

English First Peoples: Short Stories Personal Responses

Assignment

Read each short story from the text *An Anthology of Canadian Native Literature in English* and answer the questions in COMPLETE and FULL SENTENCES. You must use evidence from the text to support your answers.

1. ***The One About Coyote Going West*** (Thomas King) - pg.197

This is a story done in oral tradition format (using recursive and repeated structures) and contains humour to explain “who found us Indians” (pg.197) to counteract Eurocentric views of the explorers Cartier and Columbus.

What important ideas or lessons is King trying to convey in this Coyote story? What is the mistake in the story? What is the effect of giving it a physical form? How does this story counter the Eurocentric ideas of Cartier and Columbus “discovering” Indigenous peoples?

2. ***A Long Story*** (Beth Grant) - pg. 145

This is a rich story that begins with two contrasting quotes dealing with removing children from the care of their parents. The story contains two narrators, one for each of the two time periods: the first woman is from the 1890’s who loses her children to the residential school system; the second woman is from the 1970’s who loses her child due to her same-sex relationship.

What are the similarities and differences between the two cases of women fighting to keep their children? Are the laws used to control and punish the biological parent? Explain the significance of the title “A Long Story”. Why is this “A Long Story”?

3. ***Swimming Upstream*** (Beth Grant) - pg. 150

Explain the metaphor of the salmon swimming upstream. Who does the salmon represent? Predict what you think the narrator will do when she goes home.

4. ***The Shivering Tree*** (John McLeod) - pg. 272

This story is written like a myth in that it explains aspects of the natural world. It is also a story about shapeshifters. Shapeshifters are characters that can transform into other beings (such as tricksters: Coyote or Raven or Hare). In this story we are introduced to Nanabush (Ojibwe shapeshifter/trickster figure) who is meant to hold dual roles: give life to humans/play pranks and jokes.

Compare and Contrast the qualities of Nanabush and the Juggler. Think about their vanity and their pride. How is this story a cautionary tale? What does Nanabush learn from this humbling experiences? Give an example of how the story weaves in explanations for aspects of the natural order such as the owl's night vision etc.

5. **Blueberry Days** (Ruby Slipperjack) - pg. 381

This story is a memoir. It has a very easy casual feel to it. It is a series of anecdotes about who this family would spend their summers with.

In what ways is this story different or unique when compared to other stories?

How is humour presented and how does it add to the story?

Explain the effective use of description and imagery. What is the mood of this story?

6. **A Mountain Legend** (Jordan Wheeler) - pg. 511

What is a rite of passage? Why do young boys and men accept dares? Explain how the two boys are both connected and separated. Explain the importance of Jason's climb as a rite of passage in the context of a young Indigenous boy disconnected from his culture.

7. **Mermaids** (Richard Van Camp) - pg. 557

In this story the author's use of the role of the narrator is different. Torchy is the narrator. Is he reliable? Is he honest? Can you trust him as a storyteller? This story weaves together a number of distinct yet interconnected stories. Explain the social issues that are present in this story. How is this story about redemption?

8. **Pretty Like a White Boy** (Drew Hayden Taylor) -pg. 504

This is a personal narrative essay. It reads like a story, and is written in a satirical form. It is humorous and witty. Yet there are many themes and messages in this story. What are the struggles that Drew Hayden Taylor faces as a status Indigenous man who has blonde hair and blue eyes? Discuss how both cultures, his Indigenous culture and his Western culture treat him.

Synthesis Essay
(Critical Thinking - Major Assignment)

Assignment

Choose three of the short stories you have read in this unit. Write an essay explaining how each of these stories conveys unique aspects of Indigenous culture, history, and values, and how each of these stories conveys unique aspects of Indigenous storytelling (structure, voice, role of the narrator, symbols, humour).

This essay will be set-up using 5 paragraphs.

Essay Title	Synthesis Essay
Paragraph 1	Thematic Statement and Thesis Statement: In this paragraph you are going to introduce the topics you will be talking about and which 3 stories you have selected to analyze. You must introduce the full title of the story, along with the full name of the author who wrote it.
Paragraph 2	Introduce the first story addressing the questions above. You must provide specific details to support your analysis. This includes quotes from the stories, and then an explanation of the quote you selected.
Paragraph 3 & 4	Repeat the same paragraph format as paragraph 2 for the other two stories.
Paragraph 5	Conclusion: Explain in a short and powerful ending how each of the stories you selected addressed the topics you said you were going to discuss in the introduction.

Your Assignment must include:

- Name, date and title
- 750-1000 words
- 12 point font and double spaced
- Edited for spelling and grammar

Evaluation

CRITERIA	Emerging (I/Below 50)	Developing (C-/50; C/60; C+/67)	Proficient (B-/73; B/78; B+/82)	Extending (A-/86; A/90; A+/95)
Meaning -topic, purpose, stance -understanding of the topic -development -details	Flawed understanding of topic and /or off topic Lacks any detail Writer's purpose is often unclear Reader has trouble understanding or believing writer's message	Shows some or superficial understanding of topic Goes off topic and lacks details Writer's purpose is often unclear and reader has trouble understanding or believing writer's message	Shows good understanding of topic Stays mostly on topic and provides details Writer's purpose is mostly clear Reader understands and is mostly convinced by writer's message	Shows excellent understanding and stays on topic Thought-provoking with rich details Writer's purpose is clear and reader fully comprehends and is convinced by writer's message
Form -organization & sequence of ideas -transitions -introduction & conclusion -paragraphing	Ideas are scattered and unorganized Not multi paragraphed Choppy; no or minimal transitions; no flow Introduction and conclusion may not be present or do not address the topic effectively Thesis is not clear May not paragraph enough or too often	Some organization, but structure is confusing. Some simple transitions are used but are not always effective or incorrect; some flow Introduction and conclusion are present, but too similar Thesis may not be clear May not paragraph enough or too often	Ideas are organized and structure is developed Transitions are varied; good flow of ideas Introduction grabs reader's attention Has a clear thesis Conclusion summarizes ideas well; re-phrases thesis Indented and logical paragraphing	Ideas are well-formed and flow smoothly Transitions are varied and enhance the flow Introduction grabs reader's attention Thesis is strong and clear Conclusion summarizes ideas smoothly Indented and smooth paragraphing
Conventions -spelling -sentence structure -punctuation -usage	Multiple errors in spelling, punctuation, and sentence structure are distracting and interfere with meaning Simple, repetitive, or incorrect word usage; often uses slang	Errors in spelling, punctuation or sentence structure sometimes distract and interfere with meaning Clear word usage, but may lack variety or use slang	Mostly correct spelling, punctuation or sentence structure; errors do not distract Appropriate word usage	Few or no errors in spelling, punctuation, or sentence structure Excellent punctuation Word usage appropriate to task