

GOVERNMENT ARTS AND SCIENCE COLLEGE, KOVILPATTI – 628502

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STUDY MATERIAL FOR III B.A ENGLISH

CANADIAN LITERATURE

SEMESTER – V, ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-21

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UNIT I

POETRY

LISTENING TO MYSELF

An old man staggering through deep snow “Listening to Myself”, is a short poem of two separate stanzas. The first stanza speaks briefly about an old man. Then there is a new stanza after a break showing there is a new idea. This stanza is more in depth and inside emotions rather than physical in the first stanza. It purports to describe what took place when an old man staggered and tugged blocks of wood, almost falling from bodily weakness. The forest was full of snow. The only human being who appeared in the poem was the old man. No living person dwelt in the forest but a still pool that had ceased to reflect anything except the past. There had been no movement into the forest for a long time.

**The old man was angry:**

The forest was uninhabited. No human being dwelt there. But it was haunted by blocks of wood and snow. Receiving no answer, the old man got angry. Only the poet listened to him. The old man went to distant lands on some mission. Now he had come back to meet his friends perhaps his beloved lady and he found only a silent pool and the loss of love. The old man remembered the song of the flesh to flesh and bone to bone.

**The call of God not heeded by worldly sinners:**

The title indicates that the listener is more important than the old man. This invests the poem with a symbolical significance. The poet suggests some terrible tragedy in which all the

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residents of the forest died together. The old man must have been among them once, or at least his friends must have lived there. The old man may stand for a prophet or God himself. The call of God or the prophet was not heeded by worldly sinners. The dead silence of the pool might represent fatal worldliness.

**THE WINTER LAKES**

**The world of Death:**

Wilfred Campbell in his poem “The Winter Lakes” presents the dreary and dark landscape. It is a world of death where “waste and white stretch the great lakes away”. As the ice-winds blow, the griefs of winter are heard. The thunders of wintry woe make the atmosphere looming and ghost-like. The picture of the moon glimmering above, the water surface with white color, the shadowy shapes, lonely hidden bays, the rocky region with its utter blackness all these are sketched by the poet quite in tune with the country’s climatic surroundings.

**Life and Death Co-exist’:**

The poet finds himself in a place and a mood where all the world appears quiet and placid, where the troubles of the world are felt only as the sound of a dying storm or the distant roar of the sea. Life and death coexist. It is far away from the roar of wave and wind, from the world of everyday life.

**All things are born to die:**

It is a world where bushes and flowering plants do not grow. There is nothing of the

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fragrance and spirit of life. The poet again and again alludes to the fact that death is inevitable and final. All things are born only to die. Even the strongest and fairest fade and perish. Death overwhelms them in the end. It is an end that consumes all earthly things, all aspects of beauty, the plants and the flowers. Just as all rivers reach the sea and die there, all men however long their life may extend are bound to die one day.

**Pathos of the Poem:**

The night has fallen. The symbol of the night is drawn upon the intensity of the atmosphere of the gloom. The pathos of the poem lies in the atmosphere of hushed thought, dreamy silence, and poetic imagery. Life is ironically spoken of as ending in the final security of Death. The poet seems to say that the sun's rays certain darkness.

**Why should men struggle to avoid Death?**

Death may help men to know many things which life has hidden. Light hides the glorious stars from men's view. Only the night which is feared by men can reveal the beauty of the stars. Similarly, life may hide many things which only Death can disclose. So why should men, fear death? To overcome life's deceits, men should welcome death. They need not fear death.

**LIVE AS OLD PROUD KING IN PARABLE**

**The King renounces his throne to become a poet:**

The poem "Like an Old Proud King in a Parable" first appeared in Mc Gill Fortnightly Review in 1926. It was revised and published in Canadian Mercury in 1928. Again revised and

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published in Hound and then in 1932 with the addition of the important tenth line “O who is that bitter, king? It is not I” and the last three lines. In this poem, a king renounces his throne to become a poet to sing “difficult, lonely music. At one level, the ‘poem is a perfect example of Smith’s determination to turn his back on the world and lead an austere, hard, lonely existence. At another level, the poem is symbolic of the conflicting and ambivalent sensibility of Smith over the Romantic Modernist split. The throwing away of robes and responsibilities is, in poetic terms, a stripping away of florid diction, and overwrought emotions. A confrontation with the inner-self is suggested by the poet’s renunciation of any audience but the barren rock.

**Northern part of Canada is rugged and hilly:**

The farewell imagery in the first five lines of the poem is mind-boggling. The words “bitter”, “anger”, “fawning” .doting”. “flung” and “breaking” are expressive of strong feelings and emotions. Secondly, the speaker is forced to sacrifice, hence are expressive of unwillingness, hatred and anger. Not only is the speaker unwilling to sacrifice the existing comforts but also unwilling to go to the place where he finally has to go, “a meadow in the Northern stone”. Stone is symbolic of hardness, rigidity and austerity. “Northern stone” because Northern part of Canada is rugged and hilly.

**Smith despaired and disappointed to give up romantic qualities:**

A king is hesitant to forego the pleasures of the kingdom to lead the life of an austere poet. The implied meaning is that ‘Smith is despaired and disappointed to give up inherent romantic qualities in him to don modernist principles. The emotive words and the words of

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hardness and loneliness like “cage”, “alone” and “pride” authenticate the view point.

**“Who is that bitter king? It is not I”:**

In “Proud Parable” the desire to abdicate in the first nine lines is undercut by an intruding line: “Who is that bitter king? It is not I”. This line is a dislocating device employed by Smith to depersonalize the poem. This line savers sharply the kinship between the speaker of the poem who now espouses the cold goddess pride and announces that he would sing his difficult, lovely music to “The barren rock”.

**The poem in ironic self-mockery:**

The poem ends in typical ironic self-mockery as the speaker of the poem prays to be able to learn a proud isolated art in spite of its rare possibility of achievement. In “Proud Parable”, in spite of depersonalization through modernist techniques. The romantic elements are clearly apparent.

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SHORT STORIES

A RED DRESS

‘A Red Dress’ highlights the pressure of a teenage girl while growing up. In the beginning of the story the narrator’s mother is sewing a dress for her. The narrator is a young thirteen-year-old girl. The narrator comments that her mother likes to create many things but the creation was never as good as her ideas.

One day, the narrator brings her friend Lonnie to her home. Both of them silently watch the narrator’s mother’s work on the dress which is to be weared by the Narrator on the Christmas Dance. The narrator is embarrassed about her mother’s appearance and her complaints about her own’ childhood. When the girls get away from the mother, they go upstairs to the narrator’s room and chat about boys and sex.

The narrator’s mother is taking much pain to create the dress for her Christmas dance but the narrator admits that she doesn’t want to go. So, she uses all shorts of short cuts to avoid the programme. All her attempts fail and on the day of the dance she is just as healthy as ever.

At the dance. The narrator is a bundle of nerves as she watches older students arrive and contemptuously ignore the younger students. She feels really embarrassed to stand there because no one is willing to dance with her. So, she runs off and hides in the bathroom. In the bathroom, she meets one of the senior students, a girl named Mary Fortune. There, she invites the narrator to smoke. Mary says that she is not a flirt like other girls but she has goals in her life than to become a physical education teacher. After a short meeting, she leaves the bathroom and on the

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way to the hall she gets an invitation from a boy to dance. The narrator accepts it and dances with him.

Later on, the boy she dances with. Walks her home, talks about a hockey game and kisses her before leaving. The narrator's mother is waiting eagerly for the arrival of her daughter and wants to listen to the happenings at the dance. But the girl decides that she is not going to tell her everything. As the mentality of the common teenager, our narrator also hates her mother and her domination. However it is also possible that the narrator is going through a stage in her life, as do many young people, whereby she feels the need to free herself from her environment.

**THE RESPLENDENT QUETZAL**

Death of child I deep emotional affect on Sarah 'The Resplendent Quetzal' by Margaret Atwood, is the story of Sarah and Edward, a disparaging husband and wife. After Sarah's miscarriage the couple becomes increasingly less interested in each other until it gets to the point where Edward is trying anything to avoid Sarah, such as bird-watching, which she finds that they are compulsive, boyish and irritating. Things are different between them. But Sarah has a miscarriage. They have become increasingly uninterested in each other. The first hint of trouble in this couple's marriage is when Sarah talks about her husband's many hobbies and obsessions. Sarah resents the fact that her husband spends all of his time on his obsessions. The death of their child has a deep emotional affect oh Sarah. But the fact is that Edward is not present when the baby dies.



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**Story ends with a broken marriage**

Sarah and Edward are on a vacation in Mexico, and are visiting uninteresting tourist locations. They are married, but do not get along well. Sarah describes Edward's passions such as bird-watching, as compulsions which are awkward and boyish. They merely make her tired. She is bland and pale and plump and smug. While visiting a restaurant, Sarah steals a toy figure of baby Jesus and later throws it into a sacrificial well that they visit on a tour. Edward sees this, thinking Sarah is about to jump in the well but is hesitant to approach her. Both Sarah and Edward have previously dreamed of life without each other, making the decision to stop Sarah from jumping in the well even more difficult. Edward sees that it is just the toy being thrown in and attempts to comfort Sarah as she breaks down in tears. The two cannot truly connect or comfort each other. They no longer understand each other. The story ends with a still broken marriage. Neither Sarah nor Edward is happy.

**Sarah wants to see the Resplendent Quetzal**

“The Resplendent Quetzal’ addresses the different reactions of people to the same initial crisis and the consequence it has on their relationship. Edward and Sarah both face the same injury; their relationship engages merely feelings of hatred and defeat for one another.

The narrative ends without a decision. She asks Edward if he has found his bird. Sarah has said that the one bird she wants to see on their trip is the Resplendent Quetzal. It is obvious that neither of them will happen their bird on this trip. Their bird is the felicity of their yesteryear that they sacrifice by quashing their jobs and frights.

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AS BIRDS BRING FORTH THE SUN

‘As Birds Bring Forth the Sun’ is about how a man and his dog generated a family myth. Mac Leod explores how family stories and myths, even though they are fictitious, fold into the present to provide comfort in times of emotional distress. The story starts off in a folk-tale setting. The narrator retells the family history of an ancestor who saved and nurtures back to health an injured puppy on the brink of death when she is left in a box by a gate. He saves her by soothing her back to health instead of killing her to end her suffering.

The man who saves the puppy, runs his fingers along her broken bones and puts an end to her misery. He fashions a small box and fills it with woolen remnants from a sheep’s fleece. He puts that puppy in the box and gives warm milk. As the weeks have passed by, the puppy gets cured completely and it gets back its health. She grows very large and so the man calls her ‘cu morglas’, the big gray dog. She has grown to a tremendous height and her signs and odour attracts many suitors. The man, who is used to working with the breeding of animals, assists the big grey dog to breed. One morning, on spring season. The dog leaves his home and everyone in his family waits for her arrival but she doesn’t turn up. Then they are busy with their day to day chores and forget about it.

Over a year later, the man and two of his sons go out fishing and they get caught amidst a storm. The storm makes them take shelter on an island closely. They see the same big grey dog and the reunion between master and dog becomes tragic. The big grey dog meets her master after a long gap and so she showers her love by rearing up her hind legs on her master.

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Because of the weight and speed of her momentum, he falls down. The dog has given birth to six puppies and those puppies also have grown into a huge grey dogs. They have not seen him before and they misunderstand the man to be their enemy. So, they fall upon him in a fury, slashing his face and tearing aside his lower jaw and ripping out his throat. The man breaches his lost in the Island. The man's two sons who are still in the boat are really shocked to see their father's tragic end. After that tragic event the cu morglas and her six young dogs are vanished from the area permanently.

After witnessing the tragic and of his father, the younger son is always haunted and tormented by the horrible scene of his father's death. Often, he gets the vision of the grey dog in his sleep and he awakes at night frequently. His condition becomes worsened and he screams during night out of fear. His scream fills the house and the minds of the listeners about the loss of their father. One morning, he walks to the high cliff which face the island and there he cuts his throat with a fish knife and falls into the sea. The elder brother who has 'lived up to forty, often, has some illusion or hallucination . of the big grey dog and its pups in the form of a large-grey j haired men. In his hallucination, he has been attached by those six puppies in the form of a large grey haired men and meet his tragic end. Thus the vision or dream of the big grey dog appears to be fatal for this family.

The dog known in the stories as the "grey dog of death," consistently appears at times in dreams or in visions in the family's history as on omen of imminent death for relative. This becomes the legend, myth or family curse that has been bestowed upon that family. They

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concluded that it was an evil spell. The descendants are very much influenced by the myth of the big grey dog as being a deathly curse. The story shifts to the present, the narrator, who is the 6<sup>th</sup> generation descendant of their family sit in a Tononto hospital along with her siblings beside their ill-father while none of them mention the story to each other, it is clear to the narrator they are all thinking about it, thinking about how even its mention may signal the death of their father. Thus the myth of the dog and its curse stay forever in this family.

UNIT – III

DRAMA

ECSTASY OF RITA JOE

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**Act I**

**Rita Joe at the Court**

The action of The Ecstasy of Rita Joe begins in the court. Rita Joe, a native Canadian Indian girl is produced in the court before a white magistrate. She is charged with vagrancy and prostitution. The policeman says that she has accepted five dollars from a man'. The magistrate is not in a position to understand the. Plight of the native girl: Rita' 5 dress and manners appear very strange to the magistrate. '

**Rita's love-affair with Jaimie Paul**

Rita answers the magistrates questions in a careless manner. She calls the magistrate 'mister' and not as 'your worship', as it is expected in a court. Rita says that she was employed in a tyre store for quite some time. She talks about her love-affair with Jaimie Paul. Jaimie Paul was also a Canadian Indian. He was at first very optimistic about getting a decent job in the city and then settle down there marrying Rita Joe. He wanted to become a singer in a hotel. But the big hoteliers rejected him on account of his ethnicity, though he was a good singer. At last, he became a carpenter In order to exist.

**As a memory play**

Ryga's stage techniques make the play very appealing. Though in the court, when the case is proceeding, Rita Joe becomes exhausted and very often slips into the memory mode. The constant jumping from normal to memory mode explains her position. The magistrate uses the jargon of the court and reads out the, charges levelled against Rita; but Rita goes back on a

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memory mode. Her lover Jaimie Paul appears ‘and disappears. She comes to the real world. She says that the jail ‘stinks’ and recalls the punishment she had undergone on previous occasions. The magistrate also recalls having. Sentenced her before.

**The Magistrate does not understand Rita’s position:**

Because of continuous, repeated punishments, Rita’s mind moves away from reality. She does not realise the dangerous situation she is in. The magistrate asks her to produce witnesses in order to defend herself. Rita Joe can recall only the memory of Jaimie Paul which is of no use to her now. The Magistrate asks her to defend herself in a way a white man does. He does not understand Rita’s position.

**The Memory of Eileen Joe:**

Now Rita Joe recalls the memory of her sister Eileen Joe. She too came to the city and tried to establish her in the city. She had training to become a dressmaker. But unfortunately, as in the case of Jaimie Paul, though she was able to make very good dress, the Whites did not give any orders. Therefore she could not survive. Rita is taken up with the childhood memory of her sister Eileen Joe. When they were young, Rita and Eileen went out together looking for strawberries and blueberries avoiding cranberries in the bushes, Eileen makes her appearance on the stage and their play with the berries is interrupted with the menacing appearance of the three murderers in the background. Rita Joe begins to scream in fear.

**Rita’s illegitimate child in the Cariboo country**

The audience or the reader may notice the technique of George Ryga that the action of

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the play moves, forward and backward, from reality to memory and \_ back. The magistrate recalls that he saw a face like Rita Joe in the Cariboo Country. He looks at her face very closely and says that the face could have been her own child. Rita does not object to his suggestion. Thinking that Rita's illegitimate child has been abandoned by her, the magistrate begins to give her a long sermon on sexual morality and the importance of taking care of one's children, etc.

**Another Memory of Eileen Joe**

Rita is engaged in conversation with her dead sister, Eileen. A storm breaks out. Eileen departs in the lightning. Rita recalls the beautiful blouses made by Eileen.

**The appearance of the Priest**

The Priest and the Teacher make their appearance now and then. The Priest is a Whiteman. He is very formal with Rita. Though he IS a good man, he does not understand the plight of Rita. He advises her 'to be a good girl', as though the Indians are never good.

**Jaimie Paul's statement about the death of Rita's mother**

Next, Rita Joe's lover, Jaimie Paul appears on her mind in the memory mode. He says he has been cleaning floors and desks in a building for a living. He tells her about the, last moments of Rita's mother who was dying and was removed to a hospital in a charity flight organized by Mr. Homer and her body was brought back for burial after-her death. Mr. Homer was a whit esocial worker, who organizes charity work by providing free food and clothes for the Indians and arranges for medical services for them. People like Rita Joe and Jaimie Paul feel that they are hurt by such freebees. They want to work and earn and live like human beings. The free food

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and clothes make the native Indians lazy and useless. In another scene, we find Jaimie Paul protesting against Mr. Homer. Jaimie wants to assert the dignity of Indians before Mr. Homer.

**False case of prostitution against Rita Joe**

The Magistrate reads out the charges against Rita Joe. She has been arrested under: the charges of prostitution by policemen who were impersonating sailors. Rita denies the charge saying that she has been falsely accused. She says that while she was returning home. Two white policemen tried to tease her, while a third policeman thrust a We dollar note in her pockets They arrested her suddenly and took her to the police station.

**The cultural divide between the Indians and the Whites**

Again one can notice the cultural divide between the white people and the Indians. The policeman addresses the Magistrate as “Your Worship” as the latter is expected to be addressed according to the legal tradition. This is not known to Rita, who simply calls him “mister”. Again, in the court Rita asks whether she can smoke a cigarette. This is when she is asked to produce references who could say that she Is good. This makes it clear that Rita, does not understand the conventions of the whiteman’s court as the Magistrate does not understand Rita’ s World.

**Rita’s’ Ignorance of the White man’s law**

The Magistrate is convinced that Rita is guilty of prostitution and has abandoned her illegitimate child, whom he had seen during his holiday tour of the Cariboo country. Rita is unable to defend herself against the additional charge because of her ignorance of law what she simply wants is to be allowed to go home. This is not possible.



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**Rita's reverie about Jaimie and Eileen**

Once again Rita Joe passes into a reverie. She sees Jaimie Paul sweeping the floor. She met him at the railway station Also, her sister, Eileen Joe, appears. They are happy to exchange comments on their common friends like Clara Hill, who is expecting a baby soon. Next Rita sees another happy scene from the schooldays. She is happy to .be with the boys of her own Indian community, like Johnny and Steve Laporte. At the same time, the three murderers are seen moving Close to her.

**False testimony against Rita**

The scene shifts to the Court. Two witnesses appear. Both are whites brought by the police. The bear false testimony against Rita that she is a prostitute. Their language is vulgar and the court audience laugh.

**Memory scene about Jaimie Paul**

Another memory scene follows. Rita and Jaimie Paul make love. They are really in love with each other. This happy love scene comes to an end when an approaching train in the background kills Jaimie Paul. Rita feels quite helpless at the memory of the death of her lover.

**Magistrate advises Rita to get civilized**

The Magistrate goes on accusing her of prostitution, theft and vagrancy. Rita is tired of the proceedings and asks the Magistrate to stop the enquiry and put her in jail. She recalls an incident in which she stole a sweater once for buying her food. She says that she was wrongly accused of riding a horse over a boy once. A situation has arisen in which she does not know

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what is happening to her. The Magistrate has recognized that Rita has grown older every time she is brought to the court as an accused. Rita wants “to go lie down on grass” but the Magistrate tells her that it is “not the reservation”. (A reservation is .a place allotted for the Canadian Red Indians.) The Magistrate advises her how to get civilized. He advises her to have some money in her pockets and an address of permanent residence. He also tells her to fix her hair in the modern fashion, change her name and also tame her accent.

**Memory Scene: Jaimie’s quarrel with Mr. Homer**

Rita passes into another memory. This time Jaimie ‘Paul appears drunk. He picks up a quarrel with Mr. Homer, the White Social Worker, who is giving soup to the young Indians. People like Jaimie Paul think that such kind of charity will only spoil the Indians. Jaimie Paul teases Homer that he would spit in the charity soup. Mr. Homer threatens him asking him to shut up. Rita comes back to the present and imitates a drunken dance sequence before the Magistrate. She tells him that she once rang up the police and told them that she had seen God.

**The Magistrate opines that Rita is a carrier of venereal disease**

‘The Magistrate is of the opinion that Rita Joe is an ‘Incurable carrier’ of venereal diseases and must be isolated from the society. At the pronouncement of the judgement, Rita falls on the floor. Eileen Joe and an Old Man are seen miming clothes washing. Rita is taken to the days of her childhood anxiety and fear. Jaimie Paul also appears on the scene teasing the policemen.

**‘Rita’s Teacher**

Another scene in the memory mode. Rita sees her Teacher, another White-woman. She is

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inefficient. She tries to teach Rita in an authoritative way. Rita's impulsiveness soon unnerves the teacher. The Teacher loses her patience and calls her "a bitch in heat". Rita views even the harmless Teacher as a threat. Rita's love for Jaimie is not correctly interpreted by the Teacher. Rita is certain that she is clean and honest.

**David Joe; Rita's father in a memory scene**

Rita's father David Joe, appears in another memory, 'He appears in the company of Jaimie Paul. There is a lot of difference between the two because of generation gap. David Joe is conventional, obedient and law abiding. Jaimie Paul is restless, aggressive and quarrelsome. He is the 'angry youngman'. He is upset by the fact that nobody calls him by his name but simply insults him calling him "Hey fella". David Joe recalls how 'his neighbour, Sandy Collins, who lost his daughter, Millie requested David Joe to sell Rita Joe to him for a thousand dollars. But he was not willing to do that,

**Mr. Homer as a witness against Rita**

The Magistrate interrupts and asks Rita Joe whether she had got a health-check-up and fixed her teeth recently. Rita is hungry and wants to eat something. Once again, the Magistrate charges her with prostitution. Mr. Homer, the social worker, appears as a witness. He says that Rita was about to attack him once in a drunken mood, when he wanted to give her some soup and a sandwich. Jaimie Paul appears at the back in a drunken state. Rita appeals to him for help.

**Rita's letters are not delivered to her**

Again, the School Board Clerk comes to the court and reports that the Department of

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Education sent an offer to Rita .to study after grade five, through correspondence but she did not do so. (Rita knows that no letter is directed to an Indian properly.) The policemen, the Male Witness, and the Priest appear in the court and repeat their charges. The Magistrate now charges her for drunkenness, shop-lifting, assault and prostitution. Rita asks the Magistrate to believe her.

**Rita is sentenced for thirty days' imprisonment**

Finally, Rita is sentenced for thirty days imprisonment after medical examination for Rita. Rita simply cannot do anything. The murderers make their appearance. Rita's arrest marks the close of the Act.

**How David Joe married Rita Joe's mother**

Rita Joe is imprisoned. She is sleeping uncomfortably in her cell. Her father, David Joe appears on the scene. Recalling his youth he says how as a young man he worked with a threshing group. He narrates how he chose Rita's mother as his wife. Once he saw a young woman with a flock of geese. She had larger eyes as 'large as fifty-cent coins. When he approached her, she ran away. Her geese followed her. He has seen geese following Rita Joe in the same way. The father's image fades away. Rita wakes up from her sleep and she is shivering in bitter cold. She is very desperate.

**Priest Andrew visits Rita in jail**

The Priest and the Policeman come to Rita Joe. Rita recognizes the priest as Father Andrew, who gives her a packet of cigarettes and matches. Rita Joe accepts it and lights a cigarette. With 'animal satisfaction". She tells the priest that It was raining the previous night. As

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a child, she used to enjoy the sight of the leaves and the river but Jaimie Paul told her that they could never see such things again. The Priest quietly tells her that the city is not a suitable place for her-, meaning that she could go to the reservation after her release. He is quite sure that Rita can never fully understand the white's urban culture.

Knowing that Rita is charged with prostitution, Priest I Andrews tells her that Jesus forgave a woman like her and He would forgive Rita also. Rita's problem is that nobody listens to her. Her mother is dead. The Priest says that he knew her from her birth. Rita is an ardent lover of freedom but she becomes a jailbird. It was Father Andrew who baptised Rita as a child. He never expected her to become a woman of such pride, that Heaven may 'be barred for her. We find a gulf of difference between the priest and Rita Joe. Rita puts an ironical question whether there are simple understandable rules at least in heaven for people like Rita Joe.

**Rita about her uncle Dan Joe**

Rita Joe tells the Priest that her uncle Dan Joe told her once that how long ago the white men came with the Bible to talk to the Indians and they took all the lands of the Indians. The Priest becomes angry and asks her to confess if she wants to be free. Rita asks Wart him 'to go to hell'. She asks him to tell her father about her plight. It is clear that the Indians are not able to understand the religion of the whites also just like their politics and culture.

**Memory scene about Rita and Jaimie dancing**

In another memory scene, Jaimie Paul appears and says that he is going to, take her for dancing after work on Friday. Music appears and she dances with Jaimie Paul. A few Indians

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also join the dance. Rita and Jaimie embrace each other. Jaimie even promises her babies. He tells her about the house he has planned to take for rent. They discuss the success. Of the fellow Indians like Mickey and Steve Laporte who are going to the beer parlour on Monday night when Jaimie would receive his first pay.

Rita warns that the police officers may throw Jaimie out of the beer parlour. Jaimie says that he would fight against them. They talk about Clara Hill, another Indian. Jaimie tells that she has sent both her kids to foster homes and does not know where they are. According to Jaimie Paul one should have a good job to have babies in the city.

**The Indians do not understand what the whites expect from them**

In the mean time the three murderers appear in the darkness of the backstage and move towards Rita. They go away at the sight of the policemen. Rita says that everybody is scared of the unemployed condition of the Indians; The Indians do not understand the basic rules that govern the cities of the whites. The Indians do not fund acceptance. Jaimie says clearly, “I can’t figure out what the hell they want from us”.

Now the scene changes. Jaimie leaves. Andrew, the priest, and Rita’s father are talking. David Joe says that Rita is not close to him anymore but the priest tells him that the city is not the place for people like Rita.

**Jaimie’s encounter with Mr. Homer**

In another scene we find Mr. Homer drunk and in the company of young Indians. There is a tablefull of clothes. They are from the Society for Aids to the Indians. Many Indians take the

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clothes which they like. Rita also selects a red sweater and Homer advises her to take it as red will look good on her. Jaimie appears in an aggressive mood and teases his fellow Indians saying that all that they need is work and not free food and clothes. He asks the young boys not to accept the Whiteman's charity. He threatens Homer that he would break the windows. Rita throws the sweater and stands by the side of Jaimie. Homer becomes very angry and calls Rita a slut and a whore. In the end Jaimie is arrested and the Magistrate gives thirty days sentence to Jaimie. The Magistrate warns him that If he finds Jaimie rebellious again, he will be given six months.

**Rita refuses to go with her father to the reservation**

Rita Joe's father comes to pick up Rita Joe and take her home. David Joe has nothing against Jaimie. He calls him a "good boy" because he too has dreams of freedom for the Indians. Rita refuses to go with her father as she prefers to live with Jaimie Paul.

**What the Whites do for the Indians**

The scene changes to the court. The Magistrate reads out the sentence of thirty days before Rita. He talks about how the Whites provide schools for the Indians, clinics and other things but the Indians fail to learn and become prostitutes; drunkards and users of narcotics. At this point, the three murderers appear on the backstage and pounce on her. She runs for her life and bumps against Jaimie Paul. The murderers follow the couple.

Rita says, to Jaimie "When you are tired and sick, Jaimie the city starts to dance". The city life of the Whiteman's civilization becomes a nightmare for the Red Indian natives.

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**How Jaimie and Rita are murdered**

When the murderers hover around them. Jaimie fights ; but soon they overpower him. When one grabs Rita Joe and the other two kick Jaimie and throw his body in the railway track before an approaching train. Then the murderers gangrape Rita Joe till she falls dead and even after her death.

**The funeral of Rita and Jaimie**

“The Ecstasy of Rita Joe” closes with a funeral. Rita’s father comes in singing an ancient Indian funeral song, carrying the body of Jaimie Paul. The murderers run away from their necrophilic rape. Both the bodies of Jaimie and Rita are placed side by side. All the young and old, pay respect to the bodies. Eileen Joe rises to her feet chanting a prayer, “No, No! No More”. The play closes with Eileen’s words recalling the words of Rita Joe “When Rita Joe first came to the city; she told me that the cement made her feet hurt”.

UNIT – IV

FICTION

IN THE SKIN OF A LION

The title of Michael Ondaatje’s novel. In the Skin of a Lion, is taken from The Epic of Gilgamesh. The joyful will stoop with sorrow, and when you have gone to earth I will let my hair grow long for your sake, I will wander through the wilderness in the skin of a lion.

The story gives importance to the construction of two Toronto landmarks. The Prince



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Edward Viaduct, known as Blue Moors Street Viaduct and the RC. Ham's Water Treatment Plant. The general theme of the novel is the lives of the immigrants who ' played a vital role in the building of the city of Toronto in the early 1900s, but whose contributions have never become part of the ' . City's official history. So, the main focus is on the lives of the immigrants.

The novel is divided into three books. Book One has three chapters: Little Seeds, The Bridge and The Searcher. Book Two has two: Palace of Purification and Remorse. Book \_ Three has two chapters titled. Caravaggio and Maritime Theatre. The story is narrated by Patrick Lewis to Hana, a young girl in a car during the four-hour journey to Marmara under six stars and a moon.

### **Little Seeds**

The first chapter in Book One "Little Seeds" narrates the childhood of the protagonist, Patrick Lewis. As a twelve-year-old boy in Depot Creek, Ontario, Canada, he lives with his silent and hard-working father, Hazen Lewis. He watches the loggers arrive in winter to work in the mills. Patrick observes the life of loggers as an outsider theme that occurs throughout his life and the novel.

In summer, Patrick observes nature closely in the forth of insects, moths. Hazen Lawis has no land of his own. He is a cattle-herder. Ondaatje beautifully describes how both Hazen and Patrick save a cow that once falls through the 306 of the frozen river.

Patrick's father works as a hogger then. But he teaches himself dynamite. Then he gives up cutting timber. He decides "the one of his life," He orders books on blasting caps and fuses.

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‘He draws diagrams on the shed. He also learns about detonators and cartridges. Then he demonstrates his talent by exploding a half-ton of shale and moving logs in Rath burn Timber Company in the town.

Soon Hazen is hired as a dynamiter to break log-jams in the river. It is a dangerous work. This is because the dynamiter finds a jam and sets his apparatus under water. Suddenly, a twenty-foot log may leap out of water and throw a man aside.

Breaking his chest. After the close down of the log company, he is employed as a dynamiter in the feldspar mines nearby Patrick observes his father and learns dynamiting the title of the chapter ‘Little Seeds’ refers to the ‘seeds’ that are planted for Patrick’s personality to grow into what he becomes as a grownup man.

### **The Bridge**

The chapter ‘The Bridge’ deals with the building of Bloor Street Viaduct, earlier named ‘Prince Edward viaduct. This bridge links the eastern Toronto with the centre of the city. It Helps to carry traffic, water and electricity across the. Don Valley. In 1918, Ondaatje describes men pouring tar starting out trucks well before dawn, while building the bridge.

During the opening ceremonies, a cyclist breaks away from the public breaking the police barriers. He is thought to be the ‘first person over the bridge. But he-is not the first. It is because the workers with officials walked across the whole length of it earlier night with candles, paying their tribute to the workers who died building the bridge. Ondaatje, next describes the tarring of the roads linked by the bridge, Bloor Street and Dan forth Avenue.

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Rowland Harris, the Commissioner of Public Works, is introduced. Water is his great passion. He is the man with the vision for the bridge and the Waterworks. One windy night in 1917, Harris and Pomphrey, the architect see we nuns walking on the bridge. They must be got lost in the dark. Suddenly, the wind scattered them against the cement mixers and steam shovels, careering from side to side, in danger of going over the - edge . One nun was lifted up and thrown against the compressors. She disappeared into the night. She had fatten off the Prince Edward Viaduct before it was even completed.

All are led to believe that the hun died, but in the next section, we find a man in “midair” sees the falling figure and reaches out for her. This is the first introduction of Nicholas Temelcoff. He holds the figure and both reach the tower-deck level of the bridge. Both Nicholas and the nun walk to Qhrida Lake Restaurant. Nicholas drinks brandy to still the pain in his arm. There is a parrot in the restaurant, named ‘Alicia.’ The nun uses her veil to tie up Nicholas’ injured arm. Then he falls asleep. When he wakes up, the nun has left the place.

Nicholas Temelcoff is a Macedonian immigrant. He is famous on the bridge, a daredevil. He is given all the difficult jobs and he takes them. He descends into the air with no fear. He is the happiest at daily tasks. He is a spinner. He links everyone. His work is exceptional. He earns one dollar an hour. There Is no jealousy towards him.

Daniel Stoyanoff, in his Macedonian village tempted Nicholas and other youth to come to North America. He told them that in North America. Everything was rich and dangerous. He went empty-handed and returned wealthy. Daniel had lost an arm in an accident. He received

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compensation from the meat factory for which he worked.

At the age of 25, Nicholas came to Canada after the war in the Balkans burned his village. He entered the country without a passport. He enrolled himself in a school to learn the language. The Macedonians, Greeks and Finns went to the theatre and repeated the lines of a certain actor regularly. For Nicholas, “Language Is much more difficult than what he does in space”.

**The Searcher**

Patrick Lewis is re-introduced as twenty years old in the third chapter, ‘The Searcher’, Of Book One. He has moved to Toronto In 1930 after six years of his father’ 3 death.

In 1919, Ambrose Small, a millionaire, has failed to keep an appointment. A million dollars have been taken from his bank account. It is a great mystery. His absence has made everyone search for him. Patrick takes the job of a-‘searcher’, offered by Smail’s family. Small’s sisters ask Patrick to meet his mistress, Clara Dickens. Patrick was attracted towards Clara immediately and the two develop a relationship. During the first meeting, Clara pays no attention to Patrick. She even refuses to speak of Ambrose Small. The next day, she helps him to find documents.

In Small’s library. She allows him to sit and read the documents in her house. She soon falls in love with him and makes a relationship. She tells him of her past life. She takes him to her friend Alice’s farmhouse. They spend some time alone in the house. After some days, Alice comes, both the’ women spend time laughing and talking. Patrick leaves to Toronto Clara meets him in the hotel and informs him that she has to go hand live with Small. She asks him to leave

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her in the train and not to follow her. Patrick leaves her. But he becomes very upset. He then takes up a job in a lumber-yard. But he remains broken-hearted. Three years later, Alice meets him and they make love. She asks him to meet Clara's mother. Patrick comes to know that Clara and Small live in his own hometown. Of Depot Lake, Ontario.

Patrick finds Clara and Small living in the large house of a lumber baron. He steals into the house at night. Small finds him in the living room. Patrick tells Small that he is there only to see Clara. Small says that he will wake Clara and asked him to wait outside.

We understand that Patrick is not after money or fame. He values love. As a 'searcher' if he had followed Clara, he would have received \$ 80,000 award and fame. But he obeys her. He did not follow Clara. Instead, he lives broken-hearted, during the years of separation, he writes. His dreams in letters. He did not post them. The letters contain his dreams. This is Ondaatje's Post-modern method of mixing dream with reality.

### **Palace of Purification**

The Chapter "Palace of Purification' opens with images of men working in a tunnel dynamited under Lake Ontario. This is Harris' another project to draw water from a mile and a half into the lake and then filter and purify it in a filtration building.

Patrick moves to an apartment, where he lives alone. He uses his dynamiting skills on the tunnels. There is a great risk working in the tunnel under the lake. If Patrick makes a mistake, the entire lake could crash down on all workers. His co-workers are all immigrants from different countries. They all work silently.

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Patrick buys vetch to feed Clara's iguana. The entire family who owns the market, surrounds him with friendship. Patrick 'cries out of joy. The market-woman, Elena gives her scarf to wipe off his tears. The men embrace and kiss him. They invite him to dinner at Kosta, the Macedonian bar, Despite Patrick's broken. Conversation, they all accept him into their fold. Kosta invites Patrick for an illegal. Gathering at the unfinished waterworks. At night, various immigrant communities gather for secret political discussions and entertainment. He watches a puppet-show. The show portrays the frustration of the immigrants. The immigrants are unable to communicate in the larger Canadian world and they are pushed into jobs and places where they do not belong He recognizes a human puppet. Patrick rushes to the backstage. The human puppet is played by Alice Gull.

Patrick visits Alice and meets her nine-year-old daughter, Hana. Hana's father Cato is from Finland. Cato died working a dangerous job reserved only for immigrants. Patrick moves in with Alice. When the tunnel was completed, he gets a job as a leather tanner. He meets Nicholas, Temelcoff, now and the owner of a bakery.

One day, Patrick went to Riverdale Library. The articles and illustrations depicted every detail about the soil, the wood, the weight of concrete, everything but no information on those who actually built the bridge. Patrick understood that official histories, news stories surround daily, but the events of art reach us too late.

Alice goes for acting in the evenings. She has delivered him out of nothing. We suddenly hear the death news of Alice. Patrick finds an old photo, a rosary and understands that Alice was

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the nun who fell into the bridge earlier. Patrick felt expanded into an innocent world. Every true thing he learned about character, he learned at that time of his life with Alice. Alice tried to convince Patrick to join her views against the rich and the ruling class.

Hana, the ten-year-old daughter of Alice, becomes Patrick's adopted daughter. Hana was totally unlike Patrick, always practical. He learns more of Cato from his letters, Cato was self-made, He worked hard, he spoke out. Cato the labour agitator was murdered at Orion Lake, near Thunder Bay.

Ondaatje presents the history with its poverty and struggle of the working class. Patrick never believed that characters lived only on the page. They altered when the author's eye was somewhere else. So there was a great darkness outside, there would be light elsewhere on earth. Patrick saw himself gazing so many stories knowing of Alice, Cato, Nicholas, Hana, Clara, and so on. He saw the interactions. He saw how each one of them carried by the strength of something more than themselves. Patrick saw a wondrous night web all of these fragments of a human order.

The articles in the Riverdale Library depicted every detail about the soil, the wood, the weight of concrete, except information about those who actually built the bridge. Official histories, news stories surround us daily, but the events of art reach us too late.

Ondaatje here states the superiority of art in italics. Only the best and can order the chaotic tumble of events. Only the best can realign chaos to suggest both the chaos and order it will become. He also suggests that the first sentence of every novel should be: "Trust me, this

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will, take time, but there is order here, very faint, very human”.

Alice’s favourite sentence, I have taught you that the sky in all its zones is mortal’ rings in Patrick’s ears. He tries to uncover every facet of Alice’s nature for himself. He wants everything of Alice to be with him in the room as if she is not dead. Her memories are like those few pages in a book we go pack and forth over. Alice has delivered him out of nothing.

In acting, Alice leaps from her true self to her other true self. Patrick reads Cato’s last letter to Alice. Patrick notices the change in him. He has always been alien. He has clung like moss to strangers, to the nooks and fissures of their situations. This he had never done. He was a watcher, a corrector.

Clara and Ambrose and Alice and Nicholas and Cato-all cluster into a drama without him. He is like a prison that refracted their lives. He searched out things, he collected things. He was an abashed man, an inheritance from his father. When alone he could feel a gap of love. He has lived in this country all his life. But only now, he comes to know of union battles, Cato’s murder in 1921 and his last letter. It looks as if Patrick gazing. Into the darkness of his country, as a ‘searcher’.

Every Sunday, they gathered at the waterworks. The building, now three-quarters finished, spread grand lights were provided in the main pumping station, due to its structure. Up to the building from the lakeshore, groups walked down. There was food, entertainment, political speeches, numerous communities and nationalities spoke and performed in their own languages. When they finished the halls were cleaned up. Patrick and Alice too used to go. All these



incidents and emotions sleep on Patrick's shoulders and it becomes difficult to forget Alice. He loved Alice. Now he aches for her. For, those days that belonged to the moon. He wishes to stay with Alice Gull.

### **Remorse**

In this Chapter see that the loss of Alice creates venom in Patrick. He had always wanted to know Alice when she was old.

Patrick walked out of the Verral Avenue rooms. He enters Union Station. While travelling, he focusses thirty yards past the train window until his mind locks, thinking of nothing, not even the death of Alice. He had a black cardboard suitcase. He can think now only of objects.

Patrick arrives in Huntsville. He goes to the Garden of the Blind, on Page Island, and sits on one of the benches, under the tree. He hides there unseen. Among the blind, till nightfall. At dark, he entered the mezzanine of the empty Muskoka Hotel. He had waited for the guests and staff 90 outside for dinner. Then he walked on, the suitcase innocent in his hand. Down the stairs of the lobby. The smell was evident now, "Fire!" he yelled. He lit a match, dropped it, and the tire ran upstairs. His arm was on fire. The suitcase at the foot of the stairs exploded. The Muskota Hotel, above him was on tire.

Patrick walked from the fire towards the water. Some men saw him unhook the boat and pointed. He lit the fuse which raced towards the two men who followed him and started to row away from the dock. He went to the garden of the Blind and chose a place to lie down unnoticed.

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The news of the fire has left the Muskokas in an uproar. Patrick struggled to swim towards the boat, the Cherokee. There is a turning point in Patrick's character in 'Remorse' He has moved from a quiet observer to an active criminal. The change is sudden and shocking. He sets Muskoka Hotel, the playground of the rich, ablaze. He did this violent action to avenge Alice's death for he remembers Alice's hatred of wealth. In the boat, he motions the cook to be quiet, lets his clothes dry and enjoy the food he eats. He is fully willing to endure the consequences of his actions.

**Book Three Caravaggio**

In Book Three, in the chapter entitled, 'Caravaggio', we see Patrick painting the roof of the Kingston Penitentiary, with Buck and Caravaggio. Caravaggio is earlier mentioned as 'tar layer' and 'neighbour thief'. They paint the roof the same blue of the sky. Caravaggio paints himself 'blue' and thus escapes from the prison. He meets Alfred in a hardware store at Trenton. Alfred gives Caravaggio a maple-syrup spile as a present. He doesn't want a present in return but wants him to remember him.

Caravaggio goes to a cottage country and enters an empty cottage and gets ready to fall asleep. Before he falls asleep, he enters a dream-like state and re-lives the event of his neck being cut in jail.

Next morning, he takes a canoe on the lake. He meets Anne and is touched by her friendly talk. He then enters into three flashbacks the first one, when he met Patrick in prison, second as how he trained to become a thief and then a longer flashback on his first robbery. After

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the first robbery, he meets. Gianetta and falls in love with her and marries her. Despite his profession, he is gentle towards the two women, Anne and Gianetta, whom he meets.

**Maritime Theatre**

In the last book, last chapter entitled ‘Maritime Theatre’, Patrick is being released from prison. Patrick goes to Nicholas Temelcoff’s house and meets Hana. Five years earlier, he had left Hana with him after Alice’s death. Hana was eleven then and now she is sixteen. Hana has become tall now. Both 90 out and are back in their routine and friendship.

Ambrose is dying and Clara attends on him. In his last moments, he talks of all the women he’d been with, his financial dishonesties and betrayals. Clara just listens and watches him till he dies. Hana shakes Patrick awake. She tells him of a call from a woman called Clara Dickens. She tells him that she is on the phone. Patrick speaks to Clara. Clara tells him that she is in Marmora and she needs him to come and get her. Clara asks about Hana. Patrick tells that Hana is his adopted daughter. He needs to sleep for 40 minutes. He asks Hana to wake him after that and they will drive to Marmora. He says he’ll tell her all about Clara during the drive. Six months ago, Patrick broke into the waterworks to confront Commissioner Harris.

Caravaggio and Gianatta helped him by accompanying him to a party for the rich at the Yacht Club on Toronto Island. They chloroform the rich couple and Gianetta paints Patrick black with grease. He is put on an oxygen tank. They drop in a lake where the intake tunnel for waterworks begins. Patrick has to make it through the tunnel before his tank is emptied. Then he has to cut the grill with wire cutters to get out of the tunnel and into the waterworks building.

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Patrick uses dynamite to explode the grill. It jolts his body and injures his arm. He has four remaining dynamite sets to be kept around the waterworks. Then he walks to Commissioner Harris office. He confronts Harris there. He asks him as to how many labours died and how much exploitation of the poor he has done. Harris denies the charge. He talks with Patrick until he falls asleep with the blasting box on his lap. A guard enters in and Harris tells him to defuse the box and get a nurse to take care of Patrick's injuries.

Patrick's arm was seriously hurt. Hana helps him. Patrick tells her that Clara was Alice's best friend. He narrates the whole story to Hana in the car. We understand that the young girl listens to Patrick as they drive to get Clara.

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UNIT – V

FICTION

OBASAN

Naomi and her Uncle going to visit to the coulee. The narrator, Naomi Nakane, and her Uncle Isamu go on their annual visit to the coulee or ravine near Granton in Southern Alberta, Canada. Uncle blames his Unsteady gait on his old age. As he crouches oh the untouched land, Naomi ‘muses that he looks like Chief Sitting Bull as depicted on ,a postcard of Alberta, a souvenir made in Japan

**Naomi and Uncle paid a visit to the coulee in 1954**

Naomi recalls the first visit she and Uncle made to I the coulee in 1954. Two months earlier, Naomi’s Aunt. Emily had visited Granton. Uncle had seemed upset since Emily’s, departure, and visiting the coulee calmed him. Naomi;-worried about snakes, wondered aloud if the coulee was dangerous. In response, Uncle asked how old she was. When she said she was eighteen, he smiled, told her she was too young, and said ‘someday’. Naomi asks Uncle when

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they come to the coulee.

Now, at thirty-six, Naomi still does not know what her Uncle thought she was too young to hear. She sits on the prairie grass next to Uncle and asks him why they come to the coulee every year, but he does not answer. She takes his hand and asks again. He seems on the verge of saying something, but then he rubs at his face and shakes his head. Naomi goes to the bottom of the coulee to pick one flower, as she always does on these trips.

**Naomi looks too young to be a teacher**

It is the beginning of the school year in Cecil, Alberta. Naomi teaches a class of fifth and sixth-graders. She has taught in this room for seven years. This year, her pupils include two “Naomi girls”; Tami, a lovely child who is half European and half Japanese; and Sigmund, whom she identifies as a troublemaker. She tells him the correct pronunciation of her last name, “Na Ka Neh” with shorts as, and he asks her if she has ever been in love and if she will get married.

According to his mother, Sigmund says, Naomi looks too young to be a teacher. Naomi Wonders to herself whether her youthful looks or he, “oriental face” and what caused the parents surprised looks when she first started teaching. Sigmund says a friend of his wants to date her. ‘

**Naomi is Sansei, third generation**

Naomi recalls going on a date with a widower father of one of her students. He asked, as everyone does, where she came from. She was born in Canada. Her grandparents, who were born in Japan, were Issei, first generation; her mother was Nisei, second generation, and Naomi is

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Sansei, third generation. The widower peppered her with questions, but never asked her out again.

**Naomi not looking forward to seeing Obasan (aunt)**

Sigmund calls Naomi a spinster, an old maid. She admits that she is. as is her Aunt Emily, who lives in Toronto. Naomi wonders to herself whether Emily has ever been in love. In the middle of class, a doctor calls with bad news about Uncle. We do not yet learn what the ~ news is. Naomi thinks of the people she must call. After school, she leaves for Granton. She is not looking forward to seeing her Obasan (aunt).

**Naomi never saw Obasan cry**

Speaking loudly so that her deaf Obasan (aunt in Japanese) can hear, Naomi asks if Uncle suffered. We now understand that Uncle is dead. While Obasan makes tea, Naomi looks around at the familiar clutter of the house. She sees that Obasan's eyes and mouth are gummy, and notes that she has never seen Obasan cry.

**Naomi wanted to try a recipe for bread**

A loaf of Uncle's homemade bread sitting on the counter reminds Naomi of his first attempt at baking. Naomi was ten, and wanted to try a recipe for bread. Uncle wound up doing the baking himself, and produced a rock hard loaf. Naomi's brother, Stephen, tried to serve it to her with margarine, but she refused to eat. Over the years, uncle refined the recipe, but the results were always terrible.

**Death of Naomi's Uncle**

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Obasan describes the morning events. Uncle was taken to the hospital, where he died. Naomi wonders to herself what Uncle's last hours were like. She wonders whether he returned to the sea, or to his mother. She thinks about what Obasan will do. She realizes that Stephen will not help her. He is a moody, restless man.

**Obasan, the same as old women In France or Mexico**

Obasan says that he is too old, and then goes to scrape the mud from Naomi's books. A Naomi wonder, if Obasan could live with her, Obasan says that both her body and the house are old. Naomi reflects that the house and all its clutter are inextricably linked to Obasan. Watching her aunt crouch over the books, Naomi thinks that Obasan is the same as old women in France, or Mexico, or anywhere else on earth.

**Naomi remembers a photograph depicting closest relatives**

Naomi thinks about Grandma Nakane, Uncle's mother. She was imprisoned in Vancouver Hastings Pam. an internment camp, during World War II. Naomi remembers a family photograph depicting her closest relatives. Dr. and Mrs. Kato were her maternal grandparents, and Mr. and Mrs. Nakane, her paternal grandparents. Grandpa Nakane, a boat builder, moved to Canada first, in 1893. He married his cousin's widow, who had a son by her first husband. This son, Isamu, is the man Naomi calls Uncle. He married Ayako, the woman Naomi calls Obasan. Obasan has told Naomi that she married Uncle for the sake of Grandma Nakane, who shared Obasan's love of music. Obasan bore two still born children. After the second birth, Aunt Emily gave Uncle and Obasan a puppy.



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**Naomi's mother and father, the first not to have arranged marriage**

In the photo, Naomi's father holds baby Stephen. Naomi's mother is next to her sister, Emily. Naomi sees no resemblance between Aunt Emily, who is chubby, and Mother, who is delicate. Even as a girl, Naomi sensed tension and unhappiness in the. Naomi's mother and father, who were the first in their community not to have an arranged marriage, worked hard to draw their two families together. Naomi makes a vague reference to a worrisome letter from Japan that arrived after her own birth; She says that if her family was once close, it is not anymore.

**Naomi asked Obasan about her mother**

Obasan wakes Naomi. They go to the attic, where Obasan searches for something. Naomi sees the tool: Grandpa Nakane brought from Japan. Obasan finds an old ID of Uncle's signed by an RCMP inspector. As Obasan took through old possessions. Naomi muses that she and Obasan are trapped by memories of their dead relatives. A glimpse of an old quilt makes her return to the old question of why her mother never came back. As a child, Naomi asked Obasan about her mother, but Obasan provided no information. Now, Obasan cannot find what she is looking for and Naomi helps her back to bed.

**Naomi going about in a dream**

Naomi dreams that she and a man encounter another couple in a forest on a mountain together the two couples work at some unknown but necessary task suddenly. Naomi sees a giant animal that may be a Combination of lion 'and a dog. The animal belongs to the other man, when

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resembles a British Officer. When the animal yawns, Naomi realizes that it is a robot. In an ancient language, the other woman explains a contract between herself and the man.

Then Uncle appears with a rose in his mouth, performing a death dance. Naomi sees that the man is wearing an army uniform. Naomi wakes and goes downstairs. A package from Aunt Emily has arrived. Obasan points to an orange box.

**Aunt Emily has great belief in the strength of the Nisei**

The package contains a scrapbook, a folder an "envelope, and a journal. On a scrap of paper, Naomi sees that' Aunt Emily has written. "Write the vision and make it plain. Habakkuk 2.2"; Aunt Emily believes In the strength of the Nisei, the second generation Japanese Canadians, whereas Naomi thinks the Nisei want only to pass unnoticed. Aunt Emily is a woman of many ' words, constantly writing, crusading and attending conferences. A pamphlet on racial Discrimination Naomi recalls Aunt Emily's last post-conference visit to Granton. Aunt Emily had shown Naomi a pamphlet on racial discrimination during and after World War II.

According to Aunt Emily, Canada is more racist than the United States. While Japanese were interned in both countries, American Japanese were allowed to retain their property and form large communities after the war. As Aunt Emily talked about using language to disguise racism, Naomi felt unmoved.

**A scrapbook full of racist newspaper clippings'**

At home, during the same visit. Aunt Emily showed Uncle a WW-II era form letter from the Government, demanding that the Japanese hand over their property. There was also. A form

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letter from an official named B. Good explaining that Aunt Emily's mother's house now belongs to Canada." Aunt Emily mentioned that the Government gave Grandpa Kato three dollars for his Cadillac. Another letter tells Uncle to register as an Enemy Alien; A sixty-page manuscript by Aunt Emily asserts that despite everything that has happened to her, she identifies strongly as a Canadian. Finally, Aunt Emily showed Naomi a scrapbook full of racist newspaper clippings. Naomi wondered if they should leave the past in the past. Uncle said he considered Aunt Emily's efforts unladylike and Un-Japanese. Obasan did not join the conversation. Both Undo and Obasan expressed gratitude towards Canada.

**Naomi reflects painful memories**

Obasan saves the twine from Aunt Emily's package, as she saves everything: string, thread, tiny amounts of leftover food. Naomi reflects that perhaps painful memories, like Obasan's most disgusting bits of forgotten food, are horrifying only if brought out and looked at.

**Letters from Emily to Naomi's mother**

Obasan says, "Everyone someday dies", a sentence has been repeating almost like a mantra. She leaves the room. Naomi realizes that the book 'Aunt Emily included in her package consists of letters from Emily to Naomi's mother, whom Emily called Nesan, older sister. Obasan come: back holding a photo Naomi has seen before. It is of her mother, and herself as a toddler.

**Naomi recalling Aunt Emily's exhortations to remember the past**

Naomi vividly remembers the moment the photo was taken. A boy was sharing at her and

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her mother as the picture was taken, and she was full of fear. Her Japanese relatives taught her that staring is rude and aggressive. Naomi remembers a man winking at her as she rode a street car with her mother. She thinks about taking scorching hot baths with her Grandma Kato, who used to scrub her clean with washcloths. Naomi does not think it is a good idea to dwell on her childhood home in Vancouver, but recalling Aunt Emily's exhortations to remember the past she tomes herself to continue. She remembers the house as filled with paintings, records, musical instruments and plants. She remembers listening to her mother, father, and brother play music, herself sitting as silent as the gold fish and the statue in the room despite her family's attempt to draw her in, She remembers her toys and her pretty bedroom.

**Naomi thinks of the stories**

Naomi thinks of the stories her relatives told her a bedtime when she was a child. She always asked for the tale of Momotaro. She recalls looking at the peach tree .in her window while her mother told her about two old people, Grandmother and Grandfather. One day Grandmother was washing clothes when a peach (memo) floated to her down a waterfall. When Grandfather came home, she showed him the fruit As they looked at I. a boy, Momotaro, jumped out of the peach. Eventually Momotaro had to leave, and Grandmother gave him rice balls for his trip. She and Grandfather said goodbye wilful sadness, so as not to weigh him down. They hoped that he would behave honourably, which is the most important thing.

**Naomi does not remember being punished**

Naomi thinks of the way her mother and grandmother anticipated her needs. She never

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cried, because they knew when she was hungry, cold, tired, or uncomfortable, and solved the problem almost before she had noticed it herself. Naomi does not remember ever being punished. According to Aunt Emily, she never talked or smiled either.

**Naomi recalls an incident from her youth**

Naomi recalls an incident from her youth. Her parents had purchased baby chicks, and Naomi moved them from their box to the case where a hen was already living. As she watched, the hen began attacking the chicks and pecking them to death. Naomi ran to fetch Mother, who was sitting with her friend Mrs. Sugimoto. As Mother calmly rescued the remaining chicks, Mrs. Sugimoto stared at Naomi. Then a group of loud neighbourhood boys ran into the yard. Mother did not talk about the incident with Naomi until after everyone had left and calm was restored.

**Naomi and her family went to the harbor**

In 1941 around the time of Naomi's molestations, Mother disappeared going with her own mother to see her ill grandmother. Naomi and her family went to the harbour to see Mother off on the ship bound for Japan. When Naomi got home, she tucked away streamers from the harbour and two toy chicks in Mother's sewing drawer, hoping she would find them upon her return.

**Naomi discovered Old Man Gower**

Obasan moved in, but despite her comforting presence, the house still felt empty. One night, during a blackout, Naomi went downstairs and discovered Old Man Gower in the living room, agreeing to hold on to the Nakane family's possessions. One day Stephen came home with

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his glasses broken. Naomi wondered if he was feeling the kind of shame Old Man Gower produced in her. A girl in Stephen's class had told him that he, like the other 'Japs', was bad and would be sent away. Naomi asked father if they were Japs, and he said they were Canadians.

**Naomi recalls taking part in a Christmas pageant**

Naomi recalls taking part in a Christmas pageant as her relatives looked on. She remembers the numerous presents she and Stephen received during the holiday season. Stephen got The Book of Knowledge. Which Contained stories of brave children. Naomi wondered Which members of her family could bear up under torture, One night Naomi was making paper cranes which she heard father coughing and talking to Aunt Emily. She snuck into Father's study, where she heard Aunt Emily say that . the old people would be left in the Sick Bay, where they would die. Naomi thought Sick Bay must be similar to English Bay or the other beaches she had visited. Aunt Emily wanted to appeal to someone she knew at the Security Commission. Father said his time was up, and that despite his bad health he had to go.

**Naomi's Grandma and Grandpa Nakane Imprisoned**

Naomi explains that Japanese Canadians along the coast of Vancouver were forced into Hastings Park, a holding area, before being sent to labour and concentration camps. Some families fled to old abandoned town ! Naomi calls "ghost towns". Naomi's Grandma and Grandpa Nakene were imprisoned in the holding area. Naomi says she did not understand the racism then, and she (toes not know. What is real to her is Uncle's death and Obasan's solitude. Aunt Emily calls from the airport, where she is going to meet Stephen. Naomi takes a bath with

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Obasan, whose body reminds her of a prehistoric formation.

**All people of Japanese descent forced to leave**

She looks at the book of Aunt Emily's letters to her mother, written when her mother was in Japan. The letters chronicle the deterioration of conditions for Japanese Canadians during World War II. What began with the confiscation of business licenses and cars turned into the forced round up for Japanese without Canadian citizenship. By March of 1942, all people of Japanese descent were being forced to leave. Conditions in the labour camps were abysmal. Houses were looted. Some families fled, although many Canadian towns barred all Japanese. Ghost towns reopened to accommodate the refugees.

**Naomi remembers taking the train to Slocan In 1942**

Naomi remembers taking the train to Slocan in 1942, when she was around five years old. Stephen was 0 crutches. A young woman on the train had recently give birth to a premature baby and had no supplies. Obasan, gave her apples and oranges and an old woman gave her an underskirt to make diapers. Naomi played with her toys, particularly an ornamental doll, now battered, that mother gave her before going to Japan.

**Naomi remembers arriving at Slocan as a child**

In 1962, at age twenty-six, Naomi joins Aunt Emily, Uncle, and Obasan and revisits some of the Old ghost towns, including Slocan. No trace of the Japanese Canadian presence remained. Naomi remembers arriving at Slocan as a child and bumping into Nakayama-Sensei, the Anglican priest from Vancouver. He walked through the forest to their new house. On the

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way, Naomi realized she had pageant doll. The two-room hut was crumbling low-ceilinged, and dark. Stephen and Naomi went back outside, where they saw dozens of butterflies. Stephen slashed at them with his crutch because, he told Naomi, they eat your clothes

**Obasan shares a room with Nomura-Obasan :**

Naomi, Stephen and Obasan shared the house in Slocan with Nomura-Obasan, an elderly woman. One day, when Obasan was away, Nomura-Obasan had to use the bodpan, but Naomi could not find it anywhere. She helped Nomura-Obasan to the outhouse and had to stay in there with her until she finished. Inside, Stephen played the records mother loved. Naomi had stopped asking about her lost doll.

**Naomi remembers standing on a bridge in Slocan with Obasan:**

Naomi remembers standing on a bridge in Slocan with Obasan after Grandma Nakane died in New Denver, an hour's drive from Slocan, following an illness. She thought about the need to put other people's desires before your own, and to "make the way smooth by restraining emotion". To do otherwise is to be wagamama -self absorbed and rude.

**Grandma Nakane would be cremated:**

During the funeral, Naomi drew and Stephen sulked. Afterwards, Obasan explained that Grandpa Nakane was Buddhist, unlike the Christian Katos, and therefore Grandma Nakane would be cremated. She took Naomi and Stephen to the funeral pyre. Stephen was allowed to set the pyre alight. Naomi thought of something Obasan had told Stephen. Just as Samurai swords are subjected to fire, people are strengthened by hard experiences.



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**The adults discussed Naomi and Stephen's father:**

Winter came to Slocan. One snowy day, they learned that Uncle was coming to join them. Obasan rearrange the furniture and cooked. When Uncle arrived, she greeted him in an official-sounding voice. The adults discuss Naomi and Stephen's father. Naomi asked where he was, and Stephen scoffed at her ignorance. He played the flutes uncle had brought. In the following days, uncle made many improvements to the hut. He pulled Stephen on a homemade sled to the hospital, where Stephen's cast was removed.

**Stephen and Naomi attending an all-Japanese School:**

With Stephen's help, Uncle built a garden in the yard. Everyone in the family gathered ferns, mushrooms, and berries to eat. In 1943, Stephen and Naomi started attending an all Japanese school. One day they played in the woods with Kenji and Miyuki, two of their classmates. They climbed up to Minnie's Bluff, where they saw a Kingbird. Kenji said that according to Rough Lock Bill, an ornery local man, kingbirds slice the tongues of liars in half.

**"Rough Lock Bill telling a story about an Indian brave":**

Naomi and Kenji were playing by the lake one summer day when Rough Lock Bill came along. After remarking that he did not understand the fuss about skin colour, he told them an story about an "Indian brave" who survived a plague and went to look for a friendly place for his people to live. He wound up in Slocan. Its name Rough Lock Bill said, came from something the brave said to his people: "If you go slow, you can go. Slow can go". Rough Lock said that he had seen the last remaining Indian, who never spoke, but chirped like a bird. Rough Lock then

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remarked that Naomi was remarkably quiet.

**Rough Lock Bill rescued Naomi:**

Rough Lock went back to his cabin. Kenji took Naomi out on his raft. Kenji fell off and called to Naomi to jump, but she could not swim. Kenji went back to the shore and ran away. Naomi was sure he would not tell anyone what had happened. Scared and hoping she could swim, Naomi jumped into the water. She began to drown, but Rough Lock Bill rescued her.

**Father was in a hospital in New Denver:**

Naomi woke in a hospital. The beds in the room were packed tightly together. While a nurse combed her hair roughly, Naomi thought about what Stephen told her. Father was in a hospital in New Denver and might never come home. She thought about chicks, and what it meant that they were yellow but eventually turned white. Stephen had a game called Yellow Peril. Naomi associated the colour yellow with cowardice.

**A girl with white hair accused Naomi:**

She thought about walking to school with Stephen one day. Two boys stopped them and challenged Stephen to a fight, calling him a “gimpy Jap”. He was going to fight them, but a missionary woman intervened. They got to school, and Naomi approached a circle of boys. She saw that they were torturing a chicken. They had cut its throat and were letting it bleed to death slowly while it struggled. The bell rang, and Naomi dashed to class where the Students sang the Canadian national anthem and the School song. Another day on the way to school a girl with white hair accused Naomi of throwing her kitten down an outhouse hole. Naomi walked by the

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**Stephen cracked one of his mother's records:**

Naomi found out that the family had to move. At the time she did not understand, but as an adult one has seen the Government letters ordering her family out of Slocan. As the family packed, Nomura-Obasan, Saito-ojisan, Sachiko and Nakayama-sensei came over. The Minister led a service. By sitting on a box, Stephen accidentally cracked one of his mother’s records. The service continued, and the priest broke the communion wafer. Afterwards, he said goodbye to

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everyone and went off to lead another service.

**Naomi and her family left Slocan:**

Father disappeared one day. People poured out of town on trains. One day, Naomi and her family left Slocan. No one told Naomi where they were going or where her father was she found that Father was in the cabin. Stephen came in and cried out with delight. He and father played songs on their flutes.

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**Naomi and her family left Slocan:**

Father disappeared one day. People poured out of town on trains. One day, Naomi and her family left Slocan. No one told Naomi where they were going or where her father was. Naomi feels exhausted with the effort of remembering the past: Back in the present day, Naomi expects Aunt Emily, and Stephen to arrive at Obasan's soon. She feels exhausted with the effort of remembering the past and more broadly with the burden of behaving politely, not staring, and trying to disappear. She thinks that by delving into the past, she is escaping the present, and vice

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versa.

**Kenji's family went to Japan:**

She remembers talking to Aunt Emily in Granton after the conference first mentioned in Naomi says that in 1945, families like hers had to choose between moving east of the Rockies and going to Japan. She knows that Kenji's family went to Japan, where they suffered greatly. She is no longer in touch with anyone from slogan. Nakayama-sensei and his attempts to keep the community unified: on that night, she asked Aunt Emily if Mother and Grandma starved In Japan. They went for a Walk, and Emily said she had told Naomi all she could. She then changed the topic to Nakayama-Sensei and his attempts to keep the community unified. She said no one in the family got their land back, even Uncle Dan, Who was an intelligence Officer in the Far East. Naomi wondered if the efforts of letter-writers like Aunt Emily did any good.

**Obasan, Uncle, Naomi and Stephen are in a city:**

In 1945, Obasan, Uncle, Naomi and Stephen went to the City of Leth Bridge, Alberta, and then drove to a farm In Grandton. They moved their things into a one-room hut and went to sleep. By morning, dust had coated everything.

**Naomi can't stand to remember the hardship:**

Naomi mentions a newspaper clipping from Aunt Emily's package. The clipping describes the industry of "Jap evacuees" who worked on beet farms. Naomi says she can't stand to remember the hardship: the flies that swarmed everywhere, their house, which was actually a chicken coop; the bedbugs; the muddy water they boiled and drank; the baths taken in the same

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tub; fainting in the beet fields; and being too tired to sing or talk. They stayed there for three years, until 1948, when Naomi was twelve. Not until 1949 were expelled Japanese Canadians allowed returning home. Addressing Aunt Emily, Naomi says that the past will no doubt repeat itself in a different guise.

**In school, children torment with racist remarks:**

In Granton, they received word from Father that Grandpa Nakane had died the day before they left Slocan, and that Father himself had an operation. In the summer, the only way Stephen and Naomi could cool off was by sitting in muddy water or in the root cellar. In school, children tormented them with racist remarks. All of the Japanese students were called by Americanized versions of their names. Stephen was allowed to play the piano at school.

**Naomi remembers going outside:**

In Granton, Naomi often the swamp to hang out One evening Stephen came along on his bicycle. She showed him a frog with a broken leg, and he told her to come home. She brought the frog with her, imagining that it might be a Prince. Nakayama-Sensei was at the house. Naomi says she does not remember when she was told, though at this point in the narrative, we are not sure what Naomi is referring to; She remembers going Outside, gathering water and mud and making a home for the frog In a glass bowl. She feeds the frog for weeks until its leg heals and it escapes.

**Penny Barker felt sick:**

In 1951, the family moved to a house in town. Stephen worked on a Cantata for-a school

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production. Penny Barker, the daughter of the farmers for whom Naomi's family worked came to their house, probably to petition Stephen for a part, and Naomi told her that her father was dead. As soon as she said the words aloud, she felt sick.

**A request for Mother's readmission to Canada:**

Stephen said that Mother and Grandma must be dead, too. Aunt Emily had written hundreds of letters trying to find them, with no success. However, two letters in the package Emily sends to Obasan's in the present day concern a request for Mother's readmission to Canada which suggests that the sisters had been in contact.

**Aunt Emily came for a visit:**

After high school, Stephen went to the Royal Conservatory of Music in Toronto. There, he won a prize for a piano competition and toured Europe. He also spent time with Aunt Emily, whom Naomi had not seen in twelve years at that point. When he came home to Granton from school, he was surly and quiet. He sometimes refused to eat Obasan's food. During one of Stephen's summer breaks, Aunt Emily came for a visit. She was warm to Naomi, but did not smile when she greeted Obasan. One night, Naomi hears the adults whispering about whether or not to tell the children something. Obasan prays, and Aunt Emily cries.

**Mr. Barker comes over with his second wife:**

The cardboard folder Aunt Emily had on that mysterious night is included in her package. Earlier that day, Naomi had seen Obasan reading its contents with a magnifying glass. Mr. Barker, the family's former employer comes over with his second wife, Vivian, to say he is sorry

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for Obasan's loss. Vivian reminds Naomi of the first Mrs. Barker, who did not want her daughter Penny playing with Stephen and Naomi. Through Vivian's eyes, Naomi sees how cluttered and unappealing the house is. Mr. Barker asks after Stephen, but Naomi has not seen him in eight years. The last time he came home he brought a divorcee from Paris with him.

**Naomi thinks the rose stands for her Mother's story:**

Naomi dreams of her mother doing a death dance with a rose in her mouth. The rose is connected to Obasan's twine, which is connected to Aunt Emily's package. A figure Naomi calls the Grand Inquisitor descends and begins opening her eyes and her mother's mouth. Naomi wakes. She thinks that to understand her mother, the Grand Inquisitor has to listen to her silence. She thinks that the rose stands for her mother's story. She decides to stop her inquisition her search for the truth. Obasan wakes and begins reading the papers from Aunt Emily's cardboard folder.

**Naomi surprised by the gray in her brother's hair:**

As Naomi does the dishes, Nakayama-sensei, Aunt Emily, and Stephen arrive. Naomi is surprised by the gray in her brother's hair. He seems uncomfortable Nakayama-sensei says a prayer over the tea and Uncle's bread. Then he looks at the letters. Aunt Emily says she wanted to tell the children a long time ago. Nakayama-sensei reads the letters aloud. They are from Grandma Kato to Grandpa Kato.

**Naomi's mother not wanted her children to know what happened:**

Naomi mentions that in high school, she learned that her mother's grave had been found.



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The first letter from Grandma Kato is brief. The second says that Grandma Kato and Naomi's mother decided keeping silent would help the horror abate, but it did not. Naomi's mother specifically did not want her children to know what had happened. Grandma hoped by writing about the events to her husband, she would rid herself of some pain.

**Grandma and Naomi's mother In Nagasaki:**

In 1945, Grandma and Naomi's mother were in Nagasaki, helping Naomi's cousin, Setsuko, with her new baby, Chieko, who looked just like Naomi. While they were there, many of their family members died in a bombing of Tokyo. One day as Grandma was getting ready to make lunch, with Chieko strapped to her back, the bomb hit. Grandma was knocked unconscious. She awoke to find a scene of total devastation. The baby was unconscious, but alive. Both of Setsuko's eyes had been blown out, and her skin came off against Grandma's hand, but she was still alive and calling for her son, Tomio. Tomio survived unharmed.

Everywhere there were people hideously maimed and dying. Grandma headed towards the house of Seteuko's father-in-law. At a stream exhausted, she fell asleep when she woke she and the baby were at the father-in-law's house, but Tomio was gone. He was never found. One day, Grandma came across a bald woman who had lost her nose and a cheek. Mascots filled her wounds. This woman was Naomi's mother. Naomi's mother recovered in a hospital she insists on wearing a mask after her bandages were off. At four years old, Cheiko was dying of leukemia. Nakayama -sensei says a prayer for forgiveness. Naomi asks her mother to help her listen.

**Obasan and Uncle granted Mother's request for silence:**

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Naomi speaks to her mother as if she were there, telling her she shares her horror. She says that Obasan and Uncle granted her Mother's request for silence. She says that silence destroyed them both. Nakayama-sensei is still praying. Naomi says she feels her mother's presence and love.

**Naomi drives to the Coulee:**

In the small hours of the morning, Obasan looks through a box of photographs. Although Obasan does not weep, Naomi knows she is grieving. She puts on Aunt Emily's coat and drives to the coulee.

The novel ends with an excerpt from a 1946 Memo Written by Co-operative Committee on Japanese Canadians arguing against the deportation of Japanese Canadians.