and it helps the reader to infer the appreciation he has for his time with family and nature. This creates pathos because the reader feels deep sadness and the forced assimilation associated with the schools becomes personalized.

OVERVIEW

Important moments from Chapters 1-10



Motifs challenge my perspectives on the impact of language and tradition on the formation of a healthy identity.

The **importance of language in the formation of identity**: “Their talk and their stories can sneak you away as quick as their boats”(metaphor), labels for God vs Creator: “The school gave you words that do not apply to us”(26) “They say” “They call it”...(2-3)

Spirit: 4 (horse), 8 (spectre = ghost = residential school legacy), 14 (government taking the children), 18 (traditional intuition and connection with nature), 20 (traditions to honour the spirits) + questions about the manitous of Gods Lake, 22-23 spirit visions were comforting + honour rice as a gift from God/Creator (divine spirit) - argument regarding the name

The school

Relationship with the land: 1,4-5, 6,9, 12, 18, 10, 26, Chapter 6&7

Juxtaposition makes me infer that forced assimilation built on ignorant perspectives results in an unhealthy society because citizens suffer from an identity crisis.

Chapter 1: Juxtaposition of his appreciation and **understanding of his cultural identity** (paragraph 1 and 6) with the repetition of “they say” and “they claim” - other people imposing his cultural identity onto him (paragraphs 1-5)

Chapter 2: Juxtaposition of the **perspectives regarding “The Horse”**(6-7)

Chapter 3: The juxtaposition of **health and wellness associated with “the school”** vs living on “the land” (Chapter 6)

Chapter 4 + page 22 : **“The dog”** - how it is used.

Chapter 7 + Chapter 8: Juxtaposition of **religious beliefs**

Metaphor + Diction

“We must learn to ride each one of these horses of change” (7) invites the reader to compare riding a horse to

The invisible nature of our lives (14)