

Literary Analysis Questions and Teaching Guide

Cynthia Leitich Smith's Short Story, "Between the Lines," in *Ancestor Approved: Intertribal Stories for Kids*.

Interior monologue:

- How does this craft technique, which is a way of showing character's hidden thoughts and feelings, immerse us in Mel's point of view, and Ray's?
- Where does interior monologue help or hinder their getting to know one another?

Points of view:

- Where and when does Leitich Smith switch points of view? Why?
- How does each POV have similar/intersecting emotions?
- Whose story is this? How do you know?

Character arc:

- How does Mel change? Ray?
- How do their perceptions of each other change?



LITERARY ELEMENTS

In the short story you are studying, track the following:

	MOTIFS Motifs are repeated words, images, phrases, or ideas that connect to a theme. What motifs can you track? What themes do these motifs express?
	POINT OF VIEW Point of view includes the perspectives and lenses through which the story is told. What are the points of view? Why tell the story through these points of view?
	INTERIOR MONOLOGUE Interior monologue is a character's inner thoughts, specifically words the person says to themselves. Where is there interior monologue? What does it show about character emotion, thoughts, and beliefs?
	DIALOGUE Finding symmetry in a photo is helpful for chaotic and noisy scenery. Symmetrical features can be found in architectural elements, backgrounds, and textures.
	THEMES Themes are big ideas that are abstract concepts. They become the heartbeat and lifeblood of the story when you track how character thoughts, character actions, setting elements, and plot events combine to express a truth, a reality, or some other conclusion about life.

How do motifs, point of view, interior monologue, and dialogue combine to express a **THEME**?



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Story arc:

- How does the accident of the orange pop spill impact the characters?
- How is the world or community they live in changed, or not changed?
- How does the community change Grace and Mel?

Motifs:

- *Weather motif.* How is weather present, and what mood does weather set? Why does it seem important?
- *Art motif.* Name all the different forms of art in this story (there are many). How do different forms of art have intersecting or parallel techniques?
- *Age motif.* What do you learn about Ray and Mel's community through meeting elders and veterans? What do you learn about the community through the young people? Those in midlife?

Characterization:

- What personality traits do Ray and Mel exhibit?
- What decisions does each make to both inhibit and progress their friendship?

Theme: (Big Ideas)

- What does the story say about *Art*?
- About *Distance*?
- About *Assumptions*?
- About *Community*?
- Review ["Your Guide to Understanding and Enjoying Pow Wows"](#) and then discuss what this story says about *Celebration* and *Tradition*. Consider using this guide as a jigsaw

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activity to explore various cultural practices. For example, one student group could research veterans as a topic, while another group researches pow wow history.

Title:

- Why is the story called “Between the Lines”? What are the “lines”?

Personal Connection Writing Prompts

- Describe a time when you made an assumption about someone that turned out to be incorrect. What was the assumption? What happened? What did you learn? What do you know now?
- How do you relate to folks of varying ages? What do you learn from people who are younger or older than you?
- Are you an introvert, an extrovert, or something in between? How do you relate to those who are different than you?
- What is something in your life that is “between the lines”?