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Course

Date

Themes and Motives in *Ceremony* by Leslie Marmon Silko

Themes

The themes of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* are as follows: the importance of tradition, the importance of preserving cultural and ethnical identity, environmental protection and threat of natural hazards, human relations, war and peace, and harmony. Each of the themes aforementioned are realized in the novel in the process of revolving, that is, developing, the plot, collisions, that is, development of relations between the characters, who are the representatives of different ethnical groups, cultures, and the bearers of a certain ethnical and cultural identity. The author emphasizes the importance of personal harmony with regard of interpersonal relations and contacts between cultures.

Symbols

As far as the issue of symbols in Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* is concerned, it is important, above all, to admit the importance and necessity of customs, traditions, and ceremonies, and festive activities in the life of an ethnical group, culture, and/or nation. Particularly, this aspect is realized in the novel by means of the so-called Gallup Ceremonial, organized by a mayor of Gallup, who is the representative of European American community, therefore, revealing the prejudices and understanding that exist within the whole community of the United States towards the indigenous Native American ethnical group. It is also important to

admit the fact that the names of the characters are symbolic as well, for instance, Night Swan and Shush, which means 'Bear'.

Discussion Questions

The dialogue between Tayo and Ts'eh goes as following:

..."How did you know I'd be here?" He said, still watching the cattle. She laughed and shook her head, "the way you talk!" she said. "I was here almost a week before you came.

How did you know I'd be here? Tell me that first." (Silko 2006, p. 208). The quote is important within the framework of the Laguna cosmology as such, and specifically, Tayo's change. The nature of things, their interrelation and interdependence, the essence of love are revealed to Tayo that particular moment. Betonie's vision of feeling comfortable, which means feeling comfort of belonging to one's own land, truly reveal Tayo the importance and the need of harmony, peace, and self-development and help him to reach them, thus, to understand the world better and his, Tayo's, own destination as well.

Comment 1

"...we all have been waiting for help a long time. But it never has been easy. The people must do it. You must do it." (Silko 2006, p. 125). The quote you are citing has to do with another important issue the author is reflecting upon in her novel, namely, how people could reach mutual understanding and make each other's happier. The only way Tayo can help those whom he holds most dear, is being in peace with himself and act in terms of justice, kindness, love, and wisdom. Having encountered both physical pain and the pain of loss, Tayo teaches to apply each of these virtues aforementioned, virtues that also make a part of his nature.

Comment 2

Tayo's search for remedy and truth are truly the journey of enlightenment. But I am inclined to think that enlightenment, in this particular case, means an insight perspective, that is, a person in the attempt of realizing his- or her- own nature with regard of the external circumstances. Tayo finds all the answers to the questions he is asking himself constantly by means of becoming closer to his people, its traditions, and memory.

Work Cited

Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony*. Del. Ed. New York: Penguin Books, 2006. Penguin Classics.

Web.