

Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth

By Drew Hayden Taylor

Response Questions

Act I Location: Janice's (Grace) downtown Toronto apartment

Scene I

1. Barb, Rodney and Tonto arrive at Janice's apartment uninvited. Janice is not home, so they decide to let themselves in. The apartment is decorated with a mix of movie and theatre posters and Indigenous art. What does this tell us about Janice?
2. Barb, Rodney and Tonto come to tell Janice that her birth mom is sick. When Janice arrives home she is shocked to see them. Janice is not convinced that she needs to go to Otter Lake. What reasons does she give? Could there be other reasons she is not giving?
3. Barb, Rodney and Tonto start to leave, but then convince Janice to let them stay for the night. What would be Rodney's motivations to make up Tonto's 'night blindness'?
4. **Give three examples** of how we see different worldviews in the first scene?
5. How is humour used in the first scene to address the tensions/differences of Barb, Rodney, and Tonto's life with Janice's? **Give three examples.**

Scene 2

1. This scene begins with Janice and Barb bringing up the events of a past Christmas. How does this conversation demonstrate their different understanding of family?
2. Tonto and Rodney return and Janice learns of Otter Lake's best kept secret: Amelia Earhart. What do you think their motivation was in telling Janice about Amelia?
3. At the end of the scene Tonto says good night... *Kemosabe*, which is in reference to Tonto from the Lone Ranger (who was the trusty-sidekick). What foreshadowing can we predict from this?

Scene 3

1. Janice and Tonto have a conversation in which Tonto, unbeknownst to Janice, uses stories to persuade Janice to go back to Otter Lake with them. What do we learn about Tonto through this story?
2. How does Tonto use personal connection, humour, and tradition to persuade Janice to go back to Otter Lake? **Give an example for each** personal connection, humour, and tradition.

Act II Location: Barb's house in Otter Lake (reserve in Ontario)

Scene I

1. The four characters arrive in Otter Lake to house that Barb and Janice/Grace were born in. Explain Barb's plot for Janice when they arrive. What is her reasoning for this plot?
2. How does this scene end? Why is this significant to relationship building?

Scene 2

1. Act II, Scene 2 is the climax of the play in which Janice/Grace and Barb both share their version of the truth/reality. How do their versions differ? How are they the same? According to each Janice and Barb, what are their ideas on what it means to be "an Indian"?
2. What do we learn about Rodney in this scene? How does Rodney's secret relate to ideas of identity for him, Barb and Janice?

Scene 3

1. Although a very short scene, we learn a lot about identity conflict, family, growth, pain, forgiveness, anger, and sadness. Once again Tonto plays an important role in Janice/Grace's learning, what does Tonto suggest about identity?
2. What is significant about the final line in the play? (hint: use of language and name)

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Assignment 1: Body Biographies

On a blank sheet of white paper, outline a body for each character in the play. Inside the outline of the body, provide the following information about each character. You will have 4 body biographies in total.

- Individual impressions of the character
- Key lines of dialogue from the play that the character says
- Significant characteristics/traits
- Insights you have about the character
- Conflicts and Resolutions
- Changes and Realizations

Assignment 2: Choice (Character Analysis or Synthesis Essay)

Choose ONE of the following assignments to complete.

1. Character Analysis

You will complete a Character Analysis Brainstorm Chart (modelled like the one below) for two characters. Then you will write a compare and contrast essay analyzing the two characters you have selected.

OR

2. Synthesis Essay

You will write a Synthesis Essay addressing the question: How is humour used in *Only Drunks and Children Tell the Truth* and *Pretty Like A White Boy* to navigate ideas about identity?

