

UNIT 3: LOST PEOPLE

Readings

Armstrong, Jeannette C. "Blue Against White." From *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English*.

Fife, Connie. "Communications Class," From *Native Poetry in Canada: A Contemporary Anthology*.

Mercredi, Duncan. "racing across the land," From *Native Poetry in Canada: A Contemporary Anthology*.

Taylor, Drew Hayden "Pretty Like a White Boy." From *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English*.

Wagamese, Richard. Excerpt from *Keeper 'n Me*. From *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English*.

Pretty Like a White Boy

Read Drew Hayden Taylor's "Pretty Like a White Boy"

1. Look up the definition of *stereotype*.
2. How does the speaker in "Pretty Like a White Boy" face problems caused by stereotypes about First Peoples when he is in the presence of Aboriginal people?
3. How does the speaker in "Pretty Like a White Boy" face problems caused by stereotypes about First Peoples when he is in the presence of non-Aboriginal people?
4. Look up the definition of *satire*.
5. How does the speaker in "Pretty Like a White Boy" use satire to poke fun at the overt racism he frequently experiences?
6. Drew Hayden Taylor manipulates language frequently in this piece to be humorous in a dark way. Find two examples of how he manipulates language in this way, and discuss.
7. How does the speaker use the title of the essay as one of the themes he develops?
8. How is the speaker in the essay "lost" in the figurative sense of the word?

9. Discuss how Drew Hayden Taylor struggles with his identity. Focus specifically on the passage in which the narrator takes out his Status card and shows it to a Status Indian girl who is only nine years old, and doesn't even know what the card is. Use additional evidence from the rest of the essay to help develop your points.

Communications Class

Read Connie Fife's "Communications Class"

1. One of the major themes explored in this poem is ownership of language. Discuss how the language can be an instrument of power.
2. Who are the "lost people" in this poem? Who sees them as lost? Where do you think they have gone, and why?
3. As presented in this poem, what is the outcome of the "lost people"?
4. Discuss the symbolic use of "white squares"—what are the multiple meanings of these words?
5. Discuss the disparity between using struggling to use language effectively in the classroom, and using that same language as a tool outside the classroom.
6. Why do you think that Fife uses only lower case letters and almost no punctuation in this poem?

racing across the land

Read Duncan Mercredi's "racing across the land"

1. The use of symbolism is essential to this poem. Discuss how the following images are used as symbols: spruce and muskeg, dust of white civilization, four directions, buffalo, dancing, pounding, prairie grass/wind/everything natural lasting while man-made legacies fall through time.
2. The lost people in this poem are the oppressors. Why is this significant?
3. How is the issue of identity explored in this poem?
4. Both poems are quite empowering; how do the poets achieve this?

Blue Against White

Read Jeannette Armstrong's story, "Blue Against White" Discuss briefly the title—what kind of image is suggested by that title?

1. At the beginning of the story, the protagonist, Lena, remembers how she used to feel about the blue door on her parents' house. How did she feel when she was younger? Why did she feel that way? How is this significant to the rest of the story?
2. At the end of the story, Lena feels differently about the blue door. How does she feel at the end? Why does she feel this way? How is this significant to the rest of the story?
3. Lena mentions that "she had always thought of it as her mother's house rather than her father's house, though it had been his idea to paint the door a bright blue." Why do you think she feels this way? Use evidence from the story to support your response.
4. Lena sees a crow as she is walking toward the door. Why is she so moved by the image of the crow? How is the crow symbolic to her?
5. Describe the dream Lena has. How are doors important in this story? Why do you think that there is nothing behind the doors other than a patch of sky in her dream?
6. Lena hears a coyote as she is walking toward the door. She remembers another story about coyotes. What is the significance of mentioning coyotes in this story? Why do you think she develops this image so thoroughly?

Keeper 'n Me

Read the excerpt from, Richard Wagamese's novel, *Keeper 'n Me*

1. Define the following literary terms: **diction**, **dialect**, **tone**, and **mood**.
2. How does the author use the diction and dialect of the two narrators (Garnet and Keeper) to create tone and mood with language.
3. Garnet, the protagonist and one of the narrators, has gone through a process of seeking his racial identity. Keeping in mind that this is just an excerpt from the novel as a whole, discuss how this issue is explored in the passage you have just read.
4. Comment on how being lost contributed to his loss of identity.

5. How do you think it felt to be found? Be sure to use details from this reading as well as from outside readings or sources.

6. Keeper, the other narrator in the novel (his words are indicated by the use of italics), has his own theory on how identity is developed or lost. Discuss this theory using specific references from the passage, and comment on your opinions about this theory. How, according to Keeper, can this loss of identity be healed?